Jesus’ Triumphal Entry

John 12:12-19

Key Verse:12:13 “They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, “Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Blessed is the king of Israel!”

In the movie “*Rome*”, Julius Caesar enters into the city of Rome after conquering his enemies in BC 46. His triumphal speech in front of the Senate was very popular, “*veni, vidi, vici,*” which means, “I came, I saw, I conquered.” People called this Caesar’s triumphal entry. In the movie what he did first as a conqueror was to kill his political opponents. Caesar wanted to plant fear into the hearts of his people so that no one would resist him. After killing his opponents, he released many doves into the crowd, showing them that he came to bring peace to the world. Napoleon Bonaparte admired Julius Caesar. He wanted to replicate Caesar’s glory and splendor. So he built the Triumphal Arch (*Arc de Triomphe*) in the center of Paris. But after he died, only his remains passed under the arch. When Adolf Hitler entered Paris in June 23rd 1940 right after the armistice with France, he visited the tomb of Napoleon first. Later he said that it was one of the greatest and impressive moments in his life. As you know, Hitler didn’t bring peace and freedom to the French, but fear, sorrow, and death to them during World War II.

In today’s passage Jesus enters into Jerusalem. Jesus’ entry was completely different from the entry of Caesar, Napoleon, and Hitler. Today we’ll study why people call Jesus’ entry the ‘triumphal entry’ and what the purpose of his entry into Jerusalem was. Above all we will study the kingship of Jesus, who enters by riding on a donkey.

First, Hosanna (12-13) Look at verse 12. ***“The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem***.” It was Sunday, one day after Jesus had been anointed by a woman at Bethany. Jesus and his companions were heading to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. The great crowd who came from all over the world was also heading to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. According to Josephus the historian, at that time there were around 3 million Diaspora who gathered in Jerusalem for the festivals. When they heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, they were so excited. Some thought that they were lucky to be seeing the famous Jesus with their own eyes. They heard about Jesus from word of mouth. They were curious to see Jesus, who opened the eyes of the blind, healed the sick, and raised the dead. Many of them thought that God answered their prayer for a Messiah, who would come to save them. So they welcomed Jesus passionately.

Look at verse 13. “***They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, ‘Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Blessed is the king of Israel.***” There was no special reason for the crowd to wave palm branches, but it was the expression of their welcoming and praise for their king. These day people wave their national flags when they welcome their president or king. In the other synoptic gospels, the crowd spread their cloaks on the road. ( Mt 21:8, Mk 11:7, Lk 19:36) This was also the expression of their welcoming and loyalty for their king, as these days people spread red carpets out for their president or king. The crowd shouted, “*Hosanna*! when they welcomed Jesus. “*Hosanna*” means “Save us now.” The Israelites usually shouted hosanna at the temple each morning during their festivals. It was their expression of praise to the Lord. They shouted hosanna in expectation of God’s salvation. They shouted hosanna for God’s deliverance from foreign occupation, especially from Rome. They shouted for God’s salvation from their present sufferings and pains. On top of these, they shouted hosanna for God’s redemption from the agony of their sins and death.

This morning we should shout together, “Hosanna!” We shout for God’s immediate salvation. We need God’s salvation not only for tomorrow, but for today right now. We must shout hosanna until we have assurance of God’ answer for our prayers. Some may need God’s intervention in solving their visa status. We must shout “hosanna” together. Others may need God’s power to deliver our children from the hand of our enemies. We must shout “Hosanna!” Still, others may ask for God’s wisdom to overcome this sinful world. We must shout in a loud voice, “Hosanna!”

The crowd continued to shout, “***Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord***!” “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” are quotations from Psalm 118:25,26. These words are some of the Songs of Degrees customarily sung by Passover pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. They expected the appearance of the Messiah who could save them and deliver them from the hand of their enemies. They continued, “***Blessed is the king of Israel***!” The king of Israel is a messianic title like The Son of Man. The Jews believed that the Messiah would come as the son of David, who was the king of Israel. Now the king was coming to Jerusalem in order to save his people, to fulfill God’s prophecy, and to establish his kingdom.

We are waiting people. Some are waiting for an answer from their workplace, school, or government office. Others are waiting for the day of release, the day of retirement. But we are all waiting people for Jesus’ second coming. Even though we receive answers to our prayers, still we wait for something else. The terms of our waiting are endless. But the end will come when Jesus comes again as he went into heaven. That day we will all shout like the crowd, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of kings and the Lord of lords.” This is the day of Jesus’ glory, and this is the hour of our victory. We are all waiting for this moment as Jesus comes again riding on the cloud with great power and glory. We are waiting for the ISBC which will be held in Louisville Kentucky on August. We are waiting for God’s salvation for those who are suffering. We are waiting for God’s vision for this glorious moment. We will see our children prophesy, our young men see visions, and our old men dream dreams when the Spirit of the Lord comes upon us. Let us pray that Jesus may come into our hearts as King and Savior. Let us pray that we all may see the vision of God’s kingdom by the work of the Holy Spirit through this conference. Amen.

