



# Behold Your King

## **Matthew 21:1-11**

*Sunday the 29th of March 2026, Palm Sunday, Year A*

When they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village facing you, and immediately you will find an ass tied, and a colt with her: untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, "The Lord has need of them," and he will send them immediately.' This took place to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet, saying, 'Tell the daughter of Sion, behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of an ass.' The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the ass and the colt, and put their garments on them, and he sat thereon. Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him shouted, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!' And when he entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, 'Who is this?' And the crowds said, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee.'

## **The Gospel of the Lord.**

## **Matthew 27: 11-50**

Jesus, then, was brought before the governor, and the governor put to him this question: "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus replied, "It is you who say it." But when he was accused by the chief priests and the elders he refused to answer at all. Pilate then said to him, "do you not hear how many charges they have brought against you?" But to the governor's complete amazement, he offered no reply to any of the charges.

At festival time it was the governor's practice to release a prisoner for the people, anyone they chose. Now there was at that time a notorious prisoner whose name was Barabbas. So when the crowd gathered, Pilate said to them, "which do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" For Pilate knew it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. Now as he was seated in the chair of judgement, his wife sent him a message, "have nothing to do with that man; I have been upset all day by a dream I had about him." The chief priests and the elders, however, had persuaded the crowd to demand the release of Barabbas and the execution of Jesus. So when the governor spoke and asked them, "which of the two do you want me to release for you?" They said, "Barabbas". Pilate said to them: "but in that case, what am I to do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said: "let him be crucified!" Pilate asked: "why? What harm has he done?" But they shouted all the louder, "let him be crucified!" Then Pilate saw that he was making no impression, that in fact a riot was imminent. So he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd and said, "I am innocent of this man's blood. It is your concern." And the people, to a man, shouted back, "his blood be on us and on our children!" Then he released Barabbas for them. He ordered Jesus to be first scourged and then handed over to be crucified. The governor's soldiers took Jesus with them into the Praetorium and collected the whole cohort round him. Then they stripped him and made him wear a scarlet cloak, and having twisted some thorns into a crown they put this on his head and placed a reed in his right hand. To make fun of him they knelt to him saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they spat on him and took the reed and struck him on the head with it. And when they had finished making fun of him, they took off the cloak and dressed him in his own clothes and led him away to crucify him.

On their way out, they came across a man from Cyrene, Simon by name, and enlisted him to carry his cross. When they had reached a place called Golgotha, that is, the place of the skull, they gave him wine to drink mixed with gall, which he tasted but refused to drink. When they had finished crucifying him they shared out his clothing by casting lots, and then sat down and stayed there keeping guard over him. Above his head was placed the charge against him; it read: 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.' At the same time two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. The passers-by jeered at him; they shook their heads and said, "so you would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days! Then save yourself! If you are God's son, come down from the cross!" The chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him in the same way, saying: "he saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the king of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He puts his trust in God; now let God rescue him if he wants him. For he did say, 'I am the son of God.'" Even the robbers who were crucified with him taunted him in the same way.

From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" That is, 'My God, my God, why have you deserted me?' When some of those who stood there heard this, they said, "the man is calling on Elijah." And one of them quickly ran to get a sponge which

he dipped in vinegar and, putting it on a reed, gave it him to drink. The rest of them said: "wait! See if Elijah will come to save him." But Jesus, again crying out in a loud voice, yielded up his spirit. At that, the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom; the earth quaked; the rocks were split; the tombs opened and the bodies of many holy men rose from the dead, and these, after his resurrection, came out of the tombs, entered the Holy City and appeared to a number of people. Meanwhile the centurion, together with the others guarding Jesus, had seen the earthquake and all that was taking place, and they were terrified and said, "in truth this was a son of God."

### **The Gospel of the Lord**

### **My Way or God's?**

There is a tragic contrast between our two Gospel readings today. In the first, our Lord is welcomed into Jerusalem as King. The people of Israel had been waiting for centuries for the descendant of David to take the throne. They waited eagerly upon God's promise. When Jesus arrives He arrives as the fulfillment of all their hopes, the Messiah (anointed) King. The people expected Him to be a new king David, a great military leader who would save them from the Roman occupation and restore the tribes of Israel.

How could it be that this same crowd, filled with joy at the coming of the King, were only a few days later, calling for His Crucifixion?

What they could not understand, and did not want to understand, is that the Messiah King is also the Suffering Servant. They could not reconcile the Great Ruler with our humble, peaceful, and self-sacrificing Lord. They did not realise that even as they welcomed Him in procession into Jerusalem, they led Him to the Temple, the place of sacrifice.

The people became disillusioned with Christ. They wanted God's plan to fit inside their own box, and they didn't trust that His plan for them was far greater than the one they had for themselves. In not trusting, they then became the very ones who cause the Messiah to be "rejected and despised by men." Their failure to trust brings us to the bone chilling scene in the next Gospel where we see the King of the Universe condemned to death at the request of His own people.

Where then, do we stand in this scene? Do we join the crowd, loosing faith in God when we don't understand what's happening or when He doesn't do things the way we want Him to? Or do we walk with our Blessed Saviour, trusting even when it leads us to the Cross?

### **Questions for Reflection:**

**Are areas in my life where I'm struggling to understand what God is doing?**

**Do I trust God in these places?**

### ***A message from Pope Benedict: The True Messiah***



Let us return to today's Gospel passage and ask ourselves: what is really happening in the hearts of those who acclaim Christ as King of Israel? Clearly, they had their own idea of the Messiah, an idea of how the long-awaited King promised by the prophets should act. Not by chance, a few days later, instead of acclaiming Jesus, the Jerusalem crowd will cry out to Pilate: "Crucify him!", while the disciples, together with others who had seen him and listened to him, will be struck dumb and will disperse. The majority, in fact, was disappointed by the way Jesus chose to present himself as Messiah and King of Israel.

This is the heart of today's feast, for us too. Who is Jesus of Nazareth for us? What idea do we have of the Messiah, what idea do we have of God? It is a crucial question, one we cannot avoid, not least because during this very week we are called to follow our King who chooses the Cross as his throne. We are called to follow a Messiah who promises us, not a facile earthly happiness, but the happiness of heaven, divine beatitude. So we must ask ourselves: what are our true expectations? What are our deepest desires, with which we have come here today to celebrate Palm Sunday and to begin our celebration of Holy Week?

Dear young people, present here today, this, in a particular way, is your Day, wherever the Church is present throughout the world. So I greet you with great affection! May Palm Sunday be a day of decision for you, the decision to say yes to the Lord and to follow him all the way, the decision to make his Passover, his death and resurrection, the very focus of your Christian lives.

*A homily of his holiness Pope Benedict the XVI, On the celebration of Palm Sunday of the Passion of our Lord, 1st of April 2012.*