

“Who is This Man – Jesus!”

Ask the children – “Who is this man riding into Jerusalem on a donkey?” – and they’ll shout – Jesus! Ask them – “Who is this man hanging on the cross?” – and they’ll shout – Jesus! The little children know who He is – but as we listen to St. Matthew’s Passion account – there are many who cannot answer this question.

The Passion of Our Lord actually starts in Matthew 26 (but we’ve used the shorter version for our service today). In preparing for this sermon – I was struck by all the different names/titles used for Jesus – so I decided to go back and write them all down.

From your listening – what would you say is the most common name/title used? That’s right, “Jesus.” That much everyone seems to know. “Who is this man? He’s Jesus!” Ah, but who IS this Jesus fellow? Or, as we’ve heard Him say before – “Who do you say that I am?”

Well, the first title given a number of times to Jesus, is “Son of Man” (all which were in chapter 26). Jesus is the “Son of Man” – which is not primarily a reference to His humanity (as we often think) – but to His divinity! He is the one in Daniel 7 who is before the throne of the Ancient of Days – the One who is given the authority to judge the world.

This Jesus, who rides into Jerusalem on a donkey, is true God. We think of Him coming into Jerusalem to suffer and die – but in so doing, as the Son of Man – He is exercising authority over all things, and judging the world!

Jesus refers to Himself as the “Son of Man” when He is standing before the Caiaphas and the whole Council – and, upon hearing it, the high priest tears his robes! Who does this man think He is? He is blaspheming – claiming to be God. This man thinks He will judge us!

And they spit on Him, and punch and slap Him and say that He deserves to die (all because He says He is the Son of Man).

Which leads us to the next name by which He is called. Jesus is “the Christ.” Some refer to Him as the One who is “called Christ” – as if they don’t believe it. Well, Jesus IS the Christ – literally, “the anointed One” – the One selected by God, for sacrifice – the One selected by God, to atone for the sin of the world – the One selected, to redeem.

That’s who “this man” is riding into Jerusalem – who some refer to spitefully – and others refer to as a “righteous” and “innocent” man.

Another title is “Son of God” – or, “the Christ, the Son of God.” But did you heard how this title was used? “IF you are the Son of God” – come down from the cross, save yourself (and us). Jesus IS the Son of God – true God (and true man) – who cannot come down from the cross and still be the Christ, the “Jesus” whom the Father has given Him to be – who cannot come down from the cross IF YOU are to be saved.

There is another name or title that needs to be pointed out – and that is “king.” Jesus is referred to as “the king of the Jews” – the “king of Israel” – and again, that title gets everyone fired up! Pilate questions whether Jesus is a king – and it drives His own people (the Jews) crazy.

Jesus AS King is rejected by almost everyone – but what Pilate has written, stands written – “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.” Yes, this man Jesus – IS the eternal God – descended from heaven to judge the world. He is the Anointed One of God. He is God on earth – to rule and reign over all things, all people.

One thing that cannot be denied is that “this man” has everyone stirred up! Everyone seems to have some kind of interest in Him. To watch His Passion, the way He is treated – you’d think, like the religious authorities, that He’s the worst deviant ever – or, like the crowds, that He is a criminal – or, like Pilate, that He is a scapegoat.

But Jesus is King – whether man believes it or not. He is robed in purple – given a staff – crowned – and seated on His throne – with a right hand and a left hand man. He who sits upon the throne of the cross rules over death with His death – sheds His blood to atone for all sin – and THIS IS the judgement of the world!

Who is “this man”? With the children, let us shout “Jesus” and sing our “hosannas” to Him who comes in the name of the Lord. Let us confess that “this man” Jesus – is the Lord who “saves us now.”

In this Holy Week, God Himself is revealing “this man” to you – giving you the eyes of faith to see who Jesus is.

He is the Son of Man who judges you by His blood – shed “for you” for the forgiveness of all your sin. He is the One anointed and appointed by God to be sacrificed in your place. He is the very Son of God, who is also true man – who suffered, was crucified, died and was buried. He is the King – who rules and reigns over your sin, and its death.

This Jesus – who promises to dwell where two or three are gathered in His name – comes riding into town today. He is the Lord who saves YOU by His blood. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Amen.

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