Blessed is the One Who Comes in the Name of the Lord

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John 12:12-19

12 The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that
Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 13 So they took branches of palm trees
and went out to meet him, shouting, 'Hosanna! Blessed is the one who
comes in the name of the Lord-the King of Israel!' 14 Jesus found a young
donkey and sat on it; as it is written: 15 'Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion.
Look, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!' 16 His disciples did not
understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they
remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done
to him. 17 So the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out
of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify. 18 It was also
because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to
meet him. 19 The Pharisees then said to one another, 'You see, you can do
nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!'

1. Blessed

Many people have a positive perception of the word "blessed." I'm sure everyone in one way or another wants to be blessed. In Asian cultures, the word "blessed" can be found in everything from clothing to household goods, to signage on doors and businesses. In the US, we say things like "God bless you" and "God bless America." What does the Bible say about being "blessed?" In the Bible, the word "bless" or "blessed" occurs quite often and the word "blessed" is one of the most important words.

2. Jesus' Triumphal Entry

In today's scripture, we see the word "blessed." The day after the feast in Bethany, Jesus makes his way into Jerusalem riding on a young donkey. A great crowd that had come to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration takes palm branches and welcomes Jesus shouting, "**Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord-the king of Israel**." "Hosanna" is a Hebrew word which is used in Psalm 118:25. "**O LORD, save us; O LORD, grant us success**." "Hosanna" means "please save" or "save now." In Jesus' time, the word "hosanna" was used often as a shout of praise. Yet by adding "**the king of Israel**" the writer of John's gospel confirms that people were welcoming Jesus because they believed that Jesus was the Messiah of Israel. The saying "**Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the**

Lord" is quoted from Psalm 118:26. Although this phrase comes up in two different occasions, the meaning is very different.

In Psalm 118, "**the one who comes in the name of the Lord**" is referring to the worshipper. According to Rabbinical writings, pilgrim caravans were welcomed on their arrival at Jerusalem. The priests in the Temple would bless the entering procession of travelers. However, in John 12, "the one who comes in the name of the Lord" is not referring to pilgrims, but to Jesus who came as the King of Israel. The timing of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is also significant. The time of Jesus' arrival to Jerusalem was right before the celebration of the Passover. Passover commemorated God's deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt. The cries of the crowds to Jesus during the Passover would have great meaning. Just as Israel was delivered from Egypt, so now did the crowd hope Jesus would deliver the people from current problems under Roman occupation. The Passover was one of three festivals that the Jews were supposed to celebrate in Jerusalem. So many Jews would have come for the Passover, and many of them would have heard of Jesus' mighty works. The news of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead would have been a story that many people would have heard. The crowds were beginning to see Jesus as a possible Messiah, and they believed that Jesus had come to restore the Davidic Kingdom of Israel. So, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is called "the triumphal entry."

3. A Different Kind of King

Yet, what occurred to Jesus after his entry into Jerusalem was quite different from the expectations of the crowd. The Israelites thought Jesus would be their political ruler as the prophet Zechariah prophesied. Zechariah 9:9 says, "**daughter of Zion. Look, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!**" But Jesus had his last supper with his disciples on Thursday and was crucified on Friday morning. Verse 16 says that even Jesus' disciples did not understand the significance of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and the death of Israel's king. But after Jesus' resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit, the disciples' eyes would open, and they would understand the meaning of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Still, today many Jews do not believe Jesus as their savior. And for many Christians, it is very difficult to understand why the Jews do not believe in Jesus as their savior. Jesus was born, lived and died in the area of Israel. Many Christians visit Israel as the "Holy Land" every year. But among the population, roughly only 2% of the country is Christian. Some might ask, "why aren't there many

Christians in Israel?" Just like in today's passage, a key reason is because Jesus didn't meet the expectations of the people. The people wanted Jesus to be a political leader that would restore Israel to become an independent country. Since the restoration did not happen by Jesus, Jews still pray to this day at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, crying out for a Messiah.

