

Sunday, March 29, 2026

Holy Week: Palm Sunday

John 12:12-19; Psalm 24:7

“How Do Our Hearts Receive Our King?”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

My friends,

For this Palm Sunday,
let me begin with one central question.

How does your heart receive its King?

Your King comes to you!

So, how do you receive Him?

Are the gates of your heart flung open wide?

Do you welcome Him with palms?

With praise?

With expectation?

With indifference?

With resistance?

On the first Palm Sunday,

the crowds welcomed Jesus.

*“They took branches of palm trees
and went out to meet Him,
crying out,*

‘Hosanna!

Blessed is He who comes

in the name of the Lord,

even the King of Israel!” (John 12:13)

However,

their welcome did not last.

“Hosannas” would be replaced
with *“Crucify Him!”*

Given this,
 today we must ask:
How does your heart receive your King?

1.

My friends,
 King Jesus comes to Jerusalem.
*“Righteous and having salvation is He,
 humble and mounted on a donkey,
 on a colt,
 the foal of a donkey.”* (Zechariah 9:9b)
 Jesus is first received with joy—but then soon after rejected.

He comes humbly, riding on a donkey’s colt.
 No warhorse.
 No chariot.
 No marching soldiers.
 No swords.
 Instead, He brings peace and salvation.

The crowds receive Jesus with joy.
 They cry: *“Hosanna!”*
 That Hebrew word means,
“Save us, we pray!” (Psalm 118:25)
 They expect salvation.
 They expect victory over Rome.
 They raise palm branches in hope of national triumph.
 For these reasons, they welcome their King.
*“Hosanna!
 Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord,
 even the King of Israel!”*

The crowds hope
 for a political and economic saviour.
 One who will free them from Rome.
 One who will make Jerusalem rich and powerful.

Meanwhile,
 the rulers fear Him.
 They fear Rome's wrathful reaction.
 They fear losing their nation
 and their place in it.
 So they plot.
 One man will die,
 and the nation will be saved.

So the joyful welcome does not last.
 The rulers stir up the crowds.
 Joy turns to anger.
 "Hosanna!" becomes "*Crucify Him!*"

Why?
 Because Jesus does not meet their expectations.
 He came to save them from sin,
 not politicians.
 So, He does not cast Pilate out.
 Instead, He lets Himself be arrested and beaten.
 "*I gave my back to those who strike,
 and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard.
 I hid not my face
 from disgrace and spitting*" (Isaiah 50:6)

Pilate shows them their King.
 Beaten.
 Flogged.
 "*His appearance was so marred,
 beyond human semblance...*" (Isaiah 52:14)
 "*He had no...majesty
 that we should look at Him,
 and no beauty
 that we should desire Him.
 He was despised and rejected by men,
 a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;*

*and as one from whom men hide their faces
He was despised,
and we esteemed Him not.” (Isaiah 53:2–3)*

They were like the seed sown on rocky ground.
They had received the Word with joy.
But they had no root.
When trouble came, they fell away. (Matthew 13:20–21)

Unable to accept a suffering King,
they rejected Him.
“*Crucify! Crucify!*”

But what does King Jesus do?
He does exactly what He came to do.
He suffers.
He is struck.
He is mocked.
For them.
For us.
For you.

Jesus dies for their sin.
He dies for your sin.
And my sin.

So too,
our hearts often praise Christ—
then, like the crowd—
resist Him
when He does not meet our expectations.
When He allows suffering to enter our lives.

Yet He still loves us.
He still goes to the cross for us.

2.

My friends,
The King came humbly to Jerusalem.
In the same way,
He still comes today.
To you,
today.
Like on that first Palm Sunday,
He comes humbly,
bringing salvation.

He has not come to you today
on a literal donkey.
But He has come to you
on the 'donkey' of His Word.

He has come to you
in the Scriptures sung in the liturgy.
In the lessons read
from the lectern.
In the Word being declared
by your pastor.

*“Do not be afraid,
O Daughter of Zion;
see, your King is coming,
seated on [the Word.]”* (John 12:15)

Your King has come to you
in Holy Baptism.
He has clothed you
in His righteousness.
He has poured His salvation over you
and His Spirit into you.

And you abide in His name.
Daily repenting and rising in faith.

Your King comes to you in the Holy Absolution.
 By the Office of the Keys,
 you are set loose
 from your damning sins.
 Your pastor has spoken Christ's Word.
 By the authority of the King,
 you have been forgiven.

