

Today, we walk alongside the crowd as they watch Jesus ride into Jerusalem—not on a warhorse, but on a donkey. We’ve even heard from that donkey today. **Thank you, puppeteers!**

This parade is filled with praise, and hope, and expectation. But within days, shouts of “Hosanna!” turn into cries of “Crucify him!”

How does such a dramatic shift happen? And what can it teach us, as always, about our own walk with Christ?

I have a few questions to help us get a handle how this amazing time in the life of Jesus, the Christ works in our lives.

1. I wonder what this crowd is expecting as they await the arrival of Jesus? Remember, they knew their Bible by heart and these Bible verses would be swimming in their heads:

A combination of Hope and amazement! “Could this really be the Messiah?”

After all, “This is exactly what Zechariah said, in Zechariah 9:9”

“Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

Perhaps they felt worship and awe! The people are laying their cloaks on the ground and shouting praise,

“Glory in the highest heaven!” reports Luke in verse 19:38

Maybe there’s political expectation: “Is He finally going to free us from Rome?” “Is he the anointed, riding on a mule like the son of King David?” They remember in 1Kings 1:33-34 where King David says,

³³ he said to them: “Take your lord’s servants with you and have Solomon my son mount my own mule and take him down to Gihon. ³⁴ There have Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king over Israel. Blow the trumpet and shout, ‘Long live King Solomon!’

After all, if he IS the Messiah, Psalm 118 verse 26, that psalm of deliverance, associates the arrival of the Messiah with God’s triumph

“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

These people were not just celebrating their anticipated teacher—they were welcoming the long awaited Messiah, a liberator, a KING!

2. How is King Jesus different than what the people expect?

Jesus chose a donkey, not a stallion but this wasn’t humbling— Jesus wasn’t just entering like a traveler. He was declaring fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophesy “ Your King comes riding on a donkey...”

In ancient Israel, kings would ride horses when going to war, but they'd ride donkeys when coming in peace. Everyone knew that a donkey equals peace, a warhorse equals violence. For Jesus, horse would have meant rebellion, but a donkey says, "I come to be peace."

By riding a donkey, Jesus was revealing the nature of his Kingdom, the Kingdom of God, that he brought to all. He wasn't a political or military conqueror. He was the Prince of Peace, coming to bring reconciliation between God and God's people. Jesus came not to defeat Rome—but to defeat sin, death, and the powers of darkness. His enemy wasn't Caesar—it was the true killer, the brokenness of the human heart. And He would conquer it not with a sword, but with a cross.

But here's the key: this crowd wasn't wrong in recognizing Jesus as King—they were simply wrong about what kind of King Jesus the Christ would be. They expected political victory, Roman defeat, and a restoration of Israelite national pride. But Jesus came offering something far greater—but far less visible; far more Kingdom of God-like.

The public display that Jesus entrenched in that day left no room for neutrality. He was confronting the people, the leaders, and the city with a challenge ... a decision to be made:

- Would they crown Him King?
- Or would they reject Him?

3. How did all these people respond to Jesus' challenge?

By the end of the week, Jesus had his answer. The crowd's cries transform from "Hosanna" - "Save us" to "Crucify him!"

Why? Because Jesus didn't meet their expectations. He didn't deliver the victory they wanted. He had overturned tables in the temple (Luke 19:45-46) but he had not overturned a brutal government from its power. He had challenged the temple, not the empire.

The same hearts that celebrated Him turned cold when they realized He wasn't here to fulfill their agenda.

Maybe they just didn't have ears to hear, as Jesus had said so often before.

4. What happens with us when God doesn't meet our expectations?

You know, there was another parade in town that day. Scholars tell us that Pontius Pilate was probably riding into town on beautiful horse, all decorated to display the power of the Roman Empire, through another gate. It would have been pretty awesome and certainly would remind people who's in charge and why.

You know, there is ALWAYS another parade in town. There's always another parade that's full of power and action and that 'get er done' attitude. A way to achieve our hearts desire by pushing and shoving and demanding. Do we choose that amazing parade that impresses with raw power? OR do we choose the parade that seems a bit confusing, and offers a show of peaceful liberation with the power of the peace of the Creator?

How often do we welcome Jesus into our lives with certain expectations? Do we sometimes look for Jesus in the big flashy parade of our expectations?

- “Lord, heal me.”
- “Lord, fix my family.”
- “Lord, bless my finances.”
- “Lord, make my life easier.”

There comes Jesus on the donkey - not to serve our plans, but to redefine those plans. To help us plan with love and compassion and not greed and envy.

Like the crowd, we often want a savior on our terms. But Jesus never conforms to our expectations—Jesus exceeds whatever plans we could come up with. Jesus doesn’t just fix symptoms - Jesus transforms hearts.

5. Application: What do we do when Jesus surprises us with a solution that is barely recognizable as a solution, certainly NOT a solution we could have dreamt up ... NOT what we expect? Will we keep praising that confusion OR, will we whisper, ‘crucify him’.

Will we still follow Jesus when He doesn’t do what we expect?

- When He calls us to forgive someone who hurt us... will we follow his parade?
- When following Him means standing out or being misunderstood... will we follow his parade?
- When He doesn’t take away the hard stuff, but asks us to trust Him through it... will we follow?

That’s when faith gets real. Not just when it’s easy—but when it’s hard

6. Good News: Jesus Still Comes in Peace

Jesus rode into that city knowing the same people cheering for Him would soon reject Him. And He still went. For them. For us.

Christ doesn’t come to impress us. He comes to love us, save us, and lead us—even when we don’t fully get it.

Christ’s not the kind of King we expect. Christ is better.

6. What do we do when the donkey rides into our lives? When the answer doesn’t look like what we we’re expecting?

Here’s the good news: Jesus still comes to us—riding humbly, offering peace. Not the peace of changed circumstances, but the peace of a changed heart. Not the triumph of our will, but the victory of God’s will in us.

As Holy Week begins, let’s ask ourselves,

- Am I praising a Jesus I’ve created in my image?
- Or am I following the humble King who lays down His life for me?

Let us echo Psalm 118 with a deeper understanding: “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Even when God doesn't do what we want, God always does what we need. Let us welcome God—not just with palm branches, but with open hearts.

This week, as we get closer to the glory of Easter, we can ask ourselves:

- Am I always looking for the parade with the beautiful big horse? Or can I begin looking for the parade with that confusing donkey?
- am I willing to trust Jesus even if I don't get what I want? Am I willing to ask, "how is this what I need?"

We will do this because we know following Jesus is the path to true peace, purpose, and fulfillment.

Let's be people who, in the midst of life's many parades, choose to follow the humble King on a donkey—the King who brings peace to our hearts and calls us to extend that peace to the world.

Because this King is not just here to give us a better life— this King comes to give us a brand new life.

In closing, I offer this most perfect instruction from the Prophet Isaiah (41:10)

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Why This Verse? Because when we don't understand, God helps us to keep going, as Jesus to his resurrection

- "*Do not fear, for I am with you*" → When we feel overwhelmed, God reminds us that we are not alone.
- "*Do not be dismayed, for I am your God*" → Even when life is confusing or painful, we can trust that God is in control.
- "*I will strengthen you and help you*" → God doesn't just tell us to endure—He gives us the strength to do it.
- "*I will uphold you with my righteous right hand*" → When we feel like falling, God holds us up.

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, forgive us when we worship you with expectations instead of trust. Teach us to welcome you not for what you can do for us, but for who you are. Help us to see your peace, your humility, and your cross—and to follow you wherever you lead. Amen.

SING HYMN **217** *Ride on, Ride on in Majesty*