

INTRO:

Welcome!...And Happy Palm Sunday. Palm Sunday of course means 2 Things: **One**, it means we are only a week out from Easter. WHICH I draw your attention to BECAUSE Easter really is one of the few times when many of us/regardless of what we believe about Jesus, are often willing to consider the claims OF Jesus. And as a church family, **that's what we're all about right?** *"Sharing the Freedom & Family of Christ!"* Sharing the Claims and Good News of Jesus that bring true freedom. And doing it by inviting others into family...And so I don't usually do things like this, BUT I do wanna ask you to consider making a small, but EXCEEDINGLY important sacrifice this Easter: Which is...be here/ne here and invite someone to be here with you. Cuz I know, in our neighborhood, Easter is often a time of leaving to be with extended family. And so that's the sacrifice. I'm asking you to, perhaps, forgo that for just a week and INSTEAD prioritize inviting a friend/neighbor to be here with you/maybe even inviting your family to come TO you rather than you going to them. And again, I know that might be a sacrifice, but I really believe, it's those KINDS of sacrifices that the Lord honors AND just might change the eternity OF that friend or neighbor you love, as they get to hear all about our resurrected King. **So will you consider making that sacrifice?** That's the first thing. The **Second** thing Palm Sunday obviously means: is that the King has entered the building! Ever since, as we'll read in a second, Jesus rode into Jerusalem, under the banner of celebration, over 2000 years ago, Christ-followers have been celebrating Palm Sunday. Which is cool **right?** To, this morning, be a part of 2000-year-old global tradition. That's cool! BUT here's why, it's also incredibly relevant: BECAUSE...you love kings. We ALL love kings! Now, in our cultural context we don't usually use the word "king." Rather, we use the word "celebrity." Cuz celebrities are our modern-day kings and queens **right?** They exert influence and seemingly guide culture, and we LOVE celebrities! I learned this week that more than 48,000 jury trials occur every year in the US/or 192 per weekday. The only one that's ever been live streamed is Gwyneth Paltrow's ski accident trial that concluded this week.¹ Which just points to how much we love celebrities and even more LOVE being in the presence of celebrities. I'll tell ya, my claim to fame - I've been pastoring for 15+ years now, taught in settings of a few people to thousands; traveled internationally to teach; had the privilege of leading people to Christ/helping people grow in Christ/my ABSOLUTE claim to fame, is that: one time, someone took a picture of Tom Brady, and I was kinda in that picture. Yup! To be clear, more like behind the guy, who was behind the girl, who was holding the baby, but it was totally me...IN the presence of Football's King! We LOVE kings!

As we continue our series through **John** today, we've come to the famous Palm Sunday passage ABOUT King Jesus' arrival. And IN this passage, what John's gonna show you is that as the most transcendent celebrity and King to ever live, Jesus Christ, was also the most humble. A King who, as Jonathan Edwards said, is more glorious than any other, because He's *"an admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies."* And AS such, the ONLY King/ONLY celebrity, who if you respond to Him accordingly, brings you all manner of blessedness by dealing with

¹ https://www.denisonforum.org/daily-article/gwyneth-paltrow-trial-celebrity-worship-syndrome/?utm_source=feedly&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=gwyneth-paltrow-trial-celebrity-worship-syndrome

your deepest pathologies...SO let's take a look at King Jesus and how we can respond to Him.
Would you stand with me for the reading of God's Word?...

TEXT:²

So recall, we're approaching Passover and therefore getting close to Jesus's crucifixion, which MEANS the air AROUND Jesus is getting increasingly intense. Ya see in **vv.12,18** there, that only a day before, Lazarus had been raised from the dead, which is now causing people to flock to Jesus AND subsequently infuriating the Jewish leaders who've responded by issuing a "hit" list to have both Jesus AND Lazarus disposed of. ALL of this is happening while swarms of people are beginning to descend on Jerusalem in anticipation OF Passover. The 1st-century Jewish Historian Josephus once gave an attendance figure for a Passover 30 years AFTER Jesus...of over 2.5 million.³ So it's not a stretch to say that atmosphere into which Jesus is going is both exciting and explosive...Cuz ya see, as He heads to Jerusalem, "*a large crowd, it says, came because they heard HE was coming.*" And hearing that He was coming, this large crowd then, you see, orchestrates a kind of welcome parade that really puts on display that "*admirable conjunction of excellencies*" that characterizes Jesus' kingship...Cuz on the one hand, you get really strong indications of Jesus' magnificence and majesty **right?** I mean He's clearly developed some incredible pull to attract HUGE crowds. And not just attract em, but really enthrall em. Cuz when it says that the crowd took "*palm branches*" and "*cried 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!'*" we're talking about a kind of celebrity worship here that would make a Taylor Swift concert feel like a used car lot. Cuz ever since the time of what's known as the Maccabees, when a man named Judas Maccabeus lead a small Jewish army to drive out the Greeks - palm branches had been a recognized symbol of Jewish, nationalistic fervor. Images of palms were even put on coinage to remind the people of the nation's political aspirations. So by waving palms for Jesus, this crowd is not just revering Him, they're ABSOLUTELY expecting Him to issue a call to arms that'll result in driving out the Romans. That's why they say, "*Hosanna!*" Hosanna literally means "*save us/give us salvation*"/even "*Lord, save him,*" like a Brit might say, "*God save the King!*" AND THEN, you see, they double down on it saying, "*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,*" which is a direct quote from **Psalm 118**, about God delivering Israel from Egypt. So again, they're not just celebrating Jesus, they're anticipating that He's gonna direct His magnificence and majesty toward freeing em from Roman rule. Something you see, the Jewish leaders are, not only worried about, but really overwhelmed by, since they say in **v.19**, "*We're gaining nothing.*"/"*losing everything, cuz the whole world is going after him.*" So on the one hand, you get REALLY strong indications of Jesus' magnificence and majesty.