*“Do not be afraid,
 O Daughter of Zion;
 see, your King is coming,
 seated on [the Means of Grace].”*

Your King comes to you
 in His Holy Supper.
 He gives Himself as true food and drink.
 He gives you His body and blood
 for the forgiveness of sins.

*“Do not be afraid,
 O Daughter of Zion;
 see, your King is coming,
 seated on [the bread and the wine.]”*

Your King still comes.
 He still comes humbly.
 Hidden.
 Gentle.
 Yet bringing righteousness and salvation.

So, how, therefore, do you welcome your King?

Do you fear and love God
 so that you hold preaching
 and His Word
 sacred
 and gladly hear and learn it?

Are you therefore
 consistent in coming out to meet Him?
 Is it a first priority?
 Or do you “*esteem Him not*”?

For some of you,
 could it be
 that the Lord’s Day
 is so far down your list of priorities
 that your lives
 demonstrate a despising
 of preaching and His Word?

How do you welcome your King?
 Do you welcome Him
until His Word confronts your sin?
 Do you welcome Him
until His commandments challenge your desires?
 Do you welcome Him
until He is unpopular?
 Do you welcome Him
until His salvation
 looks different
 from what you expected?

Our sinful hearts balk at picking up crosses.
 We shun suffering.
 Our sinful hearts do not like correction.
 They resist repentance.
 They grow cold.

But unless the sin becomes bitter,
 Jesus will never be sweet.
 Like Jerusalem,
 we do not sustain our welcome.
 Yet He still comes—
 and still saves.

Psalm 118 declares,

“The LORD has become our salvation.”

Jesus saves from sin.

Jesus saves from death.

Jesus saves from the devil.

With His Word,

the Holy Spirit opens the doors
of our hearts.

The gate of the LORD is repentance.

Repentance flings wide the doors of our hearts,
that the King of Glory may come in.

The gate of the LORD is faith.

Faith receives the King
who comes bringing salvation
and righteousness.

Jesus doesn't come to us

because we are faithful.

Jesus comes

to make us faithful.

That is why the cry is

“Hosanna!”

“Save us, we pray, O Lord!” (Psalm 118:25a)

So let us open the doors of our hearts

with repentance and faith.

Let us welcome the humble King of Glory.

Let us then ever hail Him as our King.

3.

My friends,
your King will also come on the Last Day.
This same King is coming again.
Not hidden.
Not humbly.
But in power and glory.

He is coming on the clouds of heaven.
On a white horse.
And with the shout
of the archangel
and the trumpet of God.

Every grave will open.
The sea will give up all its dead.
And **every** eye will see Him.
Even those who pierced Him.

And **every** knee will bow.
Every tongue will confess:
*“Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.”*

The question is not “if” He comes.
Nor is the question ‘when’ He comes.
The question is,
“**How** will we receive Him?”
With fear?
Or
will we welcome Him
with faith?

Jesus Himself asks,

*“When the Son of Man comes,
will He find faith on the earth?”* (Luke 18:98)

Jesus says,

“the love of many will grow cold.” (Matthew 24:12b)

*“When tribulation or persecution arises
on account of the word,
immediately they fall away.*

And others are the ones sown among thorns.

*They are those who hear the word,
but the cares of the world
and the deceitfulness of riches
and the desires for other things
enter in
and choke the word,
and it proves unfruitful.*

*But those that were sown
on the good soil
are the ones who hear the word
and accept it
and bear fruit,
thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”*
(Mark 4:17b–20)

Many hearts grow cold.

Many fall away.

“But he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”
(Matthew 24:13)

Will the doors of your heart stand open
until the end?

Beloved of the Lord,
 the King who comes
 is the King who keeps you.
 He opens the doors of repentance
 for you.
 By His Word.
 By His Sacraments.
 By His Means of Grace.

Do you want to stand firm unto the end?
*“So faith comes from hearing,
 and hearing
 through the preaching
 of Christ.”* (Romans 10:17)

The King who comes is the King who keeps us.
 Jesus grants us repenting hearts.
 Jesus gives us trusting hearts.
 Jesus strengthens
 and gives us steadfast hearts.
 He upholds us
 in the way that leads to eternal life.

We stand
 because Jesus can make us stand. (Romans 14:4)

*

Therefore, my friends, we pray:
 Most merciful God,
 Grant that we may ever hail Jesus
 as our King.
 And when He comes again,
 May we go forth to meet Him
 With trusting and steadfast hearts.

For this King came once to die.
He comes now to save
in Word and Sacraments.
And He will come again
to bring us into eternal life.

Hosanna.
Save us now.
And keep us faithful to the end.

Amen.

And may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep us in Christ Jesus. Amen.