What about us? What kind of images do we get when we think of the messiah? What kinds of things would we hope the messiah would do for us? Has Jesus met our expectations? Or have we been disappointed that Jesus may not have solved all of our problems? Let me share with you my expectations. When I became a Christian, I was so excited about Jesus' invitation in Matthew 11:28. "**Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest**." When I began to follow Jesus, I thought I would be free from all kinds of troubles. I thought I would not have to worry about anything and that God would always be by my side. After I became a pastor, I wanted God to give me the appropriate sermon every time I preached. Of course, God gave me insight about what to preach, but there was no sermon note that I could use right away. When I prayed for the problems of God's people, I hoped that God would answer my prayers instantly. But I had to wait for God's will and God's time. God has been there many times in my life. But just like everyone else, there have been times in my life when I have felt like God was not near to me or things haven't gone the way that I thought they would. And yet, just like everyone here today, I have learned in my journey of faith that no matter what the situation may be, God is always in charge and I am the one who is just sent by God to do His will. It is not me, but God who is in charge of my life. We are God's people and His instruments that are part of God's plan. We are built to be in communion with God, and are designed to always be in God's plan and His timing as God uses us to be a blessing to other people on this earth.

4. Is Jesus Blessed?

From a human perspective, Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem is a sad beginning to the end of his crucifixion on the cross. But from God's point of view, Jesus' entry into the holy city is the climax of God's story of his salvation for all of humanity. Jesus could have defeated the Romans and the religious leaders of the time to rule and reign over Israel. But instead, Jesus was crucified on a cross, following God's will for his life. For some, Jesus' mission to be the Messiah seemed like a failure. But we know now that Jesus is the one who came in the name of the Lord. He was blessed

throughout it all. And he fulfilled God's mission and purpose to overcome death for the salvation of all mankind.

5. Conclusion

This week is called "The Passion Week." We remember the suffering and death of Jesus this week. And on Easter Sunday, we celebrate Jesus' resurrection from the grave. There were many who were disappointed at the death of Jesus. But we remember that without Jesus' death, there is no resurrection. In the same way, we remember that just as Christ came to Jerusalem, so too are we sent by God to go out into the world in the name of the Lord. Even in the times when we may feel that God may be far away, God reminds us that we are truly blessed to be a blessing. And Jesus' resurrection affirms that in all things, God has given us the final victory. So, when bad things happen to us, we can still trust the Lord.

6. Application

I am sure that you know a song called "It is Well with My Soul" very well, but I'd like to share this morning the story behind the song. Horatio G. Spafford was a successful lawyer and businessman in Chicago. He had a lovely family: his wife, Anna, and four daughters. On November 21, 1873, his wife and his daughters were on board the French ocean liner *Ville du Harve* on their way to cross the Atlantic from the U.S. to Europe. Spafford had to stay in Chicago to solve an unexpected business problem. He told his wife he would join them in Europe later. Four days later, the *Ville du Harve* collided with another ship. Many passengers including Spafford's four daughters drowned. His wife Anna was able to survive the collision. Horatio boarded the next ship to meet and grieve with his wife. As his ship passed the area where his daughters were killed, he wrote "It is Well with My Soul." Horatio Spafford lost all four of his daughters in a terrible collision. And yet, Spafford was able to have a peace that transcends all understanding. His heart trusted in the Lord. The same God that raised Jesus from the dead comforted Spafford in his time of great loss.

Many things happen in our lives. But as the people of God, we are reminded that "blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord." Who is blessed? Jesus and we are blessed. Blessed ones can sing even in tragedy as Spafford did. Would you join me and sing together the first stanza of hymn number 377, "It is Well with My Soul"? "**When peace, like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll; whatever my lot,**

Thou hast taught me to say, "It is well, it is well with my soul." It is well with my soul; It is well, it is well with my soul." Amen.