John 12:12-19; Zechariah 9:9-13; The King is Coming Home I. The Context of His Coming II. The Manner of His Coming

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, following the crowds can be a very dangerous thing. Sometimes when you watch the news, you can see the crowds being moved and manipulated. Crowd Mentality is when a person is influenced by the masses to do things that they would not normally do. People can be caught up in a movement. When you see lots of other people doing something, it is very tempting to want to join in and go along. But Jesus was often surrounded by crowds. Sometimes the crowds would press in on him- almost trampling him. Everyone wanted to see him- if only to touch the hem of his robe. But not everyone had a good motivation when it came to following Jesus. Today is a day called by many different names. This Sunday is called Palm Sunday, the Triumphal Entry, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Passion Sunday and the beginning of Passover. So there are a lot of different aspects of this day- but today we are going to consider the coming of Jesus as King to Jerusalem. Specifically, why did Jesus come to Jerusalem. As our sermon title states, the King is Coming Home. But what kind of a welcome will the king receive? What is he coming home to do? Will His own people accept Him or will they continue to reject Him? So today we consider this theme: Jesus Christ returns to Jerusalem as a King who must die for His people. Being born in Bethlehem was always to be the beginning of his earthly ministry- and his death outside the city gates of Jerusalem is where His humiliation would end.

**I. The Context of His Coming**

As we begin, we look at the context of His coming to Jerusalem. Now as you know, Jerusalem was the capital city of Jewish people. Even in the life of Jesus, as we will see, Jerusalem looms large in His view. As the City of David and home to the temple, Jerusalem was the location of the earthly throne and the spiritual center of the nation. Kings ruled here- and God’s footstool was established on earth here as well. So as we open our text in John 12:12, we find that Jesus is approaching he holy city of Jerusalem. The place where Melchizedek once ruled as the priest king- the city of righteousness and peace. Our passage focusses on the fact that Jesus was not alone in his coming- rather large crowds had come with him. We find these large crowds already in v. 9- and again in v. 12- where they come out to see Jesus. So we have one crowd that gathers around Jesus from Bethany in v. 9; and another crowd that comes out of Jerusalem in v. 12 who were in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover feast. The first crowd had heard about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead- so they came out to see the miracle worker and this dead man now raised. Again in v. 17- this crowd was bearing witness to the work of Jesus in raising the dead. And another crowd will be called out of the city as the first crowd accompanies Jesus into the city. In other words- there are a lot of people here! Josephus estimated that there were some 2.7 million people who would be present in the holy city over the Passover week. This was a mixed crowd- as they gathered for various reasons. Some came to see this miracle worker. Others were disciples who accompanied Jesus on his journey. Some were just curious about these events- and they were caught up in the masses of people. Others were busy with their Passover preparation- getting their own household in order and preparing to select their own Passover lamb. But what had happened recently that would cause such a stir? Well, Jesus has just raised Lazarus from the grave in John 11. A man dead for 4 days had been brought back to life. It is important to remember that it would be this raising of a dead man that would excite both Jesus friends and foes! Those who believed in Him would be moved- they would be filled with awe and wonder at this event! Others would moved by anger- because of this resurrection they would plot to kill Jesus in 11:53- and even seek to kill Lazarus as well in 12:10. Lazarus’ presence proves a problem to Jesus’ enemies- undermining their plot to squash this uprising. So the raising of Lazarus has really brought things to a head- some have been moved by faith to believe in Jesus. Other have been moved by anger to plot against him. So the first major event that has set the stage for Passover is the raising of Lazarus. The second major event that has set the stage for Passover is the anointing of Jesus. Let’s read from Mark 14:3-9. Here we find Mary the sister of Lazarus who is moved by love and thanksgiving. Notice what Jesus says in Mark 14:8- she has anointed my body for burial! So if we take a step back, we see that the larger context here is that Jesus is going to Jerusalem to be put to death – to be buried! We find this same focus in Matthew 16:21- I must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things and be killed; and on the third day rise again. So Jesus has set his heart- His focus- on this city! Every road he takes will lead him here- every decision moves him one step closer! Jesus is resolute in this fact- He must go to Jerusalem knowing that it will be here that He will suffer and die! If He is to accomplish His task- this is the only way! Jesus knew that Jerusalem would be the place of his death- and yet he came! For Jesus, Palm Sunday really is the beginning of the end. The last few days before the Passover Lamb will have His blood shed! For Jerusalem is not just the city of Daivd- it is also the home of His enemies! So as we consider the Triumphal Entry of Jesus we have to ask ourselves this question- is the King of Glory taking His throne or is a convicted man going to his execution? Is this a triumphal procession- or a funeral dirge? And still others were enemies who were plotting to take his life as v. 19 recounts. So we have the 2 crowds, his own disciples, and the enemies that rejected him. We find these enemies already in John 11:47- worried about losing their place or privilege with the Romans. Making plots to kill Jesus. In 11:57 they give order to arrest Jesus. And again in 12:19- the Pharisees worry that the whole world is going after Jesus. They were jealous of his following- jealous that the crowds listened to Him! Jesus knew that his enemies were here- and yet he came! So mixed into this mess is the rising tide of hostility! Those who will seek his life to save their own privileged status! Jesus was regarded as a criminal by these Jewish leaders. They would stop at nothing to silence him. So the context is clear- there are many people here- all thrown into the pot. Issues are coming to a head- the plot thickens- and the chess pieces are in place.

