



Part 6: Humble King, Upside Down Kingdom

Jesus is our crucified King, who embodies His paradoxical Way in His upside-down Kingdom.

I. Triumphal Entry and Holy Week

Start of “Holy Week” where we intentionally slow down to ponder and participate in the events of our Savior’s last week...Maundy Thursday and Good Friday...Easter Sunday.

In this Lent series, we have been considering the words and actions of Jesus to clarify for us what it means to be a Christian – a follower or disciple of Jesus.

Forming disciples who love Jesus and follow His Way.

The historical account of “Palm Sunday” is an appropriate picture of the Jesus Way we are called to live.

“We can’t suppress the Jesus way to sell the Jesus truth...Only when the Jesus way is organically joined with the Jesus truth do we get the Jesus life...To follow Jesus implies that we enter a way of life that is given character and shape and direction by the One who calls us.” – Eugene Peterson, *The Jesus Way*

II. Who is this man?

“When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, ‘Who is this?’”
Matthew 21:10

A. Jesus is our true king.

“This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

‘Say to the Daughter of Zion, “See, your King comes to you, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”’ Matthew 21:4-5 [Zechariah 9:9]

Jesus is intentionally embodying Zechariah’s prophecy about the coming of Israel’s Messiah, and the people recognize it. The people’s actions reveal they expect Jesus to bring the final military victory over Rome and the pagan nations of the earth.

- The crowds spread their cloaks on the ground before him
- They lay palm branches on the road before him – palms symbolized Jewish nationalism and military victory back to the time 200 years earlier when Judas Maccabaeus arrived in Jerusalem to conquer the pagan armies oppressing Israel (palm branches minted on their coins). This started a royal dynasty lasting over 100 years.

The Gospel writers all claim that Jesus is Israel’s true King and the true King of the world, and they all want us to see that Jesus’ enthronement as our true King happens on the cross. Jesus’ victory comes through the cross (Colossians 2:13-15).

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B. Jesus embodies the Way of humility for us.

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Jesus models a true humility for us not a false humility. He knows who he is, and that he is worthy of our worship.

“Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, rebuke your disciples!’ ‘I tell you,’ he replied, ‘if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.’” Luke 19:39-40

“Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so, he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.” John 13:3-4

Jesus is not seduced by the crowds and their fickle adoration. He is clear about who he is, and the way he is to use his authority and power to serve and save others.

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C. Jesus embodies the Way of radical love for others – especially the powerless and marginalized.

Jesus knew these same crowds would turn on him a few days later. He knew these same crowds would choose Barabbas over him to be released. He knew these same crowds would yell –

“crucify him!” He knew these same crowds would declare to Pilate – “We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:15).

It was for these same crowds that Jesus would say from the cross – “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

The crucifixion of Jesus is not just a cosmic transaction for the forgiveness of our sins. It is the embodiment of God’s radical love and solidarity with sinners like us who have made themselves his enemies through our rebellion (Romans 5:10).

Like our Savior and King, we are called to follow our crucified King in his radical love for others – especially the powerless and the marginalized.

When the people of God have remembered this, the gospel has spread, and justice has been modeled. When the people of God have forgotten this, the gospel has suffered, and injustice has flourished.

As followers of Jesus, we do not exist for ourselves. We belong to the crucified King and His upside-down Kingdom.

III. The Honor of Loving Our King

Ex. Famous story of Sir Walter Raleigh, one of the great explorers during the reigns of queen Elizabeth I and King James I of England ... he was walking with the Queen through London and came to a place where rainwater had made the ground muddy ... he took off his cloak and placed it on the ground so the Queen could walk over the mud – a way of honoring her (Tom Wright, *Matthew for Everyone*, 66).

We have the great honor of doing so much more. We have the honor of laying down our lives to honor and love King Jesus.

This Holy Week may we take the time to reflect deeply on our Crucified King, His great love for us, and His radical Way in His upside-down Kingdom.

May we ask Him to strengthen in us the faith and devotion to be marked by His humility and radical love.

Discussion Questions:

1. What has been your experience or practice of observing “Holy Week”?
2. What value do you see in its observance?
3. Read Matthew 21:1-11 and Zechariah 9:9-10. What similarities do you see? What differences, if any, do you observe?
4. Doug said that Jesus embodies both humility and radical love. Do you agree? How do you see these qualities expressed in this Scripture?
5. How does this Scripture inform your thinking about following Jesus?
6. Are there any attitudes or actions you are wanting to consider in light of this Scripture?