



Long Live the King

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John 12:12-19

Clint Pressley

¹² The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" ¹⁴ And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

*¹⁵ "Fear not, daughter of Zion;
behold, your king is coming,
sitting on a donkey's colt!"*

¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. ¹⁷ The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. ¹⁸ The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. ¹⁹ So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."

(Pastor prays)

Maybe you see that we live in a world that is under siege. We live in a world that is a fallen world of destruction and death and dismay. We've felt it. We felt it this week. We've come off a really hard week. We felt it in the confluence of events this week. From the death-filled havoc out in the Mississippi Delta, when tornadoes came through or in Little Rock, Ark. You've seen the video. Or even up in Indiana, we've seen the devastation of a fallen creation, and specifically the killing power of an F4 tornado. And with every picture we see, every video we see, we remember that creation groans. And in

that sullen malaise, our hearts turn to Nashville, Tenn., to a city like ours, in a church like ours, that has a school, like ours. There, on a beautiful Monday morning, a deranged devil of a woman drove her Honda Fit to the Covenant School and premeditatedly, systematically killed six people, including three children. One of them was a little girl, nine years old, the pastor's child. How is that man going to lead right now? And it appears that, at least to some degree, it appears that the motive behind the shootings had something to do with "the faith once and for all delivered to the Saints." It had something to do with Christianity. It had something to do with the faith that we hold on to. And then, in the aftermath of such carnage, the response from the President and the mass media has reminded us that this world is not our home. For a lot of us, this country is not our home. We serve a different King. We have been sent here by that King at His behest to live here in this foreign land as salt and light on His behalf. This King that we serve didn't come to kill; this King came that we might have life and have it in abundance. Here in John Chapter 12, we have joined the short march of this King and His disciples. We've joined the short march to His coronation and John Chapter 12. If you read the book of John you find out over and over again that Jesus will say His time had not yet come. In John Chapter 6 they had tried to make him a king but His time had not yet come. In John Chapter 8 His time had not yet come. But now, in John Chapter 12, the time of the King has come.

Here's what I want to do: I want you to join me in the court of this King and I want you to rejoice in your heart because even though we are exiles and we live in a land that is not ours, if you're a Christian, we live here on behalf of a King, and this King will come again. And when this King comes the second time, he will not be on the foal of a donkey. He will ride in on the back of a war horse. While we wait on that return, we joyfully bear on our souls the mark of Christ. We live our lives not with our heads down, that's not how Christians are salt and light. That's not how we live our lives. We live our lives with the Cross of Jesus held high. We sing a battle hymn whose refrain goes like this: to live is Christ and to die is gain for one good reason that is...

As Long As the King Lives, His Kingdom Will Come

In John chapter 12, let's join the story already in progress and find out what does this Palm Sunday passage tell us about our King? Here's the first one. Number 1.

He is an unstoppable King

King Jesus is an unstoppable King. Verse 12 begins with a little phrase, "the next day." So I want to know what happened the previous day. And when I started looking at the previous day, I saw a whole series of events going on that led up to Chapter 12. Chapter 11 is a great chapter. It's back there in Chapter 11 where we hear the story of Lazarus and his two great sisters, Martha and Mary. Martha and Mary call for Jesus to come and visit them in Bethany because their brother Lazarus is sick. He is sick unto death, and it turns out Lazarus does die and Jesus knows all about it. He lets him die because that's going to be for the glory of God. He tells the disciples that Lazarus has "gone to sleep," and the disciples say, well, if he's sleeping, then he's going to recover and Jesus says no, you don't understand. He is dead. Lazarus dies and Jesus then takes the two-mile walk to see his friends. And as he's headed that way in Chapter 11, Martha, (now we love Martha and Mary. Mary is found at the feet of Jesus while Martha is doing all the work) Martha's out of the house on the path to go get Jesus. She meets Him on the road and they have a conversation in Chapter 11. She is saying, if you had been here, you could have saved my brother. And Jesus says the astounding thing to her in Chapter 11, verse 25. Jesus says to Martha: I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes, he will never die. Martha's taken aback and she says something that we don't find any other woman saying in the Bible. Martha, in Chapter 11:27, Martha says: I believe that you are the Christ. You are the son of God who's come into the world. He passes Martha and sees Mary there at the tomb of Lazarus. He goes there, even under protest because there will be a stench. Jesus stands outside the tomb of Lazarus. He looks around and sees Mary

weeping. He sees all of her friends weeping. He loves this family so much. And the Bible says that *Jesus* wept there at the grave.

