

Palm Sunday: John 12:12-19

By
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Today is Palm Sunday. This is the day that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey as the crowd waved palm tree branches and cried out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"

In John 6, when the crowd tried to make Jesus their king by force, he quietly slipped away. This time, however, he accepts their shouts of praise and embraces their claims that he is the Messianic King of Israel.

In fact, this is why Jesus rode on a donkey into Jerusalem. Zechariah had prophesied centuries before that the Messianic king would enter into the city of David sitting on a donkey's colt. The other Gospels tell us that Jesus had made specific preparations so that he would have a donkey to ride on. He didn't, of course, need to ride a donkey. He was healthy. He easily could have made the trip on foot. He rode on a donkey in fulfillment of the Scriptures. He rode on a donkey to say that he is the King of Israel.

What would the King of Israel do? The crowd thought that he would save them from Roman oppression and make the nation of Israel great again. Zechariah, however, said that he would come and bring salvation and peace to Israel and indeed to the entire world. As the true king, that is exactly what Jesus came to do.

In order to give us true and eternal peace, Jesus would have to deliver us from sin and Satan. All forms of temporal suffering (including COVID-19), evil, and death (physical and eternal) are a result of our sin and Satan, the ruler of this world. There can be no true salvation or peace as long as Satan and sin have the upper hand. Thus, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem, he was riding into battle to cast out Satan and once and for all put away sin. How did he do that? He did it by his death and resurrection. The cross, as Samuel Rutherford once said, is Christ's triumphing chariot.

Knowing that Christ has gained the victory over sin and Satan makes all the difference in these uncertain and trying days. Regardless of what happens, we who are in Christ will be victorious. As Jesus said in John 11, though we die, yet shall we live. Or as Paul said in Rom. 8:

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."