

Sermon for April 13, 2014 – Palm Sunday

Matthew 21:1-11 (NKJV)

Theme: Who Is This?

- 1) *He is our God who knows all things.*
- 2) *He is our Messiah who fulfills all Scripture.*
- 3) *He is our gentle King who deserves all honor.*
- 4) *He is our Savior from all sin.*

*Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. <sup>3</sup> "And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them." <sup>4</sup> All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: <sup>5</sup> "Tell the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.'" <sup>6</sup> So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. <sup>7</sup> They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. <sup>8</sup> And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup> Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Hosanna in the highest!" <sup>10</sup> And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?" <sup>11</sup> So the multitudes said, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee."*

Days after I moved to Germany (at age 15), a friend took me to a political rally filled with cheering people. He was excited to be there. I asked my friend who the speaker was, and he said that it was Chancellor Helmut Kohl. "Who's he?" I asked. My friend explained to me that he was the leader of Germany. I'm glad I asked. Meeting someone famous is meaningless unless you know who the person is.

Our sermon text for this morning speaks of a special rally filled with a cheering crowd. In the middle of it is a man sitting on a donkey. Some people in Jerusalem asked: Who is this? And what an important question this was! If they hadn't asked, they might have missed the opportunity to hear about their Savior.

It's Sunday morning and crowds still gather around the king on the colt. Hosannas are being sung to him in every Christian Church around the world! Many people in our community see us praising Jesus and wonder: "**Who is this man they are worshipping?**"

Brothers and sisters in Christ, let us learn to joyfully answer them: *1) He is our God who knows all things. 2) He is our Messiah who fulfills all Scripture. 3) He is our gentle King who deserves all honor. 4) He is our Savior from all sin.*

Part One: He is our God who knows all things.

Our sermon text takes place on the Sunday before Jesus crucifixion. He had just celebrated the Sabbath with his disciples at the house of Lazarus, Mary and Martha<sup>1</sup>, and was now marching toward Jerusalem to fulfill everything Scripture prophesied about him.

*Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied,*

*and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. <sup>3</sup> "And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them."*

Who is this Jesus we worship? He is obviously more than just a mere man because he knows all things – including the future! Jesus not only knew that there was a donkey and its foal waiting for them in the village ahead, but also the exact words the disciples would be asked when they untied the donkey, and the willingness of the man to simply let his animals go.

What does all this tell you about Jesus? That he must be God, because he has the power to do things that only God can do. Jesus can see everything – even the attitudes of the heart. Think about that for a moment: Jesus knew that the owner of the donkeys would not just allow the disciples to take the animals, but that he would even **send** them to be used in service of His Lord.

And if Jesus could see inside the donkeys' owner's heart, he can also see inside yours and mine. And what does he see when He looks at your heart? I would be lying if I didn't say he sees sin in mine. Yes, Jesus knows all our thoughts, angers, frustrations, doubts, and sins. He sees them all. But, in mercy, He doesn't condemn us. Why? Because He wants us to repent of our sins and live.

Jesus was marching into Jerusalem to suffer and die for the sins of the world. He was going there to win our salvation. After doing this, he commissioned his disciples to preach the Gospel – and this Gospel has come to us. By the power of his almighty word, Jesus moved our hearts to repent and awaken faith in us. When Jesus looks at the heart of a believer, he does not see sin anymore. Why not? Because our sin was crucified with him on the cross. When Jesus looks into our hearts, he sees his dearly loved people – people who love and follow him, people who are in need and danger, and people whom he will safely deliver from this life into the next.

Who is the man we praise on the donkey? He is our God who knows all things and works in everything for our eternal good.

### Part Two: *He is our Messiah who fulfills all Scripture.*

After recording Jesus' command to his disciples, Matthew writes: <sup>4</sup> *All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: <sup>5</sup> "Tell the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.'"* <sup>6</sup> *So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them.*

Who is this Jesus, whom we worship? He is the Messiah who fulfilled every prophecy of Scripture concerning himself. Notice that Matthew, the writer of our text, does not quote this prophecy after it was fulfilled, but before. Why? To show that every step Jesus made was on purpose. Everything he did was to fulfill Scripture.

