

## **Palm Sunday: A King Who Comes to Serve**

By the Rev. Eric H. Carswell

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“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!” Peace in heaven and glory in the highest! (Luke 19:38)

I hope most of you have been able to be out on a dark night far from city lights and have seen the wonder of a sky full of stars. Perhaps you saw the dim stars of the Milky Way spread like a faint pathway across part of the night sky. As we think of the familiar story of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday, it can be important to remember His soul was the infinite God of the universe. It is He who created and continues to sustain the hundreds of billions of galaxies. Our galaxy, the Milky Way, by itself has thousands of billions of stars with planets circling around practically all of them. The Lord Jesus Christ, the creator of all of these worlds chose to be born into this world more than 2000 years ago because He loves us and wanted to help us.

The gospels carry the story of His love and care. The Lord was born into a church whose leadership and supposedly model adherents looked down on most people. They were a very proud people who thought non-Jews were unworthy and even those Jews who were viewed as tainted or sinners were to be shunned.

Jesus tried to convey a very different model of how we are called to live our lives. When people criticized Him for eating with tax collectors and sinners, Jesus responded:

“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” (Matthew 9:12-13)

When His disciples were arguing over who would be greatest among them Jesus gave them a very different model.

He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.” (Luke 22:25-27)

On Palm Sunday Jesus rode into Jerusalem humbly on a colt or small donkey. Riding on a donkey and her colt was a heavenly sign that Jesus was the Supreme Judge and King (*Arcana Caelestia* 9212:5). This was the sign of a king, but it wasn’t an impressive way to enter Jerusalem. We read in II Samuel of King David’s rebellious son Absalom driving through Jerusalem in a chariot with 50 men running in front of him (2 Samuel 15:1). That would have been an impressive display. Or picture someone riding in on a powerful, prancing stallion. Think of that image. But that was not what Jesus chose. He entered on a colt or small donkey. The words of today’s recitation convey what this image was.

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zechariah 9:9)

The Lord came into this world to serve. He came into the world to be our Savior and Redeemer. To accomplish this goal, the infinite God of the universe chose to be born as a human infant with Mary as His mother. Although His soul was the infinite God, through Mary, His mother, He took on the hereditary inclinations to evil that allowed the hells to attack Him. From childhood through the end of His life on the cross the hells tried to destroy Him and His mission. But through all of the tremendous struggle and pain of these spiritual battles the Lord had each of us in mind. We read in the teachings for the New Church:

“Your great reward” means the end in view realized in victories. This is clear from the meaning of ‘reward’ as the prize following conflicts brought about by temptations - here the end in view realized in victories, for the Lord never looked for any prize of victory for Himself. His prize of victories was the salvation of the whole human race. It was out of love towards the whole human race that He fought. When anyone fights out of that love he demands no prize for himself, since that love is such as wishes to give away and impart to others all that is its own, and to have nothing for itself. Consequently it is the salvation of the whole human race that is meant here by ‘reward’. (*Arcana Caelestia* 1789)

Another passage puts it this way.

. . . while He lived in the world the Lord was engaged repeatedly in conflicts brought about by temptations, and was repeatedly victorious. And what is meant here by “believing in Jehovah” is the truth that the Lord was filled repeatedly with an inmost confidence and faith that, because it was pure love out of which He was fighting for the salvation of the whole human race, He could not but be victorious. From the love out of which anyone fights it is known what his faith is. A person who fights out of any other love than love towards the neighbor and love towards the Lord’s kingdom is not fighting out of faith, that is, he does not believe in Jehovah but in that which he loves; for the love itself for which he fights constitutes his faith. Take, for example, one who fights out of the love of becoming the greatest in heaven. He does not believe in Jehovah, but rather in himself, for wishing to become the greatest is wishing to have control over others. Thus he fights for control. It is the same with every other example that may be taken. From the love itself therefore out of which a person fights one may know what his faith is. The Lord however, in all His conflicts brought about by temptations, never fought out of self-love, that is, for Himself, but for all throughout the universe. He did not fight therefore to become the greatest in heaven, for that is contrary to Divine love. He scarcely did so to become the least. He fought solely so that all others might become something and be saved. (*Arcana Caelestia* 1812)

The Lord wants to enter our lives as our God and King. We must be willing to emulate His wise kindness in our lives. He taught us “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another” (John 13:34). The night of the last supper, Jesus humbly washed His disciple’s feet and told them:

“Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. (John 13:12-17)

