



Idea: Jesus Christ came not to meet our greatest expectations but our deepest needs.

Intro: In the world of sports and entertainment, the entrance is nearly as important as the game or event. We love a good entrance, and we love a good walkout song. Baseball players, like professional wrestlers, have their own walkout music when they make their appearance. Football teams have individualized entrance routines, involving cheerleaders, the band, and lots of smoke. Then there is LeBron James and his infamous chalk toss. Celebrities and athletes use the grand entrance as a way to engage the audience and promote their brand.

We see in the Bible that at least on one occasion, Jesus also had His own grand entrance. Now, there was no theme song playing in the heavens, theatrical lights, or smoke machines. But there was a crowd of people who were cheering and who were excited to see Him. Jesus' entrance was very different than what those in His day would have witnessed in the Coliseum or what we see from our celebrities today. Jesus didn't promote Himself. He didn't work to draw attention to Himself, but neither did He refuse the praise lauded upon Him.

Jesus made a grand entrance into Jerusalem just a few days ahead of being arrested, put on trial, and crucified.

Read John 12:12-19.

Inquiry: The triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem comes on the heels of a great miracle performed in Bethany. In John 11 we read that Lazarus, a good friend of Jesus, had died. The Lord had been in Jerusalem, but then left and went across the Jordan River to where John the Baptist had been baptizing (John 10:40). Based on the timeline in John's gospel, word of Lazarus' sickness was sent to Jesus while he was across the Jordan. Jesus stayed two more days before leaving for Bethany. But by the time Jesus and his disciples arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had been dead four days. Mary and Martha were distraught. Their hearts were heavy because of the loss of their brother, but they were also heavy because of Jesus' delay. The Lord was moved with compassion for the sisters whom He loved. He proclaimed to them that He was "the resurrection and the life" (11:25), and then He commanded that the stone over Lazarus' tomb be removed. Jesus called for Lazarus, and he came walking out of the tomb alive and well.

The news of a man being resurrected from the dead after four days in the tomb spread like wildfire throughout the land. This incited the chief priests and the Pharisees to plot out how they would kill Jesus and rid Israel of His teaching and influence. As a result Jesus retreated for a short time to Ephraim to the north (11:54).

Chapter 12 begins with Jesus returning to Bethany six days before the Passover. Mary and Martha threw a big party for Jesus. News of His return spread through Bethany and into Jerusalem. A large crowd of people came to Bethany to see Jesus and Lazarus (12:9).

The time for the Lord's passion was at hand. He had told His disciples that He would suffer and die in Jerusalem. The following day (apparently Monday) a large crowd met Jesus on

the road as He entered Jerusalem, waving palm branches and crying out “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” We see in this passage the grand entrance of our Lord Jesus, and as He entered the city every single person who celebrated His entrance had his or her own set of expectations for who and what Jesus should be. Jesus Christ, however, did not come to meet our greatest expectations. He came to meet our deepest needs.

On this Palm Sunday, let’s take a close look at this grand entrance by asking three questions.

1. Who is this Jesus?

Perhaps there are as many answers to this question as there are people in the world. It seems that a lot of people have their own answer as to who Jesus is. Jesus asked a very similar question to His disciples one day (Matt 16:13-17). He asked, “*Who do people say that the Son of Man is?*” They told Jesus some believed Him to be John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets of old. Jesus then asked the disciples who they believed Him to be. Peter boldly responded, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.*” Jesus then informed Peter that the truth he declared wasn’t learned from another human teacher but from God the Father.

Who is this Jesus? The Bible, in this grand entrance account, tells us several things about who He is.

A. He is the Lord.
(Matt 21:3; Mark 11:3; Luke 19:31, 34)

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all include Jesus’ instruction to two of His disciples telling them where to find a young donkey and what to say to the owner. Jesus’ instruction on what they were to say to the owners included the title “The Lord” (ὁ κύριος). The title speaks of power and authority.