But on the OTHER, you also get this really unparalleled sense of meekness and modesty too. One of the things I find fun to do is watch videos of how athletes arrive at their team's training

² Works consulted:

- 37 - A New Kind of Royalty - John 12:12-26 - R. Kent Hughes, *John: That You May Believe*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), 296-297.
- "Behold, Your King Is Coming" - Gospel of John, Part 1 - March 24, 1991 - John 12:12-19 + "The Lord's Supper" - Gospel of John, Part 1 - October 6, 1991 - John 13:18-30 - *Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (NYC: Redeemer Church, 2013)
- Bruce Milne, *The Message of John: Here Is Your King!: With Study Guide*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 180-83.

³ Bruce Milne, *The Message of John: Here Is Your King!: With Study Guide*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 180

facilities during the pre-season and such. Cuz of course, athletes, especially the really famous ones/really ALL celebrities, LOVE to make an entrance *right?* If you're a soccer fan, you'll know the name Cristiano Ronaldo. Ronaldo is famous for showing up to training in cars that, honestly, cost more than all of our houses and apartments combined. Cuz of course, that's what people of "magnificence and majesty" do! They walk red carpets, dress in Louis Vuitton, arrive in bespoke Bentleys, Bugatti's and Lamborghinis...BUT...you see, NOT Jesus. JESUS, who mind you has already turned water to wine, multiplied food for over 5000 people, walked on water, healed a paralytic, restored sight to the blind AND raised Lazarus from the dead - all of which I'd say is slightly more "magnificent" than playing a sport - HE rolls up, you see...on a colt. Literally a baby donkey. *Have you ever seen a baby donkey?* It's not the kind of animal you find in a setting like this. It's the kind of animal you find...at a petting zoo/a kid's birthday party/behind the bouncy house!...Jesus' entrance here is incredibly meek and modest. *Why?* Two Reasons: **One**, because He's trying to, as Bruce Milne says, "*deliberately de-militarize the people's vision*" of what the Savior is like. Show em that He isn't about revolution and political freedom, but an even deeper freedom of bringing people back into relationship with God, that can only come from His substitutionary death on the Cross. In other words, REAL triumph coming through HIS weakness. A lion becoming a lamb and putting HIS head on the chopping block where yours and mine deserved to go. Cuz as John Stott says, "*The essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man.*" Jesus' meekness is foreshadowing His ultimate mission...Which is WHY you see, John includes **v.15** there, which is a quote from **Zechariah 9**/this OT prophecy foretelling the coming Savior to be gentle and riding on a donkey, and who's rule would subsequently bring ULTIMATE peace!

So you put all this together and you see that as much as Jesus is a magnificent and majestic king, He's an equally a meek and modest one. Strong, but also lowly. Fierce and yet welcoming. Utterly courageous, but without a shred of self-importance. Again, this "*admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies*" that frankly, has never been seen in history. Cuz you understand, you don't get this kind of King from Eastern ideals or the Northern Sagas. And nor from Western heritage or Roman history. This isn't Shakespeare's Henry V, or King Arthur/Lancelot... And He's certainly not like our modern-day celebs, who while they might be intriguing to follow, can't really help you in the end. No! Jesus is the ONLY celebrity/ONLY King whose if responded to correctly, brings you a blessedness that deals with ALL your deepest pathologies. Cuz ya notice, there's really **3 Ways** this text shows us we can respond TO Jesus' kingliness. The first is: **The Way Of The Pharisees:** Cuz the Pharisees, you see in **v.19**, are hell-bent on *suppressing* Jesus *right?*, to the point that they're incredibly anxious at the prospect of losing power and control TO Jesus. So the Pharisees represent, what you might call, "**Anxious Authoritarians**" OR those of us, who have a really hard time being at ease BECAUSE ya always have to be in control. Ya can't stand the prospect that someone else might have a claim of authority OVER you. Cuz deep down your mantra is, "*Ima do me!*"...It's quite a bit dated now, but you remember the Broadway production of "Jesus Christ Superstar?" Famous rock opera written by Andrew Lloyd Webber and LOOSELY based on the Gospels' accounts of Jesus' Passion. In it there's this mocking song called "King Herod's Song" about Herod meeting Jesus. And it's sort of slapstick'y UNTIL at the very end, the tone shifts and Herod stops singing and

