

**Palm Sunday Sermon: April 10, 2017**

**Sermon Text: Matthew 21:1-11**

**Sermon Theme: A King Who Lives up to His Billing.**

*As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. <sup>3</sup> If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”*

*<sup>4</sup> This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:*

*<sup>5</sup> “Say to the Daughter of Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’ ”*

*<sup>6</sup> The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. <sup>7</sup> They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. <sup>8</sup> A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup> The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,*

*“Hosanna to the Son of David!”*

*“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”*

*“Hosanna in the highest!”*

*<sup>10</sup> When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?”*

*<sup>11</sup> The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”*

We have all had those products that have just not lived up to their billing. Whether we were conned into buying it with a fancy infomercial, whether it was the latest and the newest of technology, or whether it was on the recommendation of a friend, we have gone out and bought a product or item that was supposed to be amazing, but it just didn't live up to the hype.

Maybe we had a honeymoon period with the product. We used it for awhile, it had its cons, but we were able to overlook them. We were just waiting for the great things, the awesomeness of the product to become evident.

But then, after awhile, it became clear: the product won't come close to the wonderful things that we say or were told. Maybe it won't even do what it was supposed to do.

This happens many times in life doesn't it? Things just aren't as good as we think they are, they just don't live up to their billing.

This morning we see Jesus begin hailed as a king. He is welcomed into Jerusalem and praised as the Son of David, the greatest of the Israelite kings. Yet, the people were going to be disappointed because he wasn't going to live up to that billing as an earthly king. Jesus never wanted to be an earthly king, nor did he ever call himself an earthly king. Even though Jesus didn't live up to his billing as an earthly king, he is the only king who has ever lived up to his billing.

The closest thing we have to a king and his rule is our government. We all know of the strengths and weaknesses of our government. During every election cycle, whether it is for Congress, President, or even local government, the candidates bill themselves with great promises. Then after the election we wait in expectation for those things to actually happen. More often than not, the promises are not kept. The elected officials do not live up to their billing.

In many ways, the reaction we have to those elected officials, or to the product that just doesn't work is the same reaction that Jesus received during his 3 year ministry.

For about the first year of his ministry, the people loved him. They flocked to hear him preach and teach. They came from miles around to be healed. They saw and heard him and believed him to be sent from God. But even though they came, they were confused about who he actually was.

It was during this time the religious groups of Jerusalem, the Pharisees, the chief priest, and the teachers of the Law were also sizing up Jesus and his teaching as well. During that first year, all of these groups were in awe of Jesus' power to preach and heal. Yet, what grew in their hearts was not faith in the Savior. What grew there was greed and desire. Each group wanted the power of Jesus on their side. Each group of religious teachers in Jerusalem figured with Jesus on their side, they could easily become the most powerful religious group in Jerusalem. With Jesus as their king, they could rule at his side and defeat the Romans.

These religious groups were so interested in increasing their own power and standing that they missed the important message of repentance and forgiveness that Jesus taught.

It was during the second year of Jesus' ministry that questions begin and the tide of popularity begins to change. Jesus becomes very pointed in preaching about the kingdom of God and not the kingdom of man. We hear controversies begin to arise between Jesus and those religious groups. They begin to become angry at his claims to be the Son of God. Jesus meets their anger with harsh words of their rejection and unbelief.

Finally, as year three comes around, the religious teaches have found common ground in their hatred of Jesus. We see that they hated Jesus, not so much because of what he preached, but because of what he would not do for them.

When these religious teachers looked into the pages of Scripture they read God's promises of a Messiah. But instead of a Savior from sin, they saw a king who would rule with power unlike anyone else. This Messiah would save Israel and the Jewish people from all of their enemies. He would lead with political and military might. The leaders taught the people when this king came they should celebrate.

They thought Jesus was this king. They dreamed of all he could do with his power. They even plotted to make Jesus king by force if necessary. But when it became clear that Jesus did not want to be a king, they hated him because he did not live up to the billing they thought he should. Their hatred boils over into rage as they look for a way to kill Jesus and be done with him.