**II. The Manner of His Coming**

As we move into our second point, we see that the people had a very different expectation concerning the nature and manner of Jesus coming. The crowds were expecting one thing- but Jesus was expecting something quite the contrary. So what were the people expecting? What kind of king were they looking for? What kind of salvation did they have in mind? Well, remember that the crowds were excited about the recent resurrection of Lazarus! They remember the feeding of the 5000. They were looking for a king who would give them victory- but victory over whom and in what way? The first indication that we find in our passage is in John 12:13- the crowds take palm branches and run out to meet him. So what did these palm branches mean? Well, the palm branch is a symbol of the nation of Israel and of victory. For us, it would be like waving the stars and stripes. The palm branch was a symbol of national pride and Jewish victory- even patriotism! Added to this, the crowds cry out- Hosanna in v. 13. Now hosanna is a rich, Hebrew word linked to a call for victory, deliverance and salvation. It had become a rallying cry or chant for victory. So instead of the stars and stripes- and chanting USA- we find this crowds waving their palm branches and chanting- Hosanna. This is clearly a nationalistic movement- as the crowds were hoping for Jesus to come in as the victorious king. They were looking for deliverance from the bondage to Rome- they were hoping for a national revival where physical healing and prosperity would reign. But even though they missed the point of Jesus work, they did get some things right! Jesus was coming to bring salvation- His would be the victory. But the manner by which victory would be secured would not be at the edge of a sword into their enemies- but rather the tip of a spear into Jesus side! Jesus came into Jerusalem- not as a part of His exaltation but rather as a part of His humiliation! Our reading from Zechariah proves this fact- as the king would come humble and lowly- mounted on a cold. Instead of bringing warfare, Jesus would bring peace! Peace not only to the Israelites- but peace to the nations as Zech. 9:10 puts it. His kingdom will spread and extend from sea to sea! But the way in which victory will be secured is not by military triumph- but rather with the shedding of the blood of the covenant Zech. 9:11 states. It will be by the shedding of this blood that the prisoner will be set free! So yes, Jesus is coming as the king! But the way to victory is through humiliation- the triumph comes after the blood of the covenant is shed! He comes in righteousness and brings salvation, the prophet says. A new nation and kingdom will be established- and it will be much larger than this little area in Palestine- and it will include way more nations than just the Israelites. But first, there must be suffering and death! The way to victory is not by avoiding suffering- but rather it is only by the cross that victory over the enemies will be secured. It was for this reason that John 12:27 states that Jesus’ soul was troubled. The cross loomed large ahead! And who were these enemies that would be defeated? Not the Roman army- but rather the enemy of sin, death and hell! Satan will be defeated by Jesus Christ the King- but only if Jesus would humble himself- all the way to death on the cross as Phil. 2 puts it! As Jesus drank the cup of God’s wrath and bowed his head on the cross- only then would true and complete victory be secured! So to apply this point, what kind of king are you looking for? People have various reasons for following Jesus. Like the crowds in our passage, some are looking at Jesus as a great teacher! Others are enamored by the signs and wonders- hoping that Jesus will give them physical blessings today. Still other look to Jesus as the cure for our national problems. As the crowds in John 12 did- many people think that Jesus is little more than the solution to civic unrest. But did Jesus come to make Israel great? Is the reign and rule of Jesus made evident in the prosperity of one nation over another on this earth? What kind of King is Jesus? How did He gain victory and what kind of victory did He achieve? Don’t misunderstand me, our civic leaders do need to repent and believe. But this earthly nation we live in will not last forever! Jesus did not come to Jerusalem to make the nation of Israel the envy of the world. No, this view of Jesus’ reign is too small! His kingdom is to be over all nations! His rule shall be from sea to sea! He shall speak peace to the nations! You see, Pilate had it right! Jesus is the king of the Jews- for salvation comes from the Jews! But Jesus is also the king of the Gentiles- He is the king of the world! The nations belong to Him! So we need to bow the knee- kiss the Son if you will. Rejoicing in that He was willing to suffer for our sins.

To conclude; whose kingdom does Jesus establish? God’s or man? What path does he take to get there? The easy path of manipulation or the hard part of humiliation? For soon the shepherd will be struck and the sheep will scatter! The crowd’s shout of hosanna will fade- and a new chant will be heard. The crowds that honored him will go home- and another crowd will take its place! This crowd will shout different words- crucify this man- we have no king but Ceasor! But this is not a surprise to Jesus- He knew that this was the only way to save His people! The time had come- His suffering was at hand- so Jesus goes up to Jerusalem. Jesus Christ returns to Jerusalem as a King who must die for His people.