just starts shouting. **You remember what he shouts?** He yells, “*Get out, you King of the Jews! Get out of my life.*” And it’s arresting, because if you’re honest at all, you gotta say, that your heart/and mine OFTEN sings the EXACT same tune! That there’s this impulse in us that, like the Pharisees, snarls and wants to **suppress** any claim of authority over us.⁴...But you see, BECAUSE of that impulse, IRONICALLY, what happens is your life gets filled not with LESS anxiety, but, like the Pharisees, MORE! You THINK that in being the final authority of your life you’ll be able to limit anxiety. But IN FACT, when you don’t have anyone higher than you, there’s no one to pick YOU up when you inevitably fall. AND everyone outside of you is a threat TO you!...Or let me put it another way, “*the essence of sin,*” as Stott said earlier, “*is substituting yourself for God*”/asserting your kingship over His **right?**...**So you know what that means?** That means sin...is simply “*spiritual paranoia,*” as Tim Keller calls it. Cuz when Jesus comes to you and says, “*I’m King. And you’re created to trust and obey me;*” the sin in us/the “**anxious authoritarian**” in us says, “*No! Get away from me Jesus. I need space. Need to keep my options open. Need my freedom.*” It’s paranoia. So no wonder the more you assert control over your life, the less control you actually get it. The more you actually BECOME anxious... “*You see, we’re gaining nothing,*” the Pharisees said...**When you’re confronted with Jesus’ Kingship do you suppress it?/ARE you suppressing His rule over your life in any way today?**

Cuz that’s one way to respond. Here’s a **Second: The Way Of The Crowds:** Cuz you see in **vv.12-15**, the crowds are totally amped for Jesus **right?**...Only problem is, their celebration isn’t as genuine as it appears. Cuz this is the same crowd mind you, who in less than a week, won’t be shouting “*Hosanna*”, but “*crucify Him!*” In less than a week, this exact crowd is gonna totally flip on Jesus and go from celebration to condemnation. Cuz here’s the thing: If the Pharisees are “**Anxious Authoritarians,**” the crowd is full of “**Fickle Fans**”; people who never really entered into relationship with Jesus; just orbited AROUND Jesus...In other words, those of us who, maybe you grew up in church or around religion/Jesus taking center stage at Christmas and Easter, baptisms, confirmations, 1st communions BUT Jesus doesn’t really impact your daily life. He’s an attraction or maybe an aid in times of need, but not your King/not someone you’re subject to and serve, but rather someone you attempt to SUBJECT to your wishes and desires. Cuz that was this crowd! They loved Jesus...when they thought He doing what they wanted and bringing political freedom. But when He didn’t/when Jesus doesn’t answer that prayer like you want or come through like you hope; THEN you’re out! Disbelieving, disobeying or departing from Him...Cuz again, you’re a “**fan**”. You’re not in it to SERVE Jesus; you’re actually in it to USE Jesus to get something you REALLY want OUTSIDE of Jesus. **You see?**...But here’s one of the many problems with this: It makes you **fickle!** Like this crowd going from celebration to condemnation, you’re in on Jesus when He’s meeting your needs and working within your sensibilities, but then you’re out when He’s not. In other words, you’re like a tumbleweed. Cuz ya know, the deal with tumbleweeds is: they LOOK free, cuz of course they can kinda go anywhere and do anything. But in reality, because they have no roots/no authority they’re subject to, they’re not free at all! Rather, they’re constantly SUBJECTED to every rush of wind/every changing circumstance that gets ya high or low...And I don’t mean to be insensitive, but ya

⁴ Illustration adapted from: “The Lord’s Supper - Gospel of John, Part 1 - October 6, 1991 - John 13:18-30 - [Timothy Keller Sermon Archive](#) (NYC: Redeemer Church, 2013)

know what ya call people who are always high and then low? Manic! That's this crowd here!... ***Is it you? Are you simply a fan of Jesus/maybe not suppressing Him like the Pharisees, but certainly trying to subject Him to your wishes rather than serve Him?***