The miracle begins when Jesus says, “Come forth, Lazarus!” He calls Lazarus from the dead. He comes out and Jesus says, “unbind this man.” People cannot believe it. The Jews are putting their faith in Christ. There’s this sort of revival that breaks out. Now, the mob is with Jesus. At the end of Chapter 11, there’s Caiaphas. The Jews are plotting together: We’ve got to find a way to kill this guy, and we need to kill Lazarus because people are following Him because of Lazarus. Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year, didn’t even know that he was being used by God to say that it’s better that one person should die for the nation, than that everyone should die. He didn’t even know what that meant. So Chapter 11 closes and Chapter 12 opens up. There’s a feast going on. Jesus is back in Bethany. He’s with Mary and Martha and Lazarus. Everybody’s having a party. People are there to take a look. They want to come see Lazarus. Is it real or not? They’re enjoying themselves and Mary, overcome with a devotion to Christ, she does something that is remarkable. She takes jar of perfume. It’s called pure nard. It takes a year’s salary to purchase this perfume. She breaks its container and pours it out on the feet of Jesus. The aroma is filling the entire place and she does what no dignified woman will do. Here’s the humility. She takes her hair down and wipes the feet of Jesus. Judas the hypocrite, Judas says “we should have saved that money.” Jesus says “No. Leave her alone. She’s preparing me for my burial.”

And verse 12 starts with “the next day.” Monday, after that meal with friends. It ought to be palm Monday and not really Palm Sunday. Monday, after that meal with friends, Jesus heads into Jerusalem and in verse 12, a great crowd is going with Him, a whole lot of people. Some of them are from Galilee. They’ve seen and heard what He did. Some of them are following along because of Lazarus and what happened to him. And joining with that great crowd, there are hundreds and thousands of people from all over the Palestinian area coming into Israel to celebrate Passover. They’re going to celebrate Passover.

Remember, Passover is a celebration of God's delivering His people out of Egypt with the Passover lamb. They're there to celebrate God's deliverance, and they don't even know that the real deliverer is right in their midst.

What they did know, though, was that this man Jesus is a force. Maybe He could save the Jews from these hated Romans. In verse 13 you feel the enthusiasm building. That's where we get Palm Sunday. So they took branches of palm trees, probably because 100 years or so earlier, Judas Maccabeus, a famous Jew, led a revolt against the Romans. He used the palms as a national symbol. It became the symbol of Judaism by this time. ¹³ *So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"* The enthusiasm is building, and it's a national enthusiasm. They want the Jews to win. They want to get rid of the hated Romans like Judas Maccabees did. Since the palm branches are the national symbol, it would be like us taking out the American flag and waving the flag and chanting "USA." That's what they were doing here in verse 13. They're quoting Psalm 118. They've appropriated the Bible, and they've made it a national symbol. And they're saying "Hosanna." They recognize, at least in some degree, that this man is a King, but not like the king they expected. This King doesn't rule the country. This King rules the world. This King, who is walking into Jerusalem, has been prophesied about in all of the Old Testament. He has been longed for and prayed for. They've tried to manufacture a Messiah and this King comes in verse 13 with all kinds of enthusiasm! Who doesn't love enthusiasm?

