

Father, we come before you. I love that we are reminding one another. We're reminding ourselves that you are our king forever.

You're a king who rules. You're a king who loves. You're a king who cares.

Father, I thank you for your gift to us. I thank you for your gift of your word and that we have the privilege this morning of learning from your Word, being encouraged by your Word, and being challenged by your word spirit. I pray that you would do those things in us this morning. In your name, Jesus, I pray. Amen.

It is so rich to be with you all this morning and lift up these songs of praise to our king. You know that a week from today we celebrate Easter. And you know also that for centuries now, this week leading up to Easter, we refer to it as Holy Week. And Christians around the world for centuries have remembered and celebrated during this Holy week the death and the resurrection of Jesus. So it could be said that the death and the resurrection of Jesus is the most wonderful, horrible thing that has ever happened.

Or maybe you'd be more comfortable saying that the death of Jesus is the most horrible, wonderful thing that has ever happened. Or maybe you're uncomfortable with both of those. So I'd encourage you to fill in the blank. The death of Jesus is. Think of how you would describe it.

What we're going to be doing this week is examining just that. As we have this service this morning and the Maundy Thursday service and the Good Friday service and Easter Sunday, we'll be examining this, this event, the death of Jesus. What a horrible or wonderful event that, that it is. So as we explore that, I want, I want first to rewind a few days before that happened to when Jesus was entering Jerusalem in this well known passage, the triumphal entry that we find in John 12:12-19. So I invite you to, to turn there, John 12: 12-19.

And we'll be stepping through that in a moment. And while you're turning there, I want to tell you a story. When I was a sophomore in college, so around 20 years old at Huntington University, on our spring break, we, I along with around a group of 20 people, including two professors and a bunch of college students, we went to the island of Nevis for a short term mission trip. And we were doing vacation Bible school, some work, construction, some speaking at school assemblies, a variety of things. And at the end of that week, we had an afternoon free.

And many of us had noticed on this island there was this one particular peak that looked like that would be a real adventure if we could hike to the top of that peak and look around and then hike back down and you know, excuse me, a bunch of college students. We knew that we didn't need a guide. We could figure it out for ourselves. You know, it's about an hour up, you know, give or take, take about an hour to get down. So about half of our group was up for that.

One of the professors came with us and we set out on this adventure to hike up to this peak and then back down. And it wasn't far in that we realized, wow, this forest is a lot thicker than we're used to. And this path, I'm not even sure it is a path after all. And about an hour in we were sure there is path we're following, but we figured we'd figure it out. We keep going, just have to kind of head up, right?

So another hour in and there is definitely no path at all. And we're not even sure that we're no longer going in circles. And so some in the group are getting a little worried. The professor in our group had twisted his ankle, he's lagging back and struggling. And so now we just have 20 year old males leading the charge.

And so we continue. We are getting more and more lost and there are some in the group that are getting really worried about this. And there are some in the group that think everything is just fine. This is actually kind of fun. We decided we needed to find water because we remembered seeing a stream near the entrance of where we began the hike.

So if we just found water we, we could follow it down to where we had began. So that worked okay for a while until the water kept getting steeper and the cliffs around it kept getting steeper and we were using sticks to climb down and then human ladders to climb down. And as it went on, more in our group started feeling, started crying and started worrying more and more and recognizing the that we're lost and we need to be rescued. And there's still some in the group that

thought, no, actually everything is fine, we're going to figure this out. So I wonder for you, which group would you have been in if you put yourself in that story?

Would you have been the I know we're lost, we've messed up and we need rescued or would you have been. No, actually I think this is just fine. So I want you to have that in the back of your mind as we enter into this story. And in John, John 12 verse 12, he writes this. He says the next day the crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem. So the next day, that's referring to the previous day we had this story that John told about Jesus being anointed by Mary and Bethany.

Not long before that Jesus had healed Lazarus. And then soon after that, Jesus has healed two blind men. So people have seen Jesus raise a man from the dead. People have seen him heal two blind men. So there's some momentum growing.

Some people are telling others about what is going on and some people in Jerusalem are coming out to meet him and, and there's some excitement going on that this man, this man who can raise the dead to life, who's done miracles before and continues to do them now he's entering into Jerusalem. And certainly they begin to have thoughts of prophecies from the Old Testament. So you see that the crowd is primed and, and ready. They've been waiting for this. They've longed to, to have this king come where they would dwell in the forever kingdom that the promised king from the Old Testament would usher in.