Now before we see the final way of responding to Jesus' kingship, let me just point out that BOTH the Pharisees and Crowds, even if they appear different, are actually quite similar. Because BOTH are about, you could say, "bad management." Ya know, when things are under GOOD management - your company, bank, sports league, everything just kinda hums along ***right?*** There's a lot of blessing when things are under good management. But when there's bad, everything tends to break-down. The REASON both the Pharisees and the Crowds ultimately experienced the brokenness of anger, anxiety, fickleness, rage, is cuz their lives were under "bad management;" namely...themselves. Cuz see, when you're the main manager in your life - either cuz you're suppressing Jesus' Kingship or simply trying to subject Him to yourself - you're setting yourself up for brokenness, cuz frankly, you're not competent enough to run your life/no one is. I mean think about how many times you end up doing things you didn't WANNA do or NOT doing things ya DID wanna do. We're not fit to run our lives...which is PRECISELY why Jesus came, died and rose in the first place...AND WHY, therefore, the only truly legitimate response to His Kingship is **The Way Of The Disciples:** Cuz look in **v.16** where we're told that Jesus riding in on a colt didn't make sense to them UNTIL AFTER He'd "*been glorified*" or resurrected. ***You see that? What does that tell you about the disciples?*** It tells you, they didn't always know what was up. Didn't always have all the answers/have it all together...It tells you that if the Pharisees were "***Anxious Authoritarians,***" and the crowds were "***Fickle Fans,***" then the Disciples were simply "***Lifelong Learners.***" That's actually what the word "disciple" means. It's the Greek word mathetes, literally meaning "learner."...See, the deal with the Disciples/and really anyone who's both entering into Christianity and wants to grow AS a Christian, is that it's about simply **LEARNING** (and ultimately trusting) that Jesus Christ is a whole new kind of King. That sure, He possesses all the might, majesty, and magnificence of any other King/and more! The Disciples knew that. What they didn't understand until after His resurrection is that that same mighty, majestic, magnificent King was also incredibly meek, modest, and always ever coming...in weakness! THAT'S what dawned on em! That Jesus didn't just come to liberate them from the Romans or YOU from whatever hurt, habit, or hangup is pulling you down...***Cuz what good would that be?*** If Jesus overcame some circumstantial or political oppression, but not the personal oppression of your life still being under "bad management;" you still being in your guilt before God/needing His forgiveness before having to die/***what good would that be?***...So see, what they **learned** is that Jesus came to deliver them/deliver YOU from something far more enslaving than the Romans...deliver you from death and eternal separation from God...Or as we often say around here: *The Gospel is freedom from the past PENALTY of your sin, the present POWER of sin and brokenness in your life, and the future PRESENCE of sin and brokenness altogether...*And so by extension, Jesus didn't come with political clout, rallying the troops, inviting you to "take up the sword," or really do any striving at all. Rather, He came in lowliness; weakness, and to die in your place so as to deal with your death. In other words, He came as a Lion who BECAME a lamb!

And so Friend, the only thing the Disciples had to do/“*the way of the Disciples*” if you will, was essentially **LEARN**...to do nothing, except continually turn the management of their lives over to King Jesus...Ya ever had the pleasure of retitling a house or a deed. Apart from the legalese of it all, the basic principle is pretty simple: ya simply remove your name and put someone else’s in your place...Having Jesus as King means simply removing your name from the “title” or management of your life, and putting His name in your place...So no suppressing or subjecting...Just **surrendering!**...Because you understand that when you do/when Jesus has ownership of your life/is King OVER your life, all kinds of blessings begin to flow. Anxiety is lessened because you no longer have to carry the weight OF your life. That’s His job and He’s pretty good at it, given His willingness to die for you in the first place...Control and the anger, frustration, impatience that come along with it, begin to fade, cuz ya realize that if this King was capable of rising from the dead then He’s more than capable of taking care of you, so you don’t HAVE to take control...Ya stop, for example, being a person who’s so cutthroat and using of others, because you see that YOUR King never was...BUT ya also stop allowing yourself to BE used by others/be cowardly, because YOUR King didn’t shrank back from death to bring you to Himself...And maybe most palpably, ya find yourself able to rest/maybe even lowering your blood pressure, understanding that Jesus’ Kingship and the blessings therein are offered to you apart from having to earn or EVER deserving it...It’s what St. AuGUSTine meant when he said that “*our hearts are restless UNTIL they find their rest in Jesus.*”...I mean the list of pathologies that get dealt with is endless, because, Friend/**listen**: Jesus Christ is the ONLY celebrity, ONLY leader...ONLY KING, who when you get Him, blesses you to the uttermost. And when you fail Him, forgives you to the depths. THAT is King Jesus! **Will you behold and believe in your King today?...Let’s Pray...**