

Rejoice! Your King Comes!

***⁹ Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!
Shout in triumph, Daughter Jerusalem!
Look, your King is coming to you;
he is righteous and victorious,
humble and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.***
***¹⁰ I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the horse from Jerusalem.
The bow of war will be removed,
and he will proclaim peace to the nations.
His dominion will extend from sea to sea,
from the Euphrates River
to the ends of the earth.*** (Christian Standard Bible)

Three or four weeks ago I was browsing the channels on cable and noticed that the Turner Classic Movie channel was showing the musical, "The Music Man." This was the 1962 version with Robert Preston playing Harold Hill and Shirley Jones as Mariann the Librarian. If you haven't seen it, I suggest you find it. It is so enjoyable and a wonderful escape from all that is going on nowadays.

Basically, a door to door salesman has convinced a small Indiana town to purchase musical instruments so their kids could form a band. The band the kids formed really was not good. They were terrible. At the end the kids were about to march and play. Through the use of the magic of cinema, they suddenly appeared in fancy band uniforms and they instantly grew from a couple dozen kids into a marching band of a couple hundred with 76 trombones in the lead. And they marched and played perfectly. In reality the kids were bad musicians. But in the eyes of proud parents, they appeared to be the best band ever.

Today is Palm Sunday, and we have something before us that is the opposite of The Music Man. In the Music Man the marching band wasn't good, but in the eyes of parents they were the best. In Jesus, it is the opposite. What we see isn't very impressive at all, but in reality what do we get? A King we need desperately. We get a Savior. So, let's rejoice. Your King comes.

I. We rejoice because of what this king is.

Just what kind of king rode into Jerusalem that day? ***"Look, your King is coming to you; he is righteous and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."*** First of all, this is king is humble, a trait you normally don't find in kings. We see that in how he rode into Jerusalem. Sure, in a society where most people walked, to ride on a donkey was special. Kings have ridden on donkeys before. But look at this donkey. If you saw me riding around town on a bike, you wouldn't think twice about it. But if you saw me riding a tricycle, you would stare, maybe even laugh. Technically it is a bike, but it is a bike for small kids, not grown adults. Look at this donkey. It was young and immature, too young to be ridden on. In Matthew's account you get the impression that its mother had to accompany it. And it was a borrowed donkey at that. The word translated in Hebrew as "humble" is also used to describe someone as poor and needy. This image of King riding into Jerusalem lacked the pomp and circumstance of a normal king. There was something lacking. The picture of Jesus was poor and needy.

But that is Jesus and the King we need. Jesus said that he came not to be served but to serve. This same king got down on his hands and knees to wash his disciples' feet. He is also gentle. This reminds of the Isaiah passage where it says of Christ that he will not snuff out a smoldering wick. He is patient when patience is needed. He rebukes when we need rebuking. He will encourage when needed. Overall, though, all he does for us is not to crush us, but to build us up. What a king! He has all authority in heaven and earth, but he came to serve us.

He also is "righteous." This means he is always honest and fair. If he was a judge in a courtroom, not a single one of his decisions will be overturned because he judges fairly. He is also righteous in the eyes of God. How refreshing it must have been for God the Father. As he scans the world, he will not find a single righteous person, not one. But in Christ he has one. God can never accuse him of a single sin.

And that is why this Christ came. He comes with salvation because he gives us that righteousness. As it says in Romans 3, ***"But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe."*** When I was in Denver, I had a member who frequently gave me his season tickets to the Denver Broncos. Good seats. When I walked down to those seats and sat down, the usher came over and asked to see my ticket. When he saw it, he wished me a good game and left. That is how we get into heaven. If we tried to just walk in, the angels will haul us out of there. But we have a ticket, the righteous, holy life of Christ. That is how we get in, with someone else's ticket, Christ's.

A lot of people who don't think too kindly of Jesus Christ or the Christian Church. Some undoubtedly hate God and don't want his authority in their lives. Others, however, are simply ignorant. They think God and his church is nothing more than rules and rules and more rules. But if one studies the Bible about this king, they learn that his rule is just and kind and gentle. They learn that he governs not by laws but by love. We have every reason to rejoice because of who this king is.

II. We rejoice because of what he does.

But we have even more reason to rejoice because of what this king does. Through the prophet Zechariah, Jesus says about himself and why he came: ***¹⁰ I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem. The bow of war will be removed, and he will proclaim peace to the nations. His dominion will extend from sea to sea, from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth.***

After World War II, over 117,000 military aircraft were pulled out of service and stored in what is called boneyards. Then there were all those ships, guns, ammo, tanks, and so on. What happens after a war? You don't need those tanks, weapons, or planes. Most soldiers are discharged. What happens when Christ came? The same thing. Jesus describes a dismantling of the world's weapons because the war is over. But aren't there still a couple hundred wars going on today? Yes. Don't we need a military presence just in case? Of course. But Jesus is talking about another war, the war between a holy God and sinful people.

Peace comes when a war ends. Peace comes when the enemy is defeated and can threaten you no more. Man is at war with God through sin. But God has come to establish peace between himself and man. This king wins the battle not with sword or chariot or bomb or tank. He does battle and wins with his sacrifice on the cross. ***"For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross,"*** as it states in Colossians.

We were slaves to the devil, bound by his power. We were slaves to sin, guilty and ripe for God's punishment. We were slaves to death, dying because of our sin. But our king has freed us from all of that. ***¹⁰ I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem. The bow of war will be removed, and he will proclaim peace to the nations.*** We are at peace with God.

And this shows us how this king rules and spreads his kingdom. ***His dominion will extend from sea to sea, from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth.*** This prophecy points ahead to the great commission in Matthew 18 where our king tells us to go and make disciples by baptizing them and teaching them everything he has commanded us. It doesn't say to make disciples by taking over governments and using the law and sword to force people to become Christian. We make disciples and spread God's kingdom by baptizing and telling people they have a Savior King.

Ancient Rome was huge, spreading from England to Germany to Northern Africa to Palestine. The old Soviet Union was bigger, comprising 12 time zones. China is huge. The kingdom of God is bigger. It covers the entire world, from sea to sea, from the Euphrates to the ends of the earth. It hasn't toppled the other governments. It doesn't want to. Instead it topples our hearts. His kingdom spreads when his Word is preached and hearts come alive with faith.

Miss going to a Twins game? Yes, they will allow 10,000 to attend now. Maybe they can fill the place later this summer. It is amazing to go to a full stadium to watch the Twins or the Vikings or any sports team. Imagine the shouting that took place when Jesus entered Jerusalem. It must have been amazing.

Imagine the shouting that is going to take place with Jesus returns to earth! All Christians will rise up and shout themselves hoarse. There is a second Palm Sunday coming soon. It is described in Revelation. ***"After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.'"*** You and I were not there for Palm Sunday, but we will be there for the second.

Right now it is hard to imagine how gentle Jesus will bring the rampant forces of evil to their knees in an unconditional surrender. In fact, it looks as though evil is gaining and God's kingdom is losing ground. But your king is coming. It will not take faith to believe it when he comes because all will see it. Even unbelievers will fall to their knees in acknowledgement of his kingship though it is too late for them. But it does take faith to believe it now before he comes. We still live in a fallen world. We still deal with death and illness, sin and temptation, sickness and sorrow, evil and immorality. But he is coming. This week, Holy Week, let us see our king establish his kingdom through the cross and empty tomb. He is coming to us now through his message of peace in his Word. He is coming soon to make everything new. That's what it means when it calls us prisoners of hope. Amen.