

SERMON

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Immanuel Lutheran Church, Bartlett, Illinois

Palm/Passion Sunday A, - March 29, 2026

Isaiah 50:4-9a, Philippians 2:5-11 John 12:30-43

KLIPITY-KLOP, KLIPITY-KLOP, KLIPITY CLOP...

The promised Messiah, God's anointed King, -

- arriving in Jerusalem
- to the excited cheers of welcome from God's people
- but on a little, lowly donkey!

The one born to ascend the throne of great King David,

- to fulfill God's promise that there would always be a descendant
- to rule in David's line.

And the one born by the Holy Spirit through the Virgin Mary

- as the very Son of God--
- entering Jerusalem as king on a little, lowly klipity-klopping donkey.

I don't think I have ever seen anyone riding on a donkey.

The closest I have come

- was growing up outside of town in the country
- where at one time we had a big tall horse by the name of "Dolly"
- and a much smaller pony with the well-deserved name of "Bucky."
- Bucky was about the size of a donkey.

- and definitely was “mule-headed”

- and NOT very impressive.

But the people of Jerusalem would have compared this very humble arrival

- to the style in which King Herod would arrive in Jerusalem

- from his home on the seaside.

- A kingly chariot,

- horses with soldiers mounted on them,

- flags flying

- armor and spears gleaming in the sun.

- all proclaiming the POWER of the Roman government.

Yet this weak-appearing, humble entrance

- was what ALMIGHTY God, chose--

- OUR GOD.

Things became even stranger that week

- for the one we call the King of Kings.

Rather than drive out the Romans with a mightier army,

- our king received a death sentence

- on charges cynically cooked up by the powerful religious rulers

- and with the reluctant,

- but politically motivated,

- collaboration of the Roman government,

The King of Kings,

- given a crown of thorns pushed into his scalp

- and with a sarcastic, mocking sign nailed to His blood stained cross reading

“THIS is the King of the Jews.”

How might we have reacted if we were there?

Would WE have still believed that Jesus was King at the end of this week?

- The promised Messiah

- seeming so weak and helpless

- suffering such mockery and horrible pain--

- and then dying like a criminal.....

If WE were among His closest disciples,

- would WE have remembered His words

- that on the third day He would rise again--

- and still believed--

- in the midst of all that savage cruelty

- and undeserved suffering

- and hopeless tears?...

It all was NOT too much for the Lord Jesus.

- He kept His Word.

- He rose again--

- three words we SAY so easily...

- so once again: HE ROSE AGAIN.

The hopeless-looking horrible suffering

- itself became His victory over Satan

- and all Satan's powerful forces

- not only for the nation of Israel,

- but for all the world

- for all time.

“The blood of Jesus Christ , His Son, **cleanses us from all sin.**” - 1 John 1:7

Our God, the King of Kings, was NOT overcome by the suffering--

- or the plots of the powerful,

- or the fickleness of the crowds,

- or the power of Satan

- or the apparent weakness

- or by death itself.

Jesus rose from the dead AS HE SAID HE WOULD...

That same Jesus Christ CAN **appear** to US also today

- to be very weak

- and His kingship a sad failure.

We watch as He is pushed around and mocked

- by many seemingly more powerful forces
- in OUR society--
- some in powerful government positions,
- others in PROUD academic robes,
- some even in religious robes who want to shrink who He is.

We hear arrogant people insisting that

- in any public conversation even the mention of Jesus
- needs to be silenced,
- and that His modern disciples are simply fools.

It is critical for us who love Him

- to understand that the King of Kings is still among us reigning today--
- still with apparent weakness
- not leading a powerful army with nuclear weapons
- not destroying the evil that opposes Him,
- but working in and through it all.....

It all can be frustrating to those who

- love and follow Him--
- even painful at times.
- God's ways have still not become our ways.

But the Lord Jesus has said He will come again,

- as Judge,
- with armies of angels
- in glory and POWER.

And it will be as He has said.....

Meanwhile..., where are we to look for His reign?

Let's remember what else He has said.

It will be just what we need to know for these times

- and not fall away.

Let's keep in mind that our Lord has clearly told US:

- to continue in His Word
- and to search the Holy Scriptures to meet Him there
- and to continue in the breaking of the bread where He reveals Himself.

Not outwardly impressive things at all, but small humble-seeming things.

And let's keep in mind that He taught us

- to love HIM in the very least of people--
- the unimportant-looking, afflicted, WEAK people--
- and to continue to understand that the most important and lasting things
- in our life with Him ARE very weak-appearing things
- especially to the eyes of arrogant and proud types.

Teaching us to be like LITTLE children in our faith--

- to RECEIVE THE LIFE OF HIS KINGDOM

- as a **gift** of love and grace

- with no thought that we create it by our own power.

Recall how the King of Kings in His earthly ministry

- took time out to lift even infants and bless them.

Now that same King points us to the weak appearing things of

- FAITH-- simply TRUSTING that with God all things ARE possible,

- that God both can and does keep promises made.

- And pointing us to HOPE-- such a vulnerable appearing thing,

- but that which brings indestructible joy and peace

- because when backed by our King, hope is certain.

- And the greatest of all, weak-appearing LOVE--

- love both of God and our neighbor....

- Again, seeming a VERY weak thing by human measures,

- but it is love which will never pass away because

- it is eternal.

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- God is love!

- His presence is connected with love.

- And when we come to the end our days here on earth,

- preparing to leave all behind,
- what will be most important to us?
- Will it not be having the support of those who LOVE us....
- relationships we believe will continue even more fully in the life to come?
- and FAITH that sees the everlasting reality of the unseen ...
- and HOPE, which by the Spirit's power,
- is certain of a future with our Savior.

Apparent weakness, vulnerability.

But marks of how our King still reigns in our present world.

The same King will come at His time

- in unimaginable power and glory
- and make clear He knows those
- who have recognized Him as their King in these confusing days.
- and that He recognizes by name those who
- have not been afraid to say that they know Him and love Him.
- He will acknowledge all those
- who have faithfully confessed their love for Him
- right in the midst of all the many present attacks on Him
- and in spite of the fickle crowds.
- He will claim them as His own to the Father....

His will is that EVERYONE recognize who He is **for them**....

This is a time of grace--

- a gift of His love
- so that we can be ready for the day still to come.

And this is the time for us to share the truth about Him with others

- to help them be ready too.

The one who rose from the dead

- as impossible as that once seemed
- will return as He promised
- to set all things right...
- as impossible as that now seems to many.

Bottom line: Do not be deceived by these evil days.

- What now seems like invincible power
- of those who oppose His reign
- will have an end.

What is united with Christ

- no matter how weak-appearing now
- will endure forever.

Let's remember this Holy Week

- that our King DOES reign still

- in klipity-klop ways--

- in His own unique, chosen loving ways--

- and that He WILL live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,

- as one God, NOW and forever. Amen.