

Our King Comes in Humility

1. To conquer our enemies
2. To make us humble conquerors

Introduction: Shout for joy all you people! Your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, yet humble and riding on a donkey! Did you see him? Jesus didn't ride up to Jerusalem on a war horse with fire in his eyes looking to start a fight. He came in peace, riding on a gentle donkey. But there was no mistake that he was a king, look at how the crowd praised him. In John's gospel the people shout, "Blessed is the King of Israel!" He is our king, but surprisingly, he comes in humility to conquer our enemies, our sin and our pride, and he comes to make us humble conquerors too. Listen to how Paul describes our humble king in the letter lesson for today.

⁵ *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:*

⁶ *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!*

⁹ *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,*

¹⁰ *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*

¹¹ *and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Who is this king on the donkey? He comes to conquer our enemies and give us the freedom we need. This is Jesus Christ, the God-man; 100% God and 100% man, all in one unprecedented person. His human nature has all the power and authority of his divine nature. He is in very nature God. And we have seen it. This man cast out demons in the temple, he healed the sick and raised the dead, he multiplied food when it seemed that people would go hungry, he proclaimed forgiveness when it seemed people would leave guilty. He knows all things, he is all powerful, he has access to thousands of angelic warriors. This is the man we need riding into Jerusalem to conquer our enemies!

Yet look what Paul writes in these beautiful verses - (Jesus) *being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant.* All this power and authority was his, yet he chooses not to take advantage of it. He doesn't flex his muscles or hold out his miraculous power like a pro wrestler holds up his championship belt. He doesn't hoist his trophy in the air or use his power to make a name for himself like winning athlete might. But instead, he makes himself nothing. He willingly decides not to use his godly power and might, and instead, he takes on the very nature of a humble servant. He lived like a homeless prophet, he washed people's feet, and he ate with the prostitutes and tax collectors. He always put others' needs before his own.

And did you catch what Paul asked us to do back in verse 5? - *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.* Serve each other in love. Always look out for the needs of others. Consider other people better than yourselves. Don't do anything out of selfish ambition. The world would be a better place if we lived like that, but do we? Think about the last fight or argument that you had. What caused it? What causes most of our arguments? It's really our own selfishness. We're not getting what we want. In our natural human state, we are all bent inward, completely self-centered. If the world doesn't revolve around us, we get upset. How dare my family ask for more attention, I've had a long day a work to put food on the table!

Humility is often the last thing we want to show. It's only natural in this world to show off your accomplishments and to take pride in them. Instead of using our talents and abilities to be able to serve each other generously, we use them to get more for ourselves - more money, more toys, more recreation. It's all about us. In our desperate search for self-fulfillment, we let ourselves drift further and further from Christ and his people.

We don't realize how dangerous our pride and self-centeredness are and how they lead to death, but Christ understood it perfectly. That is why he humbled himself. That is why he rode into Jerusalem on what we now call Palm Sunday. He could have galloped in on a stallion in power and dread to defeat those who plotted to kill him, but without his death, we would still be in our sins.

So Jesus rode in in humility with his eyes fixed on the cross. Even though his life would only become more and more humiliating as he journeyed to the cross, nothing could keep him from obeying his Father's will. Today he is greeted with palm branches and cloaks on the ground, days later he will wear a crown of thorns and be mocked in a purple robe. Today the people shout hosanna, later this week the crowd will cry - Crucify him. Today he is carried by a donkey, on Friday his body will be carried to a borrowed tomb by Nicodemus and Joseph of Aramathea. Our Savior rides to his death, but he is also riding to conquer death. And so *he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!*

Can you believe that he rode willingly to the cross? Fully aware of everything that he must suffer? Crucifixion was a capital punishment that was reserved for the worst criminals or the lowliest of slaves. It was a slow and painful death by asphyxiation, and people would gather around to watch criminals get what they deserved. Crosses were put high in the air to make a statement. This man is cursed. Don't mess with the power of the Roman government. Yet the one who has all the power in the world allows himself to be lifted up. Only through the innocent substitutionary death of the God-man could sinful people be saved. He thought only of us as he endured the death that we deserved. Because the blood that he shed was the holy precious blood of God, he death counts for me and for you! God will not punish us for our sins. They are all forgiven, even our self-centeredness and our pride.

Transition: It's hard to comprehend the depth of Christ's love- that he would humble himself to die on the cross. It's humbling. And at first it even looks like a sad story ending in death. But that death was triumph! Jesus does this all so that you can have eternal glory in heaven. Our King conquered sin and death, you have become conquerors too.

The Apostle Paul was certain that Christ was victorious and we are too. He wrote *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* Christ rose from the dead and he was glorified! His mission was accomplished and now there was no need to set aside his glory. Now the risen Christ, still true man, still our brother, uses all his power and glory for our good. He promises us that he will always be with us. He will continue creating faith and strengthening it. He promises to forgive us and guide us.

The glorified King Jesus also promises that we are victorious - heaven is ours. We are more than conquerors. We don't always look like we're conquering life, but remember, Jesus didn't always look victorious either, and we are called to follow him. So it's ok if I'm nothing here on this earth; Christ became nothing to give me everything. I don't need to make a

name for myself, because the one who has the name that is above every name has written my name in heaven. I am free to serve.

The people on Palm Sunday waved their branches in joy and laid down their coats before the king. In humility we lay down everything before him too. At his feet we lay our sins and our pride, and he promises to forgive them. We praise him with shouts of joy.

We also know and confess that one day Jesus will also come back, and he will not come in humility but in power. At that time everyone will acknowledge him as Lord. Those who have rejected him on earth will do so with great sadness, anger, and disappointment. Even the demons will be forced to acknowledge his rule. Everyone will bow down to him and all will see his conquering power. And we will see him too. We will bow down to our Lord, but not in fear or anger or disappointment, but in awe and grateful love.

He is not just the Lord, but he is our Lord. Paul wrote that every tongue will acknowledge, or confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord. And we do. That's what our worship services are built around, confessing and proclaiming the great things God has done for us in Christ. We also do that in the word of the Apostles Creed. Notice how the creed so clearly confesses how Jesus humbled himself for us, even as he was crucified, died, and was buried. But he also rose from the dead and was exalted. Our humble King conquered sin and death. He gives you the victory in our Lord Jesus Christ. Please rise as we confess our faith together with the words of the Apostle's Creed.