Even though these religious groups had come to the conclusion that Jesus would not be their king, the idea didn't stop so quickly with the people. Jesus rides into Jerusalem amidst shouts and praise that hail him as the king. But even as he is riding in, this procession doesn't look very kingly.

What earthly king would come riding on a colt? Even in those days, there would be much pomp and circumstance surrounding the arrival of the kings. They military would have its nicest uniforms and best weapons to show, the finest war horses and chariots would have been in the procession, the best musicians and trumpeters would be available, the way would have been prepared before the king to ensure a safe ride, and runners would have announced his coming.

Instead of coming in the finest way of the earthly king, Jesus comes humbly, just as the prophecy says, riding on a colt. He is not accompanied by military officers, rather he is guided by a group of 12 men, dressed in their dusty cloaks and robes. The crowd that forms is not made of the powerful, but of the common people. The way is not prepared in the finest linens, but by coats and palm branches. The shouts do not come from the royal runners, the shouts from the mouths of the crowd. Even children join in.

The people are praising Jesus as a king, but he doesn't look like an earthly king.

Even though the people are shouting praises, hailing Jesus as the king, do you hear the confusion amidst the praising? Who is this we are praising? Who is this Jesus? There answer: He is a prophet from Nazareth.

Many people were confused because Jesus didn't live up to the billing as an earthly king. He didn't look like a king. He wasn't interested in palaces, robes, or servants like other kings. He lived and dressed humbly living as the rabbi, the teacher of the Word of God he was.

He didn't sound like a king. Instead of calling for his people to honor and praise him as their king, when he spoke he sounded like a teacher who was preaching and teaching the Word of God to people that they might believe in him and live.

He didn't act like a king. Instead of looking to increase his political power and gain influential friends in high places, he walked and talked with the diseased, sick, the sinful and the lost because he was here to bring healing of body and soul to those who needed it most.

Just as those people were confused about Jesus, we might also be confused about why we are praising Jesus. Why are we looking to Jesus and what do we expect him to do for us? Are we looking for a king of earthly treasures? Are we looking for a king who will raise us in the ranks? Are we looking for a king of good health? Are we looking for a king who provides us pleasant days? Are we looking for a king of creature

comforts? Are we looking for a king of sports, entertainment or politics? What kind of king are we looking expecting Jesus to be?

If we are looking to Jesus as a king of earthly things, we will not be any happier with his answer than those religious leaders were. We will also be disappointed because Jesus will not live up to his billing as an earthly king.

Jesus wasn't an earthly king, but he is the only king who has ever lived up to his billing because he is the King of heaven and our Savior.

The prophets of the Old Testament do not show us an earthly king, they show us Jesus is God's only Son, who came to earth, not to be raised to power and to be served by others, but to humbly and willingly serve all people by living the perfect life of obedience and suffering to pay for the sins of the world.

A king was riding into Jerusalem, the people just didn't know which kind of king Jesus was. A week later, when Jesus shows his true kingly self, there would be no one there to praise him, not many would even notice what our heavenly king was doing for us. It is on the cross, we see our king living up to his billing as our eternal Messiah and Savior. We see our Savior completing the work that God the Father had sent him to do, that the Old Testament promised he would.

Unlike kings and leaders of this world, Jesus did not do what was best for himself, he did was best for all people of all time. Our salvation was so important to him, that he did not send someone else, he went to cross himself to suffer and die in our place. He defeated sin, death and the devil by sacrificing himself and crushed the devil's power that we would live.

Our king brings us some amazing blessings, but they the blessings of faith, forgiveness of sins, life and salvation go far beyond this world to the world to come.

Jesus didn't live up to his billing as an earthly king. That is wonderful news for us. Jesus didn't come to lead the earth, he came to lead us to heaven. Jesus has done everything he has said, he has lived up to his billing, as our heavenly Savior and King.