

March 16, 2008 – Palm Sunday - Matthew 21:1-11

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[The sermon was proclaimed in Korean and projected in English at a combined service with Knox Presbyterian Church, Victoria]

Shout to the Lord!

The coming of Jesus into Jerusalem was to dismiss the old order of the past and to declare the beginning of a new testament. However, unlike the leading warriors riding on their beautiful horses, when Jesus entered Jerusalem, he came on a colt that was borrowed from someone else. And when Jesus came, he was warmly greeted by the crowds in Jerusalem.

What we have to know is that this was not the first time Jesus came to Jerusalem. In fact, he came every season. And each time he came, he was neither on a donkey nor was he welcomed by a crowd of people. However, when Jesus was on his way to be crucified on the cross, he was different than his usual self. When Jesus came to Jerusalem he was greeted by a crowd of people waiting for him. This behaviour is different from how he normally enters Jerusalem.

First of all, Jesus came to Jerusalem riding on a young donkey (colt). Let us look at Matthew 21:1-2, “As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me.”

A donkey is a small yet very strong animal. When an adult rides on a colt, usually the feet will drag on the ground. That is why there is no special meaning in riding on a colt. If we look at chapter 21 of Matthew, Jesus rode on a colt even when there was a full grown donkey. When a colt leaves its mother, it will not move. That was why Jesus brought the mother donkey along with him when he rode on the colt.

Jesus definitely had a special intention when he decided to ride on a colt instead of the mother donkey. This was the accomplishment of the Old Testament. Now let us look at Zechariah 9:9. “Rejoice greatly, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey—even on a donkey’s colt.”

When Jesus was born, the Pharisees and the teachers of the religious law knew that there was a Messiah going to be born in Bethlehem. This was because the prophet Micah had prophesied that a shepherd of Israel would be born in Bethlehem. And Jesus coming to Jerusalem riding on a colt was the fulfillment of Micah’s prophecy. When Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, he wanted everyone to know who he was and that was why he went up to Jerusalem riding on a colt.

Whoever believed in the word of God knew that the “foolish” person who rode on a colt was the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Normally, no adult will ride on a colt because it is not very strong due to its young age, and it is also not much of a help to the rider. How can one ride a colt when the feet will drag on the ground? That is why who ever rides on a colt must either be a crazy person or the Messiah himself.

That was why for Jesus to enter Jerusalem on a colt was a test for the Jews. If the Jews believed in the Bible, it was a sign for them to come and bow down to the Messiah. Then Jesus will dismiss the old order of the past and build a whole new world and beginning for these people. However, if they reject the Messiah, they will have to face the judgement of the Lord.

Secondly, during the process of Jesus bringing along a donkey, he showed us a great understanding. Even without looking at the village, Jesus knew that there was a colt that no one had ridden on. This shows that Jesus had almighty powers. Without looking at a place, Jesus was able to tell what was in that area, and sent his disciples to the exact spot. And this was a great help and strength to the disciples in the future when doing the works of God. When Jesus sent his disciples out, he already had everything planned ahead. That is why we do not have to worry about creating something from nothing. All we have to do is to receive and bring what the Lord had prepared for us.

Matthew 21:3 explains how Jesus tells his disciples to answer if anyone asks why their master wants to have the colt released. "If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."

Then the owner of the colt approached the disciples when they were releasing the animal. He asks why they were releasing the colt that does not belong to them, and they simply answered, "The Lord needs it." The disciples did not give a long explanation of their actions, all they said was, "The Lord needs it," and the owner released the colt and the mother donkey to the disciples as though he understood what they have said. This shows that the owner of the donkey understood and knew "the Lord" that the disciples were implying, and the owner did not feel that it was of any waste to allow the Lord to use his donkey.

This compassion of the owner was exactly like that of Mary's when she poured fragrant oil on the feet of Jesus Christ. There are many people who give freely to Jesus, and these people are the ones that created the Bible and helped Jesus on his way to the cross.

