

***“The Victorious Christ”***  
***John 12:12-19***

When a country wins a war, it often recognizes its victory by constructing a grand memorial:

- **The Victory Monument** was erected in Bangkok, Thailand in 1941 to commemorate the Thai victory in the Franco-Thai War.
- The Buon Ma Thuot **Victory Monument** in Vietnam commemorates the Ho Chi Minh Campaign, when Vietnamese forces achieved a decisive victory over the South Vietnamese government and American forces bringing about a reunification of Vietnam.
- **The American Victory Monument** in Yorktown, VA commemorates the 1781 victory at Yorktown and the alliance with France that brought about the end of the American Revolution and peace with England after the American Revolutionary War.
- **The Moscow Gate** is on the city’s southside and was built in the 1830s in memory of Russia’s victory in the 1828-29 War with Turkey.
- Of course you are aware of the **Arc de Triomphe** in Paris which was begun by Napoleon in 1806; it is one of four such arches in Paris.
- The Arc de Triomphe was built in the style of the Roman triumphal arch, which is a free-standing monumental structure in the shape of an archway that often spans a road, and usually stands alone, unconnected to other buildings. The main structure is often decorated with carvings, sculpted reliefs, and dedications. The Roman triumphal arch was used to commemorate victorious generals or significant public events such as the founding of new colonies, the construction of a road or bridge, the death of a member of the imperial family or the accession of a new emperor. The oldest surviving Roman arch is in **Orange, France**, built by Augustus (27 BC – 14 AD) — yes, that Caesar Augustus.

In lieu of building monuments, we also have **parades and victory marches** to commemorate various triumphs (like for World Series teams). It was just such a march that was in view nearly 2000 years ago when **Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem** on what has become known as Palm Sunday to the accolades of Jerusalem. While those people clamored for Jesus that day, they obviously didn’t understand Him because they were probably part of the crowd shouting for His crucifixion five days later. If they had listened, they would have learned an important truth about Christ in John’s account (12:12-19) of His triumphal entry —

***JESUS CHRIST IS THE VICTORIOUS KING OF ALL MEN AND THINGS.***

Observe **three aspects** of Christ’s declaration and arrival in Jerusalem as the Messianic King...

1. **Jesus Came in VICTORY** — **PROCLAIM** Him (vv. 12-13)
2. **Jesus Came in PEACE** — **Do Not be AFRAID** (vv. 14-15)
3. **Jesus Came without ACCEPTANCE** - Understand the **TIMES** (vv. 16-19)

## 1. Jesus Came in VICTORY — PROCLAIM Him (vv. 12-13)

- When John says, **On the next day** he is alluding back to the previous day (v. 1), which was **six days before Passover**. Since Passover began on Friday evening, six days earlier would be Saturday, so this is Sunday.
  - ✓ There were two crowds that day; one was a large crowd that was traveling to Jerusalem for the Passover and with Jesus from Bethany (v. 9).
  - ✓ The other crowd was coming out from Jerusalem to meet Jesus (v. 12).
  - ✓ We don't know the population of Jerusalem at that time; estimates vary — perhaps as small as 30,000 people. The additional crowd estimates vary from 500,000 to 12 million; it would have been noisy, congested, and difficult to move about, with people filling surrounding areas.
- The crowds didn't just come, but they came with **palm branches** (v. 13); waving these branches was initially done at the feast of Tabernacles (7:37ff).
  - ✓ Date palms were common in the area and still are, so they could have easily gathered them.
  - ✓ Originally, the waving of these branches was an act done for a King (2 Kings 23:41).
  - ✓ But about two centuries earlier palm branches became the national symbol and were even used in war celebrations and on coins. To show up with the branches was an act of patriotism (like a flag).
- With the congested region and the excitement of the branches, it would have also been relatively easy for the crowds to become frenzied — and the two crowds converged and **began to shout...**
  - ✓ **Hosanna** = "Please save us" came to be declaration of praise; "salvation has come" (Mt. 21:9 = "Hosanna to the Son of David" = "the Son of David is our salvation").
  - ✓ **Blessed is He** is from **Ps. 118:26** — one of Hallel (praise) Psalms (113-118) that would have been routinely sung while entering Jerusalem for Passover. It was also sung each morning at Feast of Tabernacles and clearly is a Messianic reference.
    - Notice that they are not pronouncing a blessing "in the name of the Lord."
    - But they are giving a blessing for the One who comes **in the name of the Lord**. They clearly are affirming that Jesus is the Messiah — **even the King of Israel**. A millennia earlier they rejected God as King (1 Sam. 8), they seemingly were now willing to accept Christ's authority.
  - ✓ This shouting was appropriate because of who Christ was and why He came (Lk. 2:14, 30ff).
  - ✓ This shouting was also necessary, because had they not shouted, the rocks would have (**Lk. 19:39-40**).
- As the cross looms, the final pictures of Christ are essential — He is King — not only of **Israel**, but **all**.
  - ✓ He is King over all other kings, authorities, powers, nations (1 Tim. 6:10). He is the King of the **Greeks** (Gentiles), who even recognized His authority (v. 20). Those Greeks were "'proselytes of the gate' — Gentiles who had forsaken pagan gods and worshiped the God of Israel, but who stopped short of adopting circumcision and the Mosaic food laws." [Kent] They also wanted Jesus, the King.

