



Here comes your King!

John 12:12-19

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Passover. The greatest feast on the Jewish calendar. A massive crowd flocking to the Temple in Jerusalem, from everywhere in the world where Jews were living. Coming to remember. Coming to celebrate. Remembering God's mighty hand, delivering Israel centuries earlier from slavery in Egypt. God delivering through the blood of the lamb. Remembering, and celebrating God their Rescuer.

And they're looking for God to deliver them once again. This time, from their present day occupier, Rome. God had made them a Promise of a Messiah. A Savior. A King. Year after year drew closer to His coming. This year expectations are at an all-time high, as many had heard of One who made them think the impossible, that he might be the One!

Reports were circulating of him healing the sick. Opening the eyes of the blind. Casting out demons. Teaching, like nothing they'd ever heard before. And now, to top it all off, comes an amazing report from nearby Bethany, where Jesus commanded a corpse to arise from the grave. This was beyond their wildest dreams! Could this finally, be the year!

Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume. She poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. Some only saw it as a waste of money. But Jesus said, "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me." Anointment for Jesus's burial, while He's still alive, but not for much longer. Anointing a King. The real King.

A large crowd gathers, not just for the annual feast, but also to see Jesus, and Lazarus, too. To see the one who had been raised from the dead. An amazing SIGN pointing to Jesus' true identity. *So the chief priests make plans to put Lazarus to death as well, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.*

The large crowd that had come to the feast hears that Jesus is coming to Jerusalem. So, recalling and reenacting Psalm 118, what do they do? They take palm branches and go out to meet Him, crying out, "*Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!*" And Jesus finds a young donkey and sits on it, just as it is written (Zechariah 9:9), "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!"

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.*

I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double. For I have bent Judah as my bow; I have made Ephraim its arrow. I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and wield you like a warrior's sword.

Then the Lord will appear over them, and his arrow will go forth like lightning; the Lord God will sound the trumpet and will march forth in the whirlwinds of the south. ... On that day the Lord their God will save them, as the flock of his people; for like the jewels of a crown they shall shine on his land."

All of this was pointing to Jesus. And you wonder why, after performing a miracle, Jesus often said what? "Shhh. Keep quiet. Don't tell anyone. My time has not yet come!" But imagine the expectations on this day! What else could they conclude about the kind of king Jesus was to be?

"Shhh. Keep quiet. Don't tell anyone." Not today. Today it doesn't matter. Let everybody know about Lazarus being raised from the dead. Let everybody know what Jesus has done and who He is. *My time has come.* It

doesn't matter what kind of king the people *think* Jesus is. They'll find out soon enough. *My time has come. It's time for me to go to the cross and die for my subjects.*

At the banquet in Bethany, put on in honor of Jesus, Mary has already anointed His body for burial. The King who trades places with you. The King who gives His life, that even though you die, you shall live.

And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. ... Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." Made fit to meet a holy God.

... "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. ... While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light."

"My time has come." And how it came! All the signs point to Jesus as the Anointed One, the Messiah, the One who was to come. The One they'd been waiting for all their lives. The One all the Scriptures had been pointing to. And so, in their excitement, they're waving palm branches and crying out "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"

And Jesus is riding atop a young donkey, just as the Scriptures had anticipated would happen when the True King would come riding into His capital city one day! Today, was that day. Unbelievable!

His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified [crucifixion, resurrection, ascension], then they remembered that these things [from Psalm 118, Zechariah 9] had been written about him and had been done to him.

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. [They believed and witnessed to what they had heard and seen]. The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign.

Remember the sign from one chapter earlier, John 11? *Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany. So his sisters send for Jesus, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill."* Jesus loves Lazarus and Mary and Martha, so what does He do? He comes right away and heals Lazarus, right? Jesus loves them. What else is He going to do? Not come?

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Jesus stays. He doesn't go to them. He doesn't heal Lazarus. Why? Why would He do that to them? Why does He do that to us? Jesus loves them, so He doesn't come. He doesn't heal. And in His delay, Lazarus dies. And Jesus doesn't show up until Lazarus has been dead for four days. Jesus loves Mary and Martha, yet He stays away from them in the hour of their greatest need.