When we recite the Lord’s Prayer we say “Thy kingdom come.” For some people the Lord’s kingdom is like what can see of kingdoms in this world. They picture that those knowledgeable and active in the church will be treated better in the next life. We are clearly taught though that:

“Kingdom” means the reception of Divine good and Divine truth proceeding from the Lord, and in which the Lord is with the angels of heaven and the people of the church, for it is added, “Thy will be done, as in heaven so also upon the earth,” and the will of God is done when these are received in heart and soul, that is, in love and faith. (*Apocalypse Explained* 683)

When the Lord was teaching His disciples they did not really understand what His kingdom would be. We read:

. . . the disciples who, though with the Lord constantly and hearing so many things about His kingdom, were as yet unable to perceive interior truths . . . They imagined that He would promote their people to a position of dominion and glory over all nations throughout the world. And after hearing so many things from the Lord about the heavenly kingdom the disciples were still unable to think anything else than that the heavenly kingdom would be like an earthly kingdom . . . For the same reason also, after teaching them what it was to be greatest in heaven, (Matthew 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45), the Lord still spoke in the way that they themselves thought. That is to say, He spoke of them sitting on twelve thrones and judging the twelve tribes of Israel, Luke 22:24, 30; Matt. 19:28. If they had been told that the word “disciples” was not used to mean themselves but all people in whom the good of love and faith dwells, and also that in the Lord’s kingdom there are no thrones, nor positions of government and dominion, as in the world, and that they would not be able to pass judgement on even the smallest aspect of any one person, they would have rejected that saying, and each would have left the Lord and gone back to his own employment. The reason why the Lord spoke in the way He did was so that they would receive those things and through them be introduced into internal truths. For within the external truths which the Lord spoke internal truths lay stored away which in course of time are laid bare. (*Arcana Caelestia* 3857:6-7)

We can welcome the Lord as our King if we try to lead lives of faith and love. We are taught:

When the disciples laid their garments on the she-ass and her colt, it represented the recognition that truths in their entirety were the foundation on which the Lord as supreme Judge and King rested; for the disciples represented the Lord’s Church in respect of truths and forms of good, and their garments truths themselves. This same recognition was likewise represented when the crowd spread their garments, also the branches of trees, on the road. (*Arcana Caelestia* 9212:6)

The Lord was born into this world and did all that He did to serve us. He wants to bring each of us the happiness of heaven. May we pray that His love and wisdom rule over our lives. May we follow His example in living lives of service to others. AMEN.

Lessons: Luke 19:28-46, *True Christian Religion* 89

### **Luke 19:28-46 (NKJV)**

When He had said this, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. And it came to pass, when He came near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mountain called Olivet, *that* He sent two of His disciples, saying, “Go into the village opposite *you*, where as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Loose it and bring *it here*. And if anyone asks you, ‘Why are you loosing *it*?’ thus you shall say to him, ‘Because the Lord has need of it.’ “ So those who were sent went their way and found *it* just as He had said to them. But as they were loosing the colt, the owners of it said to them, “Why are you loosing the colt?” And they said, “The Lord has need of him.” Then they brought him to Jesus. And they threw their own clothes on the colt, and they set Jesus on him. And as He went, *many* spread their clothes on the road. Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, saying: “‘*Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!*’ Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, “Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.” But He answered and said to them, “I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.” Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, “If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things *that make* for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.” Then He went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it, saying to them, “It is written, ‘*My house is a house of prayer,*’ but you have made it a ‘*den of thieves.*’”

### ***True Christian Religion* 89**

#### **The Lord took upon Himself a human form in accordance with His divine order.**

It was shown in the section on the Divine omnipotence and omniscience that together with creation God introduced order both into the universe and into all its parts, and that God’s omnipotence therefore functions and works in the universe and all its parts in accordance with the laws of its order . . . Now since God came down, and He is order, He had, so as to become really a human being, to be conceived, be carried in the womb, be born, be brought up and learn items of knowledge one by one, and by their means be brought into a state of intelligence and wisdom. Therefore in His Human He was a child like any other child, a boy like any other boy, and so on, the only difference being that He achieved that progress more quickly, fully and perfectly than others. . . The Lord’s life followed this path because divine order is for people to prepare themselves to accept God; and as they prepare themselves, God enters them as if He were coming into His own dwelling and His own home. The preparation entails developing a concept of God and of the spiritual things related to the church - that is, developing intelligence and wisdom. It is a law of divine order that the closer and closer we come to God, which is something we have to do as if we were completely on our own, the closer and closer God comes to us. When we meet, God forms a partnership with us.