The connotation is that of a master who owns and controls his estate. It is interesting in Mark's gospel when the disciples were questioned about taking the colt and responded by telling them "*The Lord has need of it,*" that those asking submitted without resistance (Mark 11:5-6).

The Bible says that Jesus is the Lord. He holds all power, and He holds all authority. Jesus is the Master. And He is not just a lower case lord. The Bible says He is "*Lord of lords*" (Rev 19:16).

B. He is the King.

He is the King of the Jews. (Matt 21:5; Mark 11:10; Luke 19:38; John 12:13, 15)

Both Matthew and John quote from a messianic passage in Zechariah 9:9-10. According to the gospel writers, Jesus is the rightful, prophetic, and royal King of the Jews. He is the King of Israel. He is the fulfillment of God's promise to King David that there should be no end to his throne (2 Sam 7:16).

The title of King of the Jews on Jesus' cross was the proper title (Mark 15:26).

He is the King of the Gentiles. (John 12:20-21)

The Greeks John speaks of could have come from any part of the Greek-speaking world. They were Gentiles, and most likely Gentiles who feared God. We know there were Gentiles who followed Yahweh. Some were proselytes, while others merely attached themselves to the Jewish way of life and synagogue worship. Cornelius of Caesarea and the centurion of Capernaum are two who feared God.

The Greeks who came to Jesus in Jerusalem desired to know more about who He was and what He was teaching. Jesus welcomed these Gentiles. After all, He was their King. Jesus is the King of every Gentile just as He is the King of every Jew. And there is coming a day when all peoples will bow before Him as their King and confess with their mouths that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:9-11).

C. He is worthy of worship. (Luke 19:39-40)

As Jesus was coming into Jerusalem and being hailed as the King by the crowd, there were some Pharisees among them who cautioned Him and called for the people to be rebuked. Jesus responded by saying, *“if these are silent, the very stones would cry out.”*

What qualifies Jesus to be worthy of worship?

- He is God. (John 1:1; 12:44)
- He is the Creator. (John 1:3)
- He is the Savior. (John 12:47)

The Lord Jesus was not just another man, good teacher, prophet, or miracle worker. He was and is in fact very God of very God. Therefore, He and He alone is worthy of all our worship.

D. He is the Peacemaker. (Luke 19:38)

Through Jesus peace is made in heaven.

For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility – Eph 2:14

21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him – Col 1:21-22

The Bible tells us that each person's sin has separated and put him or her at odds with God. In other words, in your sin you are at war with God. You are in rebellion against God, and your sin condemns you to death. There is nothing you can do to redeem yourself. It is here that Jesus through His death, burial, and resurrection steps in as your Peacemaker. His death on the cross, as a perfect sacrifice for sin, satisfied the justice of God. So now, God the Father has accepted His death in your place. Jesus has made peace in heaven for you.

2. Who is this crowd?

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, He did so not as just another common man like at other times. Jesus entered the city of the king as the coming King. The large crowd that had followed Jesus from Bethany merged with the crowd coming out of Jerusalem, and they all waved palm branches and threw them before Jesus and the disciples as they entered. A. T. Robertson points out "that to carry palms was a mark of triumphant homage to a victor or a king." This practice began about 200 years prior to Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem. Palm branches was a national if not a nationalist symbol dating back to Simon the Maccabee who drove the Syrian forces out of the Jerusalem citadel in 141 BC. He was honored with music and the waving of palm branches.

Those in the crowd had either witnessed the resurrection of Lazarus or had heard the report. Either way, they knew Jesus was special. They were

convinced that He was not an ordinary man and leader. Many of those in the crowd believed Jesus to be the Messiah, the long awaited King in the lineage of David who would rescue them from Roman oppression. However, just like in this crowd today, there were three different types of people.