Jesus can easily take away what we have and own. He can take away our wealth, our qualifications, and our health. He can also take away our lives. Even so, giving our best and all to Jesus is not a waste. Even if we had given it to him without knowing the meaning of giving, this will become like an imperishable treasure.

Thirdly, Jesus showed us that he was a humble king when he came on a colt. A king who rides on a colt is not violent. This is because he cannot go to war riding on a colt. Furthermore, no one had to worry about reaching out to the Lord as he was not seated on a throne. Whoever was near to Jesus could touch and look at his face.

In fact, he became popular among the little children when he came to Jerusalem riding on a colt. To ride on a colt, was like a king riding on a child's tricycle. The children loved Jesus and started praising him. Jesus did not attack anyone on this earth. He spread the gospel with a humble heart. If we accept the gospel, we will have everlasting life, but we will perish if we reject it.

When Jesus came to Jerusalem, he was warmly greeted by an enthusiastic crowd which was unusual. Verse 7-8 says, "They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road."

Usually, a king rides on a horse with a beautifully decorated horse saddle and parades on a red carpet. However, followers of Jesus neither had a horse saddle nor a red carpet to parade on. The followers took off their outerwear and covered the back of the colt and the ground that Jesus was passing by. This was the best they could do out of decency to give respect to Jesus. And Jesus accepted their respect as a sign of receiving him as the king.

Let us look at Matthew 21:9. "The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest!""

Usually, Jesus was not greeted by the crowds, and he always wanted the glory to be turned to our Father God. However, when he came to Jerusalem, he was greeted with a warm welcome. When the Pharisees told the disciples to stop the crowds from cheering and shouting, Jesus said at Luke 19:40, "If they kept quiet, the stones along the road would burst into cheers!" He said that it was right for the crowds to cheer and shout for joy.

This shows that Jesus was getting ready for the cross. Through the cross of Jesus, the devil had lost its power and started to flee. And people living in bondage were released and freed from their sins and they were able to start a whole new life with strength. This was the reason why the crowd should cheer and shout for joy.

Since Jesus had decided to die for us on the cross, whoever believes in him will definitely receive salvation. This is also the reason why when he entered Jerusalem, he wanted the crowds to shout and cheer with joy before he was crucified. Those who welcomed Jesus might not have seen the cross, but they believed that he was the only son of our Lord God. That is why the people in Jerusalem shouted with praise, "Bless the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in highest heaven!"

Jesus came to this earth in the name of our mighty Lord God. He came to Jerusalem as a Lion of God. He came to bring peace between Father God and the people on earth. This was a way to solve the many problems on earth. And those who have found peace in the Lord our God, let us give unto him all the glory.

Why did Jesus say the stones will cheer when the people on earth kept quiet? This was because the stones were agitated. Even the stones knew the son of God has come to this earth, but humans did not recognize his coming. Everything on earth is pouring out their woes because they are frustrated with the humans' reaction.

No one can stop anyone from praising the Lord our King. If anyone stops this, the stones will shout. Peace is not found in the eyes of other people. Peace is where our strength is in praising and lifting the name of our Lord. Giving praise is receiving the salvation of the Lord, and it will also defeat the power of the devil.

Not too long ago, there was a new president elected in South Korea. Many Koreans shouted and cried with joy. Now, there is an ongoing election campaign in the US for a new president. When we see the supporters of the presidential candidates passionately holding pickets and yelling with words of support for them, we should ask ourselves if we have had such a passion when Jesus came to this earth as our King.

Jesus is higher than any other kings or presidents of the earth, and this week we should praise the Lord Jesus who gave us peace that the world could not give. Jesus is our King and our Saviour. Let us raise our voices and praise the name of the Lord our God.

Let us praise and shout for joy to the Lord. Just like the people who gave praise to the Lord in Jerusalem, let us all praise him and shout for joy. Let's raise our hands and praise him. I will say in Korean, then in English - please repeat after me... JESUS IS OUR SAVIOUR, OUR LORD, AND OUR KING. AMEN!