Second, the King riding on a donkey (14,15) A few weeks ago President Trump and North Korea leader Kim Jung Un met in Singapore for a peace talk. At that time both leaders took heavily protected limousines followed by entourages and officials. In ancient days when Caesar entered Rome, he rode a golden chariot which was driven by four white horses. Horses are the symbol of war. But when Jesus entered into Jerusalem, he took a young donkey. A young donkey is the symbol of peace. The donkey itself is not the symbol of peace, but Jesus who entered into Jerusalem riding on a donkey is the symbol of peace. Jesus came to end the war between men and his enemy Satan. He came into Jerusalem to fulfill God’s will for world salvation through his death and resurrection.

Look at verses 14,15. ***“Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: “Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.”*** In the picture of Jesus who entered by riding on a donkey we learn what kind of king Jesus is. He is the king of peace. The worldly kings brought fear, horror, anxiety, strife, war, and death to their people when they entered their cities. But Jesus brought peace, especially peace of mind, which comes from the forgiveness of sin. Since Adam’s fall, men became objects of God’s wrath and grief because of their sin. But Jesus would bring peace between God and sinners through his reconciling death on the cross. As Paul said in Romans 5:1, we have peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Isaiah prophesied about Jesus, who is Prince of Peace. (Is 9:6) When he was born in a manger, the angels sang, “*Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests*.” (Lk 2:14) We have peace with God when our sins are forgiven. We have peace with God when we forgive other’s sin. We have peace with God when we have Jesus in our hearts and serve him as our King.

Next, Jesus is the king of humility. A young donkey in the Middle East is the same size as a big dog. Jesus’ feet might have touched the ground when he rode on the donkey. Because he sat on a small donkey, all could see him and touch him. Jesus did not sit on the high seat of a golden chariot. Rather, he lowered himself in order to be with his people. People are proud and arrogant. We are not happy when others consider themselves better us. No one wants to humble himself and say first, “I am sorry.” But Jesus was different. He humbled himself so that all might see him, touch him and be saved. Jesus said in Matthew 11:29,30, *“…learn from me, for I am gentle and humble*.”

Above all, Jesus is the Savior King. He is the king of salvation. In Matthew’s gospel 12:29, Jesus explained how he could save his people from his enemies. “*Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can plunder his house.*” Jesus taught this story to the Pharisees right after he had delivered a demon-possessed man. In this story Jesus compared himself a savior who was stronger than the man in the house. Jesus is much stronger than Satan who holds God’s children as hostage. Jesus has a mighty hand and rescues his people from the hand of our enemy Satan. Amen.

We, children of God, must believe the power of the Holy Spirit in our spiritual battle. Before he went up to heaven, Jesus promised power to his disciples through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We’ll receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on us. These days the Holy Spirit works in us and for us in the place of Jesus. Jesus died for our sins on the cross and rose again from the dead. Jesus already gave us victory through these two events. War is over but battle is going on. We’ll win our daily battle when the Holy Spirit comes on us and empowers us. Amen.

Third, the fulfillment of the Scripture (16-19) Someone joked about Jesus’ disciples in this: They are slow to understand, quick to eat, and brilliant to make excuses. Verse 16 says that **at first his disciples did not understand all this**. They did not understand why Jesus rode on a donkey instead of white horses. They did not understand the meaning of the crowd’s shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about Jesus and that these things had been done to him. (16) Jesus did all these in order to fulfill the Scripture. Jesus did not ignore even one word of prophecy about him in the Old Testament. Some Bible scholars said that there are 353 prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament. Others said about 400. Jesus fulfilled all these prophecies so that he might glorify the Father God through his complete obedience.

We often feel powerless in our spiritual battle. Our Christian life seems to be dry and unhappy. Do you know why? When we don’t eat and miss several meals, we become powerless. We lose the desire to work. In the same way when we do not eat spiritual food, the word of God, we become powerless and lose spiritual desire. Even though we read the Bible, if we do not obey his word, our Christian life becomes boring and tasteless. Spiritual revival comes when we struggle with the word of God. When we struggle to obey the word of God, our spirit revives. Remember how Abraham struggled to obey the word of God when he was in the land of the Chaldeans and when he was at Mount Moriah. (Ge 12:1-2, 22:1-2) Remember Jesus who fulfilled the promises of God in the Scripture. In fact, our UBF ministry was established and has been expanded by those who have struggled to obey Jesus’ world mission command, which is Matthew 28:19,20. When we work hard and pray hard to obey Jesus’ command, our spirit is alive and our ministry thrives. John, the author of this book, continued to testify to how Jesus struggled to fulfill the prophecies of God even on the cross. Let us repent of our pride and obey Jesus’ command. Let us pray that our life may fulfill God’s will through our obedience in this generation. Amen.

Look at verses 17-19. “***Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. So the Pharisees said to one another, “See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!***” No matter how Satan tried to block the work of God, God will continue to work for our salvation. The Pharisees tried to stop the work of Jesus by threatening him and arresting him. But God sent more than 3 millions of Diaspora at that time so that they might hear and see Jesus and spread the good news of Jesus Christ to every corner of the world. Imagine the news of Jesus being spread through 3 million people in Jesus’ days. What the Pharisees had worried about Jesus came true: The whole world has gone after him.

Let us welcome Jesus into our heart as our King. Let us learn from him his humility, gentleness, and obedience. Let us shout every morning as the Jews did at the temple, “Hosanna! Save us now. Give us success today.” Blessed are those who experience his deliverance. Blessed are those who receive power and wisdom to overcome the world. Blessed are those who wait patiently for Jesus’ second coming and work hard for his kingdom even today. Amen.