A. Genuine Disciples (Luke 19:37)

Luke tells us that Jesus' disciples rejoiced and praised God for Jesus and His mighty works. A disciple is a follower of Jesus. It is one who learns from and lives for the Master. These men and women believed Jesus to be their Messiah, King, and Lord. They had placed their faith in Him and developed a personal relationship.

B. Casual Observers (John 12:12, 17-18)

John references two different groups in this large crowd. There were those who had witnessed the raising of Lazarus (John 11:45) and those in Jerusalem who had come for the Passover feast. The former had not stopped talking about the amazing miracle they had seen a few weeks earlier. Many of them were believers. The people who had come from Jerusalem came, hoping to see Jesus perform another miracle. They were spectators, casual followers of Jesus. They kept up with the news of Jesus in the headlines. He was a celebrity to them. They had no personal relationship and had no genuine desire to form one.

C. Religion Followers (Luke 19:39; John 12:19)

There were Pharisees in the crowd who were blinded by their religion. They believed that God was pleased by their religious practices. They believed that keeping the Law could satisfy God's

judgment against sin. They believed that because of their religiosity they were good enough in the eyes of God.

Today, these same three types of people are present in every church service. There are many here who are genuine followers of Jesus. They have acknowledged their sinfulness, confessed it to Jesus, and have repented of it. They have placed their faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus for eternal life. Jesus has accepted them as His children and given them new life.

There are others here who are merely causal followers of Jesus. They may or may not believe Jesus is Lord and Savior, but they do believe He was a good and important teacher. He is someone from which to learn. The causal followers have never placed their faith in Jesus and repented of sin. They may want to do so at some point, but for now they prefer to follow at a distance.

There are also some religion followers in the crowd today. Like the Pharisees who put their faith in their ability to keep the Law, religion followers in the church today place their faith in the sinners prayer they prayed as a kid. They place their faith in baptism. They place their faith in church membership. They believe they are right with God and going to heaven because their name is on the church roll. They see faith in Jesus more as a religion to keep rather than a relationship to enjoy. They come to a service and small group more to check it off their list than to worship the Lord.

The casual observers and religion followers missed the point of Jesus' grand entrance. They remained lost and separated in their sin. But the genuine disciples understood Jesus and His gospel. They experienced salvation and new life.

3. How shall we receive this King?

The crowd shouted “*Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!*” Hosanna is a transliteration of a term meaning “save now.” It became a term of acclamation and praise. Both Hosanna and the statement that follows are drawn from Psalm 118:25-26. The phrase “*even the King of Israel*” isn’t a quotation from the psalm. The psalm originally conferred a blessing on the pilgrim heading up to Jerusalem. The Midrash (a rabbinic teaching), however, understood this portion of the psalm to be messianic. And those who proclaimed it before Jesus in John 12 certainly connected it to the Messiah.

Like the Greeks who wished to see Jesus (John 12:21), we must receive the King on His terms rather than our own.

A. In Repentance (John 12:35-36)

Jesus tells us that those who would follow Him must turn from the darkness of their sin to the light of His salvation. Sinners must acknowledge their sin and rebellion against God. Repentance is the turning from sin and self to the Savior. “I’ve been on the wrong road. I am merging onto God’s road for my life.”

When the sinner confesses and forsakes his sin, God promises to forgive and cleanse him from all sin (1 John 1:9).

B. In Faith (John 12:44)

Jesus calls on us to believe in Him and His work on the cross. Paul says that we are saved by grace

through faith (Eph 2:8). We are to put all our trust in Jesus and the sacrifice He made upon the cross.

Conclusion: The Lord Jesus made a grand entrance into Jerusalem just a few days ahead of His trial, crucifixion, and resurrection. The purpose of His passion was to secure our salvation. It was to redeem us from our sin. Jesus went to the cross so that you and I could make our own grand entrance into heaven. He is our Lord, King, and Savior. Who are you? Are you a genuine follower, a causal observer, or a religion follower? Will you make a grand entrance into heaven or hell?