

“What kind of Salvation?”

After reciting the Tenth Commandment and not coveting your neighbor’s donkey – a catechumen noted that these people sure are concerned about their donkeys. Here in our text, Jesus sure seems concerned about “a donkey and her colt” as well – and as a brother pastor often reminds me – “the Holy Spirit doesn’t waste ink.”

So, why so much ink regarding this lowly “beast of burden”? First, we hear Jesus instructing His disciples to go and fetch this animal – then St. Matthew tells us that tis was to fulfill the prophesy of Zechariah – and then we get the play-by-play reaction of the crowds to this man riding into town on the donkey.

All of this to paint an unmistakable picture. When you see a man standing in a boat as soldiers’ row it across a river – you know that it’s General George Washington. When you see the astronaut setting foot on the moon – you know it’s Neil Armstrong. When Air Force One lands, with marines standing by, saluting – you know the President of the United States is about to disembark.

So also here, with this man riding into Jerusalem on a donkey – the crowds know this is their king – and not just any king, but the “Son of David.” When Solomon (David’s son) was anointed king, they placed him on King David’s donkey and paraded him through the streets of Jerusalem.

The Lord had promised that He would raise up one of David’s sons to sit upon his throne – and His reign would be from everlasting to everlasting. The prophet directs God’s people to “Behold, your king coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.”

One greater than Solomon is here. Jesus enters Jerusalem mounted on a donkey – and the picture is clear. The promised Savior is here, with His everlasting kingdom. And Zechariah prophesies: “Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation.” (9:9)

The crowds greet King Jesus with shouts of “hosanna!” These are shouts of deliverance – shouts of relief – shouts which literally mean, “save us now!”

“Save us now” Son of David! “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” And yet, within the week – their “hosannas” are replaced with shouts of “crucify Him, crucify Him!”

How can this be? How can they crucify their long-awaited King? How can they put their Savior to death? I know – all this was necessary – all of this was to fulfill God’s plan of salvation – but it still strikes me that such a turn of events should take place so quickly.

Some have suggested that Jesus didn’t turn out to be the kind of king they wanted – that He didn’t run the Romans out of Jerusalem. But, maybe we’re asking the wrong question. Not – what kind of KING did they want – but what kind of SALVATION did they need?

No doubt many were looking for an earthly king who would wield earthly might to save them from their earthly enemies – just like King David of old. Granted, riding a donkey doesn’t strike fear into anyone – but that IS how the Lord rescued His people of old – using simply, humble means (like a smooth stone and a slingshot) to strike down their gigantic enemies.

And so, it’s not beyond reason for the crowds to believe that humble Jesus would likewise save them from their great enemy – the Romans. But you know how that story ends – how the Romans take Jesus in hand and crucify Him.

Are you looking for a king who will save you from your earthly enemies – from those who mock you and take advantage of you? Are you looking for a Savior who will cure cancer and Alzheimer’s – who will create a nation of great moral standing, of peace and prosperity – a utopia on earth? If that’s the kind of SALVATION you are looking for – you’d better look for another king.

Regardless of the kind of KING you want – the Lord gives you the SALVATION you need. It’s the salvation of which St. Paul speaks when he says – “salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.”

It is a salvation for those who walk in darkness – in orgies and drunkenness, in sexual immorality and sensuality – a salvation for those whose battle is with quarreling and jealousy.

It is the salvation we need in our day – a salvation from sin – a salvation from ourselves! Sin is our great enemy – and it wreaks its destruction in our nation, our marriages, and in our bodies. But it also has eternal consequences – separating us from God here in time – and threatening to separate us from God for all eternity!

Whether you realize the seriousness of sin, or not – whether you confess your own sinfulness, or not – whether forgiveness is your top priority, or not --- that's what you need --- and that's why your Savior comes to you, righteous and having salvation.

For you and your salvation, God sends His Son from heaven to earth. The King descended from His heavenly throne and humbled Himself to be born of a virgin. He humbled Himself to take on your humanity, and like a beast of burden, carried all your sin. Jesus humbled Himself to be handed over and crucified – to be put to death – to forgive you – to save you.

“Behold, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation.” He comes to you through humble means (a Word, water, bread and wine) – to rescue you from the threatening perils of your sin – to forgive you, and clothe you with His righteousness – to save you NOW.

“Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” Blessed are YOU – for you are saved – in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.