But be careful now. Just pause. Be careful with enthusiasm. The people in the text in verse 13, they are genuinely excited about Jesus to the degree that down to verse 19 the Pharisees are worried because it feels like the whole world is going to Him. The movement had momentum, and who doesn't like momentum? The movement had forward progress. I mean, come on. This guy has just raised the man from the dead. And they were excited and they should be. Are they excited four days later? Now this is a Monday, but four days later, where was the excitement? Four days later when they tried Him and crucified

Him? Listen, brothers and sisters, the hay and stubble of enthusiasm burns up in the furnace of difficulty. We must not equate enthusiasm with commitment. They are not the same. Enthusiasm gets you this sort of token moment of euphoria, followed by a lifetime of forgetfulness.

Now let me back up and just say, I think that as Christians we are unbelievably optimistic. We should be filled with joy and even excitement. Excitement is good because of what Christ has done for you. But enthusiasm can't get you through the "valley of the shadow of death." Only the King can do that. Now I know it. I feel it myself. It feels like a tense time in our world. You actually may even be anxious when you think about it. But as long as the King lives— and He does— as long as the King lives, His Kingdom will come. He's an unstoppable King. But let's go a little further down into verse 15 and 16. You'll notice that He is...

A humble King

This event, by the way, the triumphal entry is what we call it, this event is recorded in all four Gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They are synoptic Gospels because they are synonymous. They basically tell of the same events in the same way. John differs a little bit. The Synoptic Gospels are a little more detailed than what John has given us here in verse 14 and 15. But look what Jesus does to fulfill the prophecy in verse 14 and then it's explained in verse 15. ¹⁴ *And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,*

Now if you read the synoptic Gospels, what you find out is Jesus actually planned this. He told the disciples where to get the donkey. All of this is sort of scripted out, but John says it like this, Jesus found the donkey. And then he tells us what Jesus did this to fulfill an Old Testament prophecy. He quotes Zachariah 9:9. ¹⁵ *"Fear not, daughter of Zion. They pick the palms from the trees and they went and met him and they start crying, Hosanna. This is Psalm 118. "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"* ¹⁵ *"Fear not, daughter of Zion;*

*behold, your king is coming,
sitting on a donkey's colt!"*

And why is He doing this? Jesus knows what the crowd wants. They're holding the branches up. They're waving them. They are singing Psalm 118, which is a coronation. That Psalm is saying, "Hail to the king!" They want to overthrow the Roman government and here Jesus says, "I don't come in like that. I come as a man of peace, riding on a donkey. I come like the Bible said I was going to come. I come to fight off a misunderstanding and to keep this from becoming some sort of political rally." Jesus takes corrective action in verses 14,15 and 16. He is the King. But not like Judas Maccabee, not like Solomon, who had 40,000 horses and chariots, not like that. He comes gentle and riding on the donkey. What did Paul tell us in Philippians 2:8? Paul said that He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. This King wasn't coming to conquer Rome. This King was coming to conquer death and Hell and the grave. This King came to die. Remember what He said to Mary and what He said to Judas when Judas says Mary shouldn't have poured that perfume on Jesus feet. Jesus said, "she is preparing for my death." He's letting them know what this King is about. Brothers and sisters, as we think about our King, as we think about who our King is and what His kingdom stands for, we must always keep the cross of Christ central in our hearts. Jesus is not a politician, or a pundit or a talking head. Jesus is the Savior king. Jesus is the Savior King who has secured His kingdom by defeating evil at the Cross. And to join the Kingdom of God, to join the family of God, you must come through the cross. It's the Gospel.

Let me pause here; walk with me through the Gospel. We believe in a God who is a holy creator. You can read it in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. God, who created everything we see. All of this beautiful creation, God created it all. We believe He not only created all we see, but that He created mankind, Adam and Eve, in His image. He brought them together in a beautiful garden called Paradise, The Garden of Eden. The man and the woman were in beautiful fellowship with one another and with God. But Adam and Eve sin and it