They are waiting to be rescued. I. I think back just on Thanksgiving, the day after Thanksgiving, I had this interesting idea to replace on my own our thermostat for our heat and air condition. And in the process of replacing it, the new one, I wired something wrong and nothing, no heat would turn on. So no big deal, I'll just, I'll give up and I'll put the old one back where I tried to put the old one back and no heat would come on. And it's the day after Thanksgiving.

You can't call an electrician at a reasonable price and get them to come and fix it. It was a pretty cold weekend that particular weekend this past Thanksgiving, giving. So I found myself in a mess that I had caused now. Longing for, waiting for. I need rescued by an electrician now.

So there are many of us that we find ourselves today in a much higher stakes, longer waiting than that waiting. In a situation where we realize that this is somewhat. The mess that we find ourselves in is somewhat self induced. And we are waiting, we're longing for someone to rescue us. So think what that is for you right now.

This self induced impart, this mess that you're in that you long to be rescued from. It might be a relational struggle, it might be, you know, many of the things that are broken around the world. Where do you find yourself waiting to be rescued? When we think about the Old Testament, while confusing in some places, when studied well, we see that the story of the Old Testament is this holy God who reveals himself to a people and the people rebel against him. He wants to have relationship with him, but.

But they rebel against him and they're separated from him. And then our holy God promises to come and provide rescue for them in the midst of their separation from God. So throughout the Old Testament there's this promise of one who will come to save his people from their massive self induced mess. So here are some of the promises that you'll recognize. From Isaiah we read these familiar words.

He writes, for to us a child is born, to us a son is given. And the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, of the greatness of his government and peace, there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on until forever. So we have this promise of this king who will reign with perfect justice, with perfect peace and righteousness.

Micah 5:2 was, was a psalm, was a prophecy that they would have had well in mind, where it says, but you, Bethlehem Ephraim, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be the ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times. Those two phrases, this origins from of old, from ancient of times, that, that points to this infinite existence, to this divine Savior. So, so we have this king who is coming, who will bring perfect justice and perfect righteousness, who, who is divine in nature. And then the prophecy in Zachariah that

James read and referred to this morning, Zachariah 9, 9, which says, Rejoice greatly, daughter Zion. Shout, daughter Jerusalem.

See your king comes to you righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on the colt of foal of a donkey. So this king is coming. He's an amazing king, bringing peace and justice. He's a divine king and he's a R. In this humble way, which is a little bit mysterious, but we'll get to that in a moment. And for 700 years, the people of God, in the midst of their mess, they're waiting for this rescuer, this king that's prophesied in all these ways.

Some seem exciting and wonderful, some are a little bit mysterious. They're waiting for this king. And on this particular day, around 30 A.D. in Jerusalem, Jerusalem, a few days before the Passover, this king arrives. So what do you do when this king arrives, the rescuer that you've been waiting for? You and your family and your family's family for generations have been waiting for.

And it says they broke into song. Blessed be the Lord, our God of Israel. Something like that may have been different. And maybe they didn't, like, maybe some of them weren't, you know, they were singing inside and they weren't singing out loud, but they were excited about, what does this mean that our king has come? You read in verse 13 here, it says they took up palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting hosanna.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the king of Israel. And then to add to this momentum, as they are singing Blessed is the King of Israel, Jesus doesn't correct them, he doesn't deny this. Not long before Matthew tells the story of Jesus healing two blind men. Just a little bit before this journey and, and the two blind men, you'll remember, they're shouting out Jesus, son of David.

They're giving this clear messianic reference and, and again, Jesus isn't correcting them. So you have this reality that there's no turning back now. Jesus was stepping into his role as messianic king and pressing people to follow him or not. Then you have this interesting reference in verse 14 of the donkey. Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it.

So think about the comparison. I enjoyed kind of thinking about. You think of a king and what is a king going to ride on? He's going to ride on the strong and powerful and fast war horse and that's going to give the king this advantage in battle where he's above his opponents and on this strong, fast horse. And compare this war horse to a donkey.

What would it be like if a king entered a battle? If anyone entered a battle on a donkey, you are low and slow and you're going to get smashed. So while there's momentum with the crowd believing, hoping that he is the king who is coming in to start this forever kingdom, there's also this mystery in the humble way that the king is coming, he's riding on a donkey.

Humility isn't something, and we see and experience this today. Humility isn't what gets all the clicks on social media right. Humility isn't something that is popular and desired.

Our king comes with humility. So it's also interesting to notice that. Actually, I see it amazing as amazing that the king comes at all. The idea of God putting on human flesh and coming all the way to earth to rescue us. You know, often we think about how it's a good situation when someone might meet you in the middle.

