The real reason for the King


When they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.' The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

While the most scary part of this pandemic is worrying whether or not you are going to get sick, the second most scary or uncomfortable part is just having to stay home away from everyone else. If you are like me, palm Sunday always had a special meaning because they handed out palms during the service. It was often the start of a special week as we built towards Easter. Some of it would be festive like Palm Sunday and Easter, and others would be sad or more introspective like Maundy Thursday or Easter.

And every time we celebrate Palm Sunday and have palms it takes me back to being a child. A reminder of how Palm Sunday stood out from the rest of the other Sundays because we held palms. Often there is some attempt to duplicate Jesus riding into Jerusalem by having a procession of our own. And so it was hard to realize we didn’t need to have Palms this Sunday due to staying at home. And not having this wonderful Sunday in church to celebrate in person holding palms makes it a little bit tougher on all of us.

But let us reflect on what makes it so special to hold the palms and celebrate Palm Sunday? What made Palm Sunday so special from the accounts? What was this celebration of Jesus riding into Jerusalem all about? Why does it show Jesus is the true king that we need to have as Savior? As we take time to reflect from Zachariah and see how Jesus fulfilled it in the Gospels we are reminded Jesus is the only King and Shepherd that we truly need.

What was one reason that made Palm Sunday special? Well part of it was Jesus was fulfilling another prophecy in Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

This was Jesus continuing to lay the groundwork for fulfilling prophecies to show that He was the Savior of the world who had come to save people from their sins by going to the cross. So Jesus would have done this regardless the final time He entered Jerusalem. Even if the crowd had not been that big, Jesus would have still done it.

But I think there was going to be a crowd. People had an excitement about Jesus. He had just raised Lazarus from the dead. Like a popular celebrity, politician or athlete there is excitement around Jesus building. But why is there excitement? Jesus is much more than just a celebrity. And this something the crowd doesn’t truly fathom to the extent that we hopefully do today.

The fact that the people gathered to praise and honor Him and called Him “Son of David” showed they were bestowing on Him the tile of king just like the King the Jews truly honored King David. That indeed Jesus was the prophesied King in the footsteps of King David. So yes Jesus is clearly a king. He is the prophesied King.

But a king of what and how is this King to serve the people? If you read through the book of Zechariah, God uses the prophecy of Zechariah to remind everyone He is present, the battle over sin with Satan and the need for restoration from sin, and false shepherds. It is a great book of the Bible that we probably should spend much more time in than simply pulling it around Palm Sunday.

In every generation there are false shepherds who try to steer us away from focusing on Christ alone as our Savior. During Zechariah’s time of the prophecy for Jesus to come, the people were still in exile. They were exile
because they had not repented and listened to false prophecy instead of focusing on God and living as His people. They had made other things more important than God. Thus they needed to repent and be restored by a true king that had the best intent for them as king.

Which brings us today, what type of King do we need? What type of King do we need to stay pointed at and focused on in the midst of false idols? And what are our false idols? What things have we made more important than God? I think we are in this pandemic to see what more really matters and what doesn’t.

Much of our life is centered around things that while they are fun can also be a distraction. We have sports going year around. We would have been in the middle of March madness with the college basketball tournaments and focusing also on who would be going to the playoffs in the NBA. Spring training for baseball would be beginning. And yet we don’t have those things and they don’t seem as important right now. They are a nice entertainment to watch and it’s a testimony to our society that we have enough money and leisure time to go watch sporting events. But life will go on without sports.

Many of are gathered around things for the end of school. If you have a family so much of your time is driven by school activities. And while it has been tough home schooling so many children, I think it has been good for families to perhaps spend a little more time together. I know at my house we are doing more home projects and eating at the dinner table because our schedule is less crazy. There aren’t as many events interfering with the life of the family.

This pandemic has started us to simplify our lives and slow down to focus on what is important. We probably have become as close to things were if any of you can remember during World War II. Where everything revolved around helping the war effort. Things during World war II that weren’t important were canceled to save resources. Everything was focused on defeating the enemy. And right now we are focused on coping with the enemy of the pandemic or so it seems. And we need a king to defeat the pandemic right? Or do we? Or is it as bad it is maybe it’s own false idol if we focus on the disease and not the true cure we need?

Eventually we won World War II, and things were great everywhere afterwards right? No things were better but there were problems still. The Jews thought they needed a king to get rid of the Romans not realizing that an earthly kingdom is not what they needed. That even if the Romans were kicked out, the Jews still had not repented and received the mercy that they truly needed from God. There is something bigger than Covid 19 and the pandemic.

No the big fear of the pandemic is what? That people will get sick and die. But even if have a vaccine tomorrow will people still die? Yes they will. The pandemic is scary. Covid 19 is scary because while many of us will probably survive it, we can carry it to others who it may lead to their death. But the big threat of Covid 19 is death. We need a king to conquer death!

We need a king that will overcome sin and death for all eternity. And that is the king we celebrate riding in on a donkey on Palm Sunday. The King described in Zechariah. A king who will be the true shepherd for the flock and not teach them falsehoods. A king who will be pierced for them and save them from their sins as Zechariah reveals later on in chapter 12.

10 “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced,

That is the king we celebrate on Palm Sunday. The king that will restore us to His kingdom for all eternity through what He does for us on the cross. That is the reason we hold up Palm branches and celebrate Jesus riding into Jerusalem. He is our Savior and through the faith He has given us, our King for all eternity. Amen.