- ✓ But He is also King over sin. Israel wanted His kingship over Rome; they weren't so interested in authority over sin.
- ✓ He is also King of eternity. Two times in the NT we see palm branches being waved — here and in **Rev. 7:9-10** — a heavenly picture of worship of the Messiah, Jesus. Piper writes —

“The entry into Jerusalem with waving palms (John 12:13) was a short-lived preview of the eternal Palm Sunday to come. It needed to be said....

“I like to think of all our worship in this age as rehearsal for the age to come. One day we, who by God's grace have been faithful to the Lord, are going to stand with innumerable millions of believers from Bangladesh, Poland, Egypt, Australia, Iceland, Cameroon, Ecuador, Burma, Borneo, Japan, and thousands of tribes and peoples and languages purified by Christ, with palms of praise in our hand. And when we raise them in salute to Christ, he will see an almost endless field of green, shimmering with life and pulsating with praise. And then like the sound of a thousand Russian choruses, we will sing our song of salvation, while the mighty Christ, with heartfelt love, looks out over those whom he bought with his own blood.” [“He Set His Face to Go to Jerusalem.”]

- The point of all this talk about Christ's Kingship is that it informs us of the message we have to proclaim. The **crowd** did get that part right. Jesus *is* the **King**. What the crowd missed was the implication of what His Kingship meant:
  - ✓ They “knew” Jesus’ was born from Joseph and Mary (6:42) and from Galilee (7:27, 41); the readers of the gospels *know* that He is born of a virgin and His origin is in Heaven (**1:21ff**).
  - ✓ The people expected an abundance of signs from the Messiah (**7:31; 6:30**); Jesus *did* perform miracles to attest to His Kingship, but not for their temporal interests (**6:26**).
  - ✓ They thought Christ's Kingdom meant “Rome is out.” Christ said “My Kingdom is not of this world” (18:36). To focus on only worldly transformation is to miss the intent of Christ's rule.
  - ✓ They thought Messiah would rule and reign immediately (that's why they had palm branches); Christ came to suffer and die to atone for their sins (Is. 53; **1n. 12:32-34**). They were blind to that truth.
  - ✓ In summary, the people were exhilarated with Christ but not interested in transformation by Christ. There is an excitement about what Christ can do without an excitement about who Christ is (which is how the gospel is often “marketed” today). What He was then, He is today: Redeemer from sin.
  - ✓ This passage is a clear reminder about what we proclaim about Christ —
    - He is the victor over sin; He is the One who releases from sin — that's what the Messiah came to do — He is the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world (**1:29**); that is still our message (**20:23**).
    - The Gospel *is* about a Kingdom, but not the way too many think about it. It *is* about His sovereignty over our lives in salvation and the institution of His own MK and eternal kingdom.
  - ✓ This is not only what we proclaim to others, but this is also what we proclaim to ourselves in our sin.

