

"I'm gonna be a mighty king, so enemies beware! I'm gonna be the mane event like no king was before. Free to run around all day. Free to do it all my way!" These words were sung by Simba in the Disney movie, the Lion King. He was only a little guy at the time, but already looking forward to being king. Being king to him meant taking orders from no one. It meant people looking at him all the time. It meant everyone doing what he wanted them to. Our thoughts on kings and people with powerful positions might not be that different. They have everything they want. They're strong and in charge. Everybody adores them and things always go their way.

Jesus didn't think that way at all. He rode into Jerusalem unlike a king. The people were looking for someone strong; someone with authority. Jesus seemed to have neither. The way he rode, the people he associated with, even the animal he chose weren't in keeping with royalty. But they sang Hosanna to him anyway. There was something about him. There was something majestic about the scene as it played out on the first Palm Sunday.

The gospel records what happened that day when Jesus got near Jerusalem for his final time. His arrival was well documented. It provides material for us to study today so that we might join with the crowds singing...

**Hosanna to the king
Humbled for great acts of love
Exalted as the Son of God**

Everyone knows that the best place to hide when playing hide and seek is not right next to the person counting. As soon as they get to twenty they'll open their eyes and find you. But that's almost what Jesus was doing. The religious leaders were looking for him to arrest him. Instead of hiding in some far away town where they couldn't get to him he walked right into Jerusalem, headquarters for the religious leaders who wanted to kill him.

Now picture the scene as Jesus prepares to enter Jerusalem. He tells his disciples, **"Go into the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me."** If Jesus was trying to impress people the donkey probably wasn't the way to do that. This was no princely mode of transportation, not fitting for a king. A working animal wouldn't showcase power but rather meekness and humility. And they weren't even his animals. He borrowed them. And the crowd that walked with him, no great band of peoples either. No heads of state. No gold crowns. No wealthy influential people. These are the faces of those who will run away when times get rough, or they'll be part of the group of people making things rough by chanting for Jesus to die.

We vote for the people who are somebody. We look up to the strongest on the playground. We want to hang around with the coolest in school or even at our jobs. When someone has "it" everybody knows. Bank accounts and power tell us who's "it". These tell us who has the ability to provide and care for themselves and for us. We choose who to align ourselves with based on that. So would we have chosen Jesus? Can we choose God because some believe that you can? What if he stays hidden and we go looking? If Jesus hadn't been sitting on the donkey would we have noticed him in the crowd?

The answer is "no". But in spite of your sinfulness and mine, Jesus comes to us. **"Say to the daughter of Zion, see, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey."** Look at this man. He brings no outward glory, he carries no scepter, and he has no soldiers at his side to fight for him. He's rather prepared to die. **"He humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!"** He became obedient Paul says. He wasn't forced. This servant went willingly to the cross. It's a great act of undeserved love for human beings. The one who walks into Jerusalem riding on the back of a donkey will ascend the hill of Calvary and give up his life to save yours. His humility leads to our glory and salvation.

Recognize him for who he is. It's vital that we see the Scriptures calling him our Savior and substitute. Everything that happened on Palm Sunday happened because Scripture said it would. That's the reliability of Scripture and Jesus who speaks to you through Scripture. This king's message is extremely important. There in that gospel message is the power to convince us that Jesus is the king we owe hosannas to because he was humbled for great acts of love.

It's hard to remain humble when you're the king. Simba in the Lion King sang, *"No one saying do this, no one saying be there, no one saying stop that, no one saying see here."* Clearly Simba found it difficult to remain humble when everyone was telling him only what he wanted to hear. When everyone tells you that you did a great job the ego puffs and pride swells. Humility is far from our minds. For Jesus who was riding a donkey, walking with deserters, and among a crowd of attackers it wasn't hard to stay humble. He was the eternal God in the flesh who had come to give his life. He remained humble even while the crowd exalted him as the Son of God.

Few times did Jesus allow people to openly worship him. Most times he accepted their praise but he didn't want it to be some big show. He kept himself as low key as possible. hard to do when you're the Son of God. Paul said in Philippians, **"Christ Jesus who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped."** Here walking into Jerusalem Jesus let things go. **"They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat upon them."** Putting your cloak down for someone to sit on was something done for kings. They were exalting Jesus. Laying your cloak in the road was the same thing. The palm branches placed in Jesus' path was a deep sign of homage and exaltation to a king.

These people were worshipping Jesus as a king. They recognized him as the Messiah. A simple walk turned into a parade and celebration. What started as a humble procession turned out to have a triumphant tone to it. Jesus wasn't trying to sneak into the city. He wasn't being smuggled in or out. He was riding in triumphantly. Before he even sets foot in the city, before he gets to work, before the suffering and the dying, he's already victorious. The long wait for salvation was over. The king was here to do something about sin once and for all.

This is our Savior riding into the city. He's unique and the Word of God shows it. The people shouted to him, **"Hosanna to the Son of David."** This was a messianic title from the Old Testament. It points to the fact that Jesus is a king. He's exalted as the one who would come from David's line to free captives and liberate his people. We're his people and we're being freed by what he has come to do. When the people called to him **"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"** they saw in him one who would do the Lord's work. We know that work is completed just days later on the cross and verified three days after that in the empty tomb. **"Hosanna in the highest!"** is meant to say that the saving work done in heaven is now being done on earth. Praise for the exalted king rings out here on earth and also in heaven.

We don't have the ability to put palm branches in Jesus' path. But we recognize our Savior and king. The palm branches we carried in procession this morning connect us with that first Palm Sunday. We humbly lay our palm branches before the feet of Jesus our Savior who comes for us and to serve us. We do it to indicate that he is who we trust to rescue us from this world of tears and from our sins.

"Everybody look left, everybody look right, everywhere you look I'm standing in the spotlight." Young Simba in the movie wanted the glory right away. He thought that's what being a king meant. Only one king really gets the glory. What started out as a humble walk into Jerusalem ended with a humiliating death on a cross. But the victory for the enemies was short lived. The final victory would belong to Christ. Palm Sunday is a victory parade. Jesus knows the victory over death and sin is guaranteed. Because of that Jesus is worthy of our cries of hosanna to the king.