Jesus says to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. ... And Jesus ... cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." ... Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

Why must Lazarus suffer? Why must death lay hold of him? Why must these sisters experience such heartbreak? Why must we? Jesus does all of this - Jesus stays away and allows all the mourning and the tears and the pain and the misunderstanding - so that they might BELIEVE IN HIM. That *you* might believe in Him. *Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him.*

If Jesus would have come to Lazarus right away, while he was still alive, what would have happened? People would have said what? Jesus healed Lazarus. Or Lazarus got better on his own - Jesus had nothing to do with it. And no glory would have come to Jesus. No belief that He has the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

But when Lazarus dies, *now* what are you going to do? When there's a chance that Lazarus could have gotten better on his own, Jesus stays away. How long? Until Lazarus is dead and nothing else can be done. Until all hope is gone. Then, when all hope is gone, Jesus shows up. Then the question is no longer "What can be done?", but "Do you believe?"

And that question from the tomb of Lazarus outside Bethany continues to be the question to be answered by those gathered in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Much of the excitement that first Palm Sunday is directly related to Jesus staying where He was and letting Lazarus die. As Jesus Himself said, "*Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe.*"

And that's what happened. Not just for those who were there the day Lazarus came forth from the tomb, but for those also who had later heard what had happened. *When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.*

So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him ..." So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.

"The wine has run out. Jesus do something. Show yourself. Show them what you can do. Reveal yourself." And Jesus says to his Mother, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." (John 2:4)

Then they tried to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him, because his hour had not yet come. (John 7:30)

He spoke these words while he was teaching in the treasury of the temple, but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come. (John 8:20)

We await this *hour* throughout the Gospel of John. Everyone thought that Jesus' hour would be an hour of grandeur, His final four championship victory, when He would at last throw off his humble humanity and begin to act like a real Messiah, the Anointed King everyone expected Him to be. But no, His hour won't be the triumphal march into Jerusalem, where he seizes power, takes over the government, and kicks out the Romans.

Rather, when Jesus speaks of His hour of glory, He's got something else in mind. As Moses had lifted up a bronze serpent in the wilderness, so must Jesus, the Son of man, be lifted up for the life of the world, for *your* life. (Cwirla)

Hosanna! It means "save us, Lord." It's what you shouted to the King as he rode through the city. Hosanna! Save us! And He did just that.

(Phil 2:5-11) *He made Himself nothing.* The Son of God. The Creator of the universe. The One who holds all things in His hands. The One who keeps the stars in place and the planets in their orbits and takes care of worlds we don't even know are out there. The One who knows when a sparrow falls to the ground, and how many hairs are on your head. The One who knit you together in your mother's womb. *The only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God.*

The King of kings and Lord of lords, *made Himself nothing.* Taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Jesus *made Himself nothing.* He emptied Himself. The King is a Servant. The Suffering Servant. The One subject to none, makes Himself subject to all. He not only makes Himself nothing, He makes Himself less than nothing. Taking upon Himself *your* sin and the sin of the world, He was the greatest sinner who ever lived. Whoever you usually think has that title, the most evil person you can think of, you're wrong - it's Jesus.

He's the worst idolater, the worst hater, the worst murderer, the worst adulterer, the worst thief, the worst liar, the worst everything ... because He's taken all your sin, and all my sin, and all the sin of all the people who've ever lived and will ever live, on Himself. (from James Douthwaite)

The King of kings *made Himself nothing* - for you. That's what this day, and all this week, is all about. Jesus rides into Jerusalem that day to save. The King as Servant. *Your* King. *Your* servant. *Who for the joy set before Him, [the joy of saving you] endured the cross.*

"The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone [the chief stone, the foundation of eternal life]: the LORD has done this; and it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. ... Blessed is [the King] who comes in the name of the LORD.

His hour had come. *And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.*

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, [is King] to the glory of God the Father.

And the palm branches and the welcoming committee that day, are but a taste of what's to come, as we see in the book of Revelation, a great crowd standing before the throne of God, and in front of Christ the Lamb, wearing white robes, cleansed in the blood of the Lamb, waving palm branches, singing, "*Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.*" (Rev 7:10)