*Our message about Christ (to ourselves and others) is that He is victorious King, come to end sin's domination.*

## 2. Jesus Came in PEACE — Do Not be AFRAID (vv. 14-15)

- Jesus not only came as the victorious King, but He came as a humble King...
- **Jesus, finding a young donkey...** = much more detail in Synoptics; cf. Mt. 21:1ff. Jesus arranged His ride — He didn't just take the leftovers off the used car lot. He was making a statement — He *chose* a donkey.
- **Fear not** is not something the crowds said that day — John is interpreting the event after the fact. When they saw Jesus on the donkey, they should have understood that they weren't to fear.
  - ✓ John is quoting from **Zech. 9:9**. Why should they not fear? Because if you look carefully (**behold**), you will see He's coming on a **donkey** (not a horse).
    - A donkey was not an inferior animal — used by princes and dignitaries — but it was sign that the rider would bring and provide peace. This was Christ's promise when He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey on the Sunday of Passion Week. And the nation rejected Him. So, He went to the cross and was resurrected to secure spiritual peace for those who believe in Him (**14:27; 16:33; 20:20**).
    - While He came on a donkey, don't miss that the Messiah will also reign (**Zech. 9:10, 13-15**).
    - That reign will ultimately be the King coming on a horse — which denotes power and conquest (and He will, **Rev. 19:11ff**; Zech. 14:1ff).
  - ✓ Jesus was not only coming as King, but coming in gentleness and peace. There will be no more wars — even *to the ends of the earth* (Zech. 9:10); He's more than just King of Israel.
- What the crowds and disciples were anticipating was anarchy and Roman overthrow (e.g., Acts 1:6).
- What Jesus came offering was peace of mind and heart because one was reconciled to God (**Lk. 2:14b**; Jn. 14:27; 16:33; 20:19, 21, 26; Rom. 5:1; 16:20). That reconciliation should have removed their **fear**.
- There is a time to be afraid of God and Christ —
  - ✓ The unredeemed, facing God's wrath should be fearful (Mt. 10:28).
  - ✓ The redeemed, in worship should be fearful — drawn to God in delight (Rev. 19:5; 1 Pt. 2:17).
- There is also a time **not** to be **afraid**. Over 100x in Scripture the believer is told not to be afraid because:
  - We will not die apart from God's gracious decree for his children.
  - Curses and divination do not hold sway against God's people.
  - The plans of terrorists and hostile nations do not succeed apart from our gracious God.
  - Man cannot harm us beyond God's gracious will for us.
  - God promises to protect His own from all that is not finally good for them.
  - God promises to give us all we need to obey, enjoy, and honor him forever.
  - God is never taken off guard.
  - God will be with us, help us, and uphold us in trouble.
  - Terrors will come, some of us will die, but not a hair of our heads will perish.
  - Nothing befalls God's own but in its appointed hour.

- When God Almighty is your helper, no one can harm you beyond what he decrees.
  - God's faithfulness is based on the firm value of his name, not the fickle measure of our obedience.
  - The Lord, our protector, is great and awesome. [Piper, *Pierced by the Word.*]
- Most people (including believers) tend to fear what they should not — persecution, shame, hardship, opinions and words of others, lack of... — but do not fear what they should — the living God (Heb. 4:13).
  - The message of the triumphal entry (and the cross) is that Christ came for peace and all fear is removed.

*In the triumphal entry, we have a new message to proclaim and a new peace to embrace.*

*Christ came as victorious King — this is the message that should identify us...*

