

## GATEWAY CHURCH NORTHUMBERLAND

### The Kingdom coming - Joss Bray

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Today is Palm Sunday when we remember in particular the time when Jesus came to Jerusalem with his disciples just before passover. This is what is described as the triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

The account is slightly different in the 4 gospels. That's what you might expect from real eyewitness accounts and it gives an air of authenticity to the gospels which is very reassuring. There is no cover up here - it's all out in the open with plenty of evidence to look at. It was a major event in Jerusalem and thousands will have seen it and been part of it.

Let's go through the events and draw in particular from Luke and Matthew. We do need to note as we read that it isn't *just* about lots of people waving palm branches.....

So what does Luke have to say?

LK 19:28 After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.'" Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They replied, "The Lord needs it." They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

Matthew adds at this point:

MT 21:4 This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: "Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your King comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'" "

The Old Testament quote was from Zechariah:

ZEC 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Matthew goes on:

MT 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!" When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

Luke says this:

LK 19:41 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you." Then he entered the temple area and began driving out those who were selling. "It is written," he said to them, " 'My house will be a house of prayer' ; but you have made it `a den of robbers.' "

Matthew adds:

MT 21:14 The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant. "Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him. "Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read," `From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise' ?"

Then Luke says:

LK 19:47 Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words. One day as he was teaching the people in the temple courts and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, together with the elders, came up to him. "Tell us by what authority you are doing these things," they said. "Who gave you this authority?"

As well as the Zechariah prophesy, Jesus himself was also quoting other several other Old Testament verses in what we have just read including:

Psalms 118v26, Isaiah 56v7, Jeremiah 7v11, Psalm 8v2

### **So Jesus the King was coming to Jerusalem**

What was happening on that first Palm Sunday bears the hallmarks of what we can expect when we pray “let your Kingdom come”. Where the King is - there he will rule and his Kingdom will come.

But like the people of Jerusalem it might not be quite what we expect. But we want to be ready and to recognise the Kingdom don't we? So let's look at what we can see from this important time when the King came to Jerusalem.

### **What are the characteristics of the Kingdom demonstrated in the Palm Sunday events and what followed?**

The King was on the move, and the disciples were close to him and stuck by him. The disciples, in fact, were an integral part of events. They were obedient to the King - even though they were asked to do implausible and possibly dangerous things. There was a personal cost for the disciples - their needs were second to the King's.

The disciples themselves were full of joy. They praised God - loudly. They freely gave their testimony - their accounts of what the King had done - in particular miracles and healings. They could not keep quiet - they were overflowing with news of the Kingdom. The disciples were very clear about who Jesus was and they didn't hold back from massive claims about him and what that meant.

Prophecy was fulfilled - even prophetic words from 500 hundred years previously - that many may have forgotten - came to pass.

Ordinary people got drawn in and caught up in the events - they welcomed this good news and joined in. They shouted hosanna - which means “save, rescue, saviour” in Aramaic. They praised Jesus and called him blessed. The whole city was stirred up.

There was a tradition of covering the path of someone who was worthy of the highest honour and they did this for Jesus. Palm branches were a symbol of victory. Interestingly, multitudes wave palm branches before the Lamb and his throne in Revelation 7v9, celebrating his victory over death.

But the King came gently - not lording it over people but humbly. He accepted praise from men but did not force his will on them. His choice of a donkey signified he came to bring peace. (If he was on a horse the message conveyed would have been of a King going to war - we see this in Revelation when Jesus does come back on a white horse for the final judgement).

The blind and lame came to Jesus and were wonderfully healed. Jesus himself taught the people and the word of God was given a high priority. However, despite all this, among the crowds there was still some confusion as to exactly who he was, but most of them went along with it - with some notable exceptions.

The Pharisees were annoyed and felt threatened. Particularly because children were shouting noisy praise in the temple - but also because they didn't want a new King teaching people about the Kingdom. They had their own good thing going which they didn't want to lose - their earthly power and authority. They wanted to kill the King so they questioned his authority and plotted against him.

Despite this, Jesus had compassion and wept over the city. Ultimately, despite all the waving and cheering, they would not understand his message of peace and of the Kingdom of God.

But Jesus the King also had righteous anger over what the temple had become. Rather than a place to pray it was a centre for commerce which did nothing to honour his father. He was forceful in making his point with such authority that no one stopped him. Even though the Pharisees questioned his authority, he demonstrated it for everyone to see.

We should note that his anger wasn't about what they were about to do to him - to crucify and kill him, but about his Father's honour. In the same way, his sadness wasn't over his fate - but over the people's rejection of the kingdom of God and their ultimate doom.

## **So what sort of things should we be expecting to see when we pray “your Kingdom come”?**

We will see God on the move. There will be an unfolding of heavenly plans - which may be different to ours. We will see people of all ages being drawn to the King even though some are not sure what is going on. It will be noisy and not totally organised. We will see miracles and healings. We will see people being saved by our saviour king.

But we should also expect opposition particularly from those with earthly power and vested interests. People will try and stop the Kingdom coming but they will have no power to do it. However, support may come from unexpected areas.

For us as disciples we will see our joy increasing and praise rising up. We will begin to overflow with what God has done. We will not be able to stay silent about the King and the Kingdom. We will be witnesses wherever we are. We will be happy to put Jesus first before ourselves and acknowledge him as King of our lives - even if it is costly.

We may see the church as a whole being cleansed by God in ways which we can't predict. He wants a church that honours him and reflects his glory. He will build his church - but it will be in his way.

Prophetic words for us will increasingly be worked out even though they were given some time ago. That will be for the church as a whole and for individual people. We need to look out for that.

There will be an emphasis as well on the word of God - the bible will be taught and the message will not be compromised. There will be a clear message of who Jesus is and what he taught and why he came, what he did for us and that he will be back again with a different sort of glory. The message of the coming kingdom and repentance and forgiveness will become prominent again.

We will follow him as we see him doing new things. We will become more like him - gentle and serving, but with increasing delegated authority - making us bolder to expect God to do amazing things. We will have more compassion for the lost and marginalised, the sick and the poor, and they will be drawn in to the kingdom. Let your kingdom come Lord!