Did you know that if Jesus had failed to fulfill even the most insignificant prophecy of Scripture we would have to reject him as the Messiah? But thankfully we don't have to wonder if Jesus is the promised Christ. And why not? Because he has fulfilled or is in the process of fulfilling every prophecy of Scripture down to the littlest detail. For example, Zechariah (some 500 years before Jesus birth) prophesied that the Messiah would use a mother donkey and its colt, and this is exactly what Jesus did.

And if Jesus is able to fulfill every minutely detailed prophecy, we can be confident that he will also fulfill every promise God made concerning us. He cares for us more than a mother cares for her children. He may allow us to suffer such want that we find ourselves spending our last penny – but even if we are at the

brink of disaster, he will not let us fall. He will keep his promise never to leave or forsake us. No matter what trouble or hardship we face, he will keep his promise to work in all things for our eternal good. He will never remove his love from us, because he is our Messiah who fulfills every promise of Scripture.

Part Three: *He is our Gentle King who deserves all honor.*

Our text continues: <sup>7</sup> *They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them.*  
<sup>8</sup> *And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road.*

It might seem strange to us: laying out expensive clothes for two donkeys to trample on. What would move the people to do this? They wanted to honor the man riding on the two donkeys as their eternal King.

And this king certainly deserves all our respect and honor. He does not ride into Jerusalem in pomp and luxury, rather he comes in humility and gentleness. This king's glory is in serving rather than in being served. Most kings demand that their subjects die for them, but this king would die to save his subjects. From what? From our slavery to sin, death and the power of the devil. No praise could ever be enough for this. No gift of ours could ever be too generous to thank the one who gave up his heavenly home to be sacrificed in our place, so that we might be at peace with God. We serve Jesus with our time, talents, and treasures because he most certainly deserves our total praise for being our Savior-King.

Part Four: *He is our Savior from all sin.*

We read: <sup>9</sup> *Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD! Hosanna in the highest!"*

Why did the crowds shout, "Hosanna to the son of David"? Because the Scriptures say that the Messiah would be David's descendant. Why did the crowds cry out: "Blessed is he, who comes in the name of the LORD"? Because of a prophecy recorded in Psalm 118, which reads: "*Save now, I pray, O LORD; . . . Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!*" <sup>ii</sup>

Did you know that the word "Hosanna" means "Please save us"? When shouting Hosanna, the people were asking Jesus to save them, just like the Psalmist did some 700 years earlier in Psalm 118. So, who was this riding into Jerusalem that crowds of people still worship today? It is Jesus from Galilee, whose name actually means: "The LORD's Savior." He is our God who knows all things, our Messiah who fulfills all Scripture, our gentle King who deserves all honor and, most importantly our Savior who has taken our sins upon himself in order to suffer God's wrath in our place. Because of his suffering, death and resurrection, we are at peace with God and don't have to be afraid of him any longer.

But there are many people in the world who do not understand these things. There are many people who still do not know who this Jesus is that we worship. This should sadden us, because their ignorance is making them miss out on their Savior. This is why I encourage all of you to pick up an Easter invitation and hand them to your family, friends and neighbors. If we run out, don't worry: we can easily make more.

Many times and in many different ways, people ask us: "Why do you go to Church?" "Why do you love this Jesus so much?" "Who is he?" Dear Christian, when opportunity knocks and you are asked these questions, be bold and say: "This is Jesus of Nazareth. He is our true God who knows all. He is our promised Messiah, who fulfills all Scripture. He is our loving Savior-King, who offered himself up for all in order to forgive everyone who looks to him in repentance and faith – no matter how great or many their

sins have been. Jesus is our gentle, loving king, who works and in all things for the good of those who love him. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Cf. John 12

<sup>ii</sup> Psalm 118:25-26 NKJV