*Christ came as peaceful & humble King — do not be afraid.*

### 3. Jesus Came without **ACCEPTANCE** - Understand the **TIMES** (vv. 16-19)

#### • Understand that many do not and will not **UNDERSTAND** Christ (v. 16)

- ✓ While witnessing the event and knowing the Scriptures and having been with Christ three years, the **disciples** missed the significance of what was happening while it was happening.
- ✓ They weren't the only ones — Mt. 21:10 — “the whole city was stirred saying, ‘who is this?’” Jerusalem was swollen from ~ 30,000 to at least 200,000 and possibly even 1-2 million. *STILL*, after three years, they didn't know (Jn. 1:11).
- ✓ For all the teaching by Christ, there was massive misunderstanding of Him then; for all the exposure to Christianity for two millennia, there is massive misunderstanding of Him now.
- ✓ We live in a culture and among people that do not understand Christ and His message.
  - Christ came for our great problem (sin), not our temporal problems (sick children and new job).
  - Belief in Christ is a lifestyle, not a decision (“believe” in Jn. is usually present, continual). So,
    - ... “You have a problem, sin.” (1:5b)
    - ... “God sent Christ into the world to illuminate your sin problem” (1:9)
    - ... “Those who received Him (trusted/believed continually), *He made* into His children” (fellowship; 1:12-13)
    - ... “Some (many) will not receive Him; those will have no understanding, fellowship, or sonship” (1:10-11)
    - ... The basic message of the gospel is: *sin, Savior, Substitute*. All must believe. And remember: the crowds seemed to get it right, but they were wrong. They wanted a different Jesus than the Savior Jesus. They ultimately rejected Him (12:37; Mt. 27:20ff).
- ✓ This is what we must tell them, and this is what we must understand that they do not understand.
- ✓ But recognize that after the resurrection, they did understand (**2:22**); the resurrection changes all.

- Understand that many are only CURIOUS about Christ (vv. 17-18)

- ✓ “[John] does not accord a very high place to the crowd’s positive response to Jesus.” [Carson]
- ✓ They came to Jesus because those who saw Lazarus’ resurrection were still talking (v. 17; cf. 9)
- ✓ They came to Jesus because He did a miracle (**sign**) — v. 18. They came because He performed many signs (**Jn. 6:26-29**). And when the signs were explained, they grumbled (**Jn. 6:41**). They always came when He did miracles but they weren’t interested in Him. What the people want and what Christ offers are two different things (they want signs; He offers Himself as a ransom for sin).
- ✓ As you talk to people about Christ, remember that He may simply be a curiosity, just one more voice to be considered, one more option, but for the most part they are unmoved by Him (the next day the money changers were back in the temple making trades — the Messiah came to visit, and all they could think about was making a few more denarii).
- ✓ Do you ever wonder “why do people not care about truth?” Because they want what they want...
- ✓ The curiosity of the crowds should shape our gospel presentations:
  - Jesus did not come to fix temporal problems; He came as King and Lord to be followed and obeyed.
  - Our hearts should be broken — **Lk. 19:41ff**. Does apathy to the gospel grieve you? Do we pray?

- Understand that most are OPPOSED to Christ (v. 19)

- ✓ Most not only do not understand Christ, they not only are merely curious about Christ, but they are opposed to Christ — **you are not doing any good...**
  - The discussion among the Pharisees is almost amusing because they have turned on each other — “I thought you said you had a great plan to get rid of Him — a lot of good that did!” (**11:53, 57**).
  - None of them could do anything because Christ was in control of the circumstance (**7:43f; 8:59**).
- ✓ They were angry with one another and they were angry with Christ. Note the gracious works of Christ in **Mt. 21:15** — and they were indignant! In **Lk. 19:39** the pleaded with Him to rebuke the 12!
- ✓ Note the irony — in anger and jealousy they said, **the world has gone after Him**.
  - That is not literally true — the whole world did not go after Christ to follow Him (**2:23-25; 6:60**).
  - But some from the world (not just Israel) did turn in faith to Him (v. 20). And that was His plan in coming — that the world would be saved (**3:17; 10:16**).

- When Jesus Christ came, He came to His own created world, and the people in it rejected Him (1:11). He was a misunderstood curiosity who was rejected with anger and hatred. That is still true today.
- Understand the people to whom you preach the gospel today...

**CONCLUSION:** When Jesus walked into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, it looked like a victorious day for Jerusalem and Him. That “victory” turned to “defeat” only five days later. And that “defeat” set the stage for the only victory that will stand the test of eternity — **the empty tomb**. The crowds misunderstood and had the wrong kind of victory parade. But Christ still was and is the victorious Christ as would be revealed in seven days.