breaks the fellowship with God. But it doesn't only do that. They are cursed and condemned because now they have rebelled against God and are thrown outside the garden. And God not only curses them, God curses the very ground they walk on so that creation groans. Creation is under a curse, all of it. It's why tires go flat and things rust and buildings fall and tornadoes wipe people out and people die because we live in a fallen creation. God is not only a creator and a God who judges sin. He is a loving, kind God, a God who wants to see good. Through God and His goodness, at the appointed time, He sent Jesus to defeat the Prince of Darkness. He sent Jesus to the earth as a man. He had to be a human because He had to live in a way that we should have. He had the perfect fellowship with God that Adam and Eve had in the garden but lost because of sin. Jesus never sinned. He kept all the laws of God, all the fellowship with God. He did that as a man on our behalf and He does that perfectly. And at the end of His perfect life, it's where we're picking up the story here, Palm Sunday, He walks to Jerusalem. He goes there to be nailed to a cross. It was a Roman instrument of torture and death. He receives the punishment of God that you and I deserve. That's what He's doing. He is going there to die. And the text tells us that Jesus will die in the place of sinners. And the way into His kingdom is to trust that Jesus did that for you. Turn from your sin and trust Jesus.

In fact, in verse 16, John gives us an editorial comment. Verse 16 is John looking back at the event and saying we know a lot more now than we knew then. He uses the word "glorification." Let me show it to you in verse 16. ¹⁶ *His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.* John gives this editorial comment and he uses the word "glorification." What does that word mean, that Jesus had been glorified? You go back to this week right here in the text, the passion week that started on this Monday, which we call Palm Sunday. Jesus will go there to Jerusalem and on the night He is betrayed, he'll be in the garden called Gethsemane. There He will plead with the Father to "take this cup from me. Yet not my will but yours." In the garden, He is betrayed by His closest

associates. They all run away. Jesus is taken there and put before Pilate. He is put on trial. Part of His trial is the terrible scourging. They will drag His bleeding body to the cross and there nail Him to the cross at the crucifixion between two thieves. Jesus will breathe His last and say, "It is finished." They'll take Him down from the cross and put Him in a tomb on a Saturday. It's a Sabbath. God will, miraculously, gloriously raise Him from the dead on Sunday. It's Easter Sunday. He will then ascend into Heaven. And here in verse 16, John is telling us this is why the humble King came. And the fact that He is glorified reminds me and you that our King is alive. And as long as this King is alive, His kingdom will come. He's an unstoppable King. He is a humble King. I'll give you one last thing in verses 17,18 and 19.

He is a dividing King

Jesus divides. In verse 17-19, you find two groups. One group that is following and bearing witness and the other that wants to stop the movement. The crowd that had been with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, they continued to bear witness. They gave testimony. They talked about Jesus. The reason why the crowd went to meet Him was they heard that He had done this thing. There is a crowd that still follows Jesus. But there's another crowd in verse 19. It's the Pharisees who are saying "you better do something. You've got to stop this Jesus" He was a terribly divisive figure. It turns out brothers and sisters, Jesus rightly understood that he is a terribly divisive figure.

The beautiful thing about Jesus is that He will receive anyone who will come to Him. Jesus will receive all. Jesus will welcome all who will come and submit to His lordship. I'm a pastor at Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C., in the year 2023. God has given us here at this church a joyful, diverse church. There is in Heaven a group of Saints who have gone on before us who are joyful and diverse. God has welcomed us through faith in Jesus. This little outpost of the kingdom is in a foreign land. We'll always be surrounded by a crowd that rejects Jesus as King and seeks His downfall. But in our day, it's

good to remember what Jesus said to Peter in the book of Matthew. Jesus said, "I will build my church and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it."

After the week we've had it's good to think of our King going in in triumphal entry. It's good to think of Jesus going to Jerusalem. Jesus will go to Jerusalem. There He will be betrayed for our betrayal. There, Jesus will suffer for our suffering. There Jesus will be crucified for our sins and we receive forgiveness. There He will die to take the sting out of our death. There on Saturday, they put Him in a tomb where He will keep the Sabbath. And then, there on Sunday, He'll be raised for our joy. He'll be glorified for our reconciliation. He will ascend for our intercession. And as long as the King lives, brothers and sisters, His kingdom will come. I want you today to find your place in the Kingdom of God. I want you to take great security in the Kingdom of God. I want you to take great joy that you are a daughter or a son of the King.

(Pastor prays)