But this is a picture of the King coming all the way to us, a broken and rebellious people. There is no one like this king.

Verses 17 and 18 we see the response of some of the people where it says, now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. So you have many people acknowledging their need for rescue. And they see him, Jesus, as this king who has come to rescue him. If the king is here, then that means these prophecies are true.

The prophecies of this king that will reign forever, this spirit being poured out on all God's people. The king who will reign with perfect peace and justice. If these prophecies are true, and it seems like they are, then God is real. He cares about us. He sees us.

The Savior, the forever King, has come. You're as God's people, you're saved from oppression. You're part of this kingdom that will last forever. This means that God will rule. Not the Romans, not the terrorists, not the oppressors, not AI, but God will rule.

This is fabulous news.

Then there's this weird ominous verse, verse 19, that says, so the Pharisees said to one another, see, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has come and gone after him. So we begin to see the Pharisees turning a different direction. They're not ready to accept this king. So you have some people who believe they need to be rescued, and this is the king, the one God promised to rescue them.

And then you have some people that were pretty comfortable with how things were going and for them they preferred to just keep things how they were rather than move into this unknown with this new king. So the question is, where do you fall? Do you fall in the well, I recognize the mess that I've made for myself and I need rescued? Or do you fall in the group that says, actually I think I'm okay, I don't want to move into that uncertain unknown. Some people believe they need rescued and this king is the one God promised would rescue them.

Some people were comfortable with how things were and they preferred to just keep going along in that way. So where do we fall? Do we look around and see our self induced mess in the midst of this broken world and conclude that we need rescued? Or do we conclude that while things aren't perfect, we're actually doing all right and I'd rather stay in this way that Things currently are. Some men and women in Jerusalem recognized they owned and they accepted their need for a savior, for a king, for this king, and they welcomed Jesus.

They were ready to give Jesus their allegiance, even though they didn't fully understand what that was going to mean. They were ready to crown him king. And then you had others, particularly some religious leaders, they didn't want Jesus to, quote, unquote, rescue them. They didn't want him as king. They liked their current arrangement.

They didn't. They had tolerated Jesus movement for a while, but now he was pressing things so far that they had to make a choice that he had gone too far and and now they would have to kill him.

I read this week Tim Keller, in some of his teachings, suggests that when Jesus rides into Jerusalem, his actions and words have gone so far that he's pressing people to make a choice and either to crown him or to kill him. Every man and woman who has ever lived since is presented with that same choice. Do we look at Jesus and do we decide to crown him or to kill him? To crown him is to accept his rule. That is to give our allegiance completely to him, to live the way he wants us to live.

He is the king and we are the servants. To crown him is to accept his rescue. Accepting his rescue is acknowledging that we are in bondage to sin and we can't break out of it. We need our king to rescue us out of our bondage to sin. To crown him is to accept his new life, the new life he puts in us, the new life he empowers us to live in him and through him and, and for him.

To kill him is to reject him, is to reject his rules, saying, I would rather be the king of my own life than follow his rules. And his way to kill him is to reject his rescue, to not even notice the bondage we are to sin, or to not acknowledge our. Our inability to break out of that or to sit content in the midst of that. To kill him is to reject the life he offers, the life he offers to. To give to us, empowering us to live in and through and for him.

So which group are you in? The I know I need rescued group from the mess that I've caused or the I actually think I'm okay. The rescuer has come. So our choice is to crown him or to kill him. Those of us who place faith in Jesus are placing faith in the king who has come to us, not halfway, but all the way to us.

Tim Keller also puts it this way. In his teaching, he says that that sin is when the servant puts himself in the place of the master of the king, and salvation is when the king puts himself in the place of the servant.

What I want to do, what we want to do together this week is continue to consider this, this king who puts himself in the place of a servant. We want to learn more about this incredible king, about his rule, his rescue and the life that he offers. So I hope you'll come back on Maundy Thursday, on Good Friday and on Easter as we talk about his rule and his rescue and his offer of new life.

Want to spend a moment in prayer as you just listen to what the Holy Spirit wants to speak to you and the worship team will come up and we'll close in song in a moment. But close your eyes and just ask the Lord some of these questions. Ask the Lord.

How do you want me to respond, God, this morning to your your claim to be king?

Ask yourself, who, who else is worthy of our worship and our allegiance?

God, I asked in, in these moments that that we would hear you, that we would understand your invitation to give our allegiance to you, grow our knowledge and understanding that you are worthy. You are our king who came to save. In your name, Jesus, I pray. Amen. Would you stand and respond with me.