

WHEN THE KING YOU WELCOME IS NOT THE KING YOU EXPECT

22 MARCH 2026

SUMMARY

This Palm Sunday message explores the paradox of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, where He is welcomed as King but arrives in an unexpected manner—on a donkey rather than a war horse. The message traces the journey through Lent, building on previous weeks' themes of awareness, interruption, decision, dependence, surrender, and community. It confronts the congregation with the reality of human weakness and fickleness, as demonstrated by the crowd that praised Jesus on Palm Sunday but called for His crucifixion days later. The message emphasizes that Jesus chose the cross despite our rejection and weakness, offering a solution to sin that no self-help program can provide. It calls believers to recognize their need for a Savior and to go deeper in their understanding of Christ's kingship, which is rooted in self-giving love rather than domination.

KEY POINTS

- Palm Sunday marks a turning point in Lent, directing us toward the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- Jesus' entry on a donkey was a deliberate statement revealing the nature of His kingship—one of peace and self-giving love rather than domination
- The disciples recognized Jesus as King but did not fully understand His kingship
- We often want Jesus to work within our framework and expectations rather than surrendering to His plan
- The crowd's fickleness—praising Jesus one day and calling for His crucifixion days later—reflects our own weakness and tendency to turn away from God
- Palm Sunday confronts us with our weakness and helps us recognize our need for a Savior
- Jesus chose the cross despite our rejection, offering a solution to sin that goes deeper than behavioral modification
- Christ came to remedy the core weakness within us that we cannot overcome through our own effort
- The grace God gives us may be unexpected, such as patience rather than changed circumstances
- Lent is about interior work that God does in us, stripping back layers to expose our weakness and frailty.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

- Luke 9:51 - Jesus set His face to go to Jerusalem
- Luke 19:36 - The triumphal entry, disciples spreading cloaks and praising
- Luke 20:9-15 - The Parable of the Wicked Tenants

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SMALL GROUP GUIDE

This guide is designed to help your small group dive deeper into the message.

OPENING PRAYER

Invite the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and open hearts to God's transforming work during this Lenten season. Pray the IMPACTERS Community Prayer .

ICEBREAKER

Share about a time when something turned out completely different than you expected. How did you respond?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Part 1: Recognizing the King

1. The Unexpected King

- Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey, not a war horse. What does this tell us about the nature of His kingdom?
- When have you encountered God in an unexpected way? How did you respond?

2. Recognizing vs. Understanding

- The disciples recognized Jesus as King but didn't fully understand His mission. Where in your life do you recognize God's work but don't fully understand what He's doing?
- How comfortable are you with following God when you don't have all the answers?

Part 2: Our Framework vs. God's Plan

3. The Grace Story

- Emma shared how she prayed for "grace to do the impossible" (changing others' minds), but God gave her grace for patience instead. Have you experienced something similar—where God's answer was different than your expectation?
- What areas of your life do you want God to work within YOUR framework rather than His?

4. Crowd Mentality

- The crowd praised Jesus on Palm Sunday but shouted "Crucify Him" days later. What makes us spiritually fickle?
- When are you most likely to turn away from God or choose against Him? (When things get tough? When you don't understand? When others influence you?)

Part 3: Confronting Our Weakness

5. The Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Luke 20:9-15)

- God kept sending prophets, then finally His Son. What does this tell you about God's persistence in pursuing us?
- How does recognizing your weakness lead you to need a Savior?

6. Beyond Self-Improvement

- The message emphasized that Christ came for something deeper than behavior modification. What's the difference between self-improvement and transformation through Christ?
- How does this change your understanding of Lent or spiritual growth?

Part 4: He Chose the Cross

7. Despite Our Rejection

- "Even if you failed in all of that, Jesus still chose the cross." How does this truth impact you?
- What does it mean to you personally that Jesus "set his face toward Jerusalem" knowing what was coming?

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Option 1: Honest Assessment

- Set aside 30 minutes to journal about your spiritual "crowd moments" — times when you've turned away from God or chosen against Him
- Confess these to God and receive His grace
- Share one insight with a trusted friend or accountability partner

Option 2: Prayer of Surrender

- Daily pray: "God, give me grace for what YOU want, not what I expect"
- Keep a simple log of where God's answers differ from your expectations
- Practice saying "Your will be done" in one specific area of struggle

Option 3: Meditation on the Cross

- Each day this week, spend 10 minutes reflecting on what Jesus endured on the journey from Palm Sunday to Good Friday
- Use this simple prayer: "Jesus, you chose the cross. You chose me. Help me choose You today."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR THE WEEK

1. Where am I trying to make Jesus work within my framework instead of surrendering to His?
2. What weakness in my life is God exposing this Lent that I need to bring to Him?
3. How can I recognize Jesus as King this week, even in unexpected ways?

CLOSING PRAYER PROMPTS

Invite group members to pray for one another, focusing on:

- Recognizing Jesus as King in areas of life where we've been resistant
- Grace to trust God when He works unexpectedly
- Strength to walk through Holy Week with open hearts
- Awareness of our weakness and dependence on Christ