**SEE, YOUR KING IS COMING**

April 23, 2017

John 12:1-19

Key Verse 12:14-15 “Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: ‘Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.’”

According to Plato, there are 5 forms of government; aristocracy. It is ruled by the righteous king. It is the best form of the government. Then when the king rules only for his own self-interest and honor, it degenerates into timocracy. Then it degenerates an oligarchy, which is a government where the few rich people rule the majority of the poor. The poor majority will soon come together to form an even worse form of government, democracy. In a democracy, people are free to do what they want and live how they want because the majority decides. People start disregarding all laws and nobody wants to be ruled. This is where tyranny comes. A tyrannical ruler will come. We are living in a democracy now. While living in a democracy, we crave for freedom. Yet we find that practically speaking, everyone is under someone’s authority. Spiritually speaking, many people are under the power of darkness. They suffer from slavery to sinful desires, fear, anxiety and despair. This robs them of meaning or hope for the future. People say, “I don’t need a king. I am a king.” But in fact they are ruled by the power of darkness which they cannot control. In that sense, we need a king who will rule us with righteousness, justice, love and peace. Jesus came to be our king. He invites us to his kingdom. Let’s learn Jesus’ kingship and what it means to live under his reign.

**First**, Jesus is the king who is worthy of our worship (1-8). It was six days before the last Passover, during which Jesus would become the Lamb of God and thus fulfill the meaning of the Passover. On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus stopped by Bethany, which was just two miles away. There a dinner was given in Jesus’ honor. Among many celebrations and parties, this one might have been the most joyful. Martha was serving diligently and wholeheartedly, with a big smile on her face. All her complaints were gone. Lazarus was reclining at the table, sharing his experience of being dead for four days and coming back to life. There was a sense of victory over the power of death. As people were coming and going, eating, drinking and talking, suddenly Mary appeared. She took a pint of pure nard, a very expensive perfume, and poured it on Jesus’ feet. It was common in those days to put one or two drops on the head or upper body of a guest, as a sign of honor. But Mary poured the whole jar of perfume on Jesus’ feet. The house was filled with its fragrance. Then Mary wiped Jesus’ feet with her hair. At that time it was totally unacceptable for women to loosen their hair in the presence of men. It was considered a disgrace and shame.

Why did Mary do this? From a human point of view, it seems to be eccentric and too extravagant. But to Mary it was the appropriate response to Jesus; it was an act of worship. Mary had been in deep despair and sorrow over the death of Lazarus. She gave way to bitterness and resentment toward Jesus. She doubted his love. But in his great mercy, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. She saw God in Jesus. Jesus was not just a good teacher or a prophet, as many like to say. He is God, the Creator and Author of life, and the object of worship. Mary repented her doubt, bitterness and resentment and Jesus forgave all her sins and assured her of eternal life and living hope in the kingdom of God. Since then Jesus became everything to her. She willingly gave her most precious treasure to Jesus. Until then she held this perfume for her own use, perhaps on her wedding day. Now she gave it to Jesus lavishly, joyfully, and with deep gratitude. Pouring out her perfume meant pouring out her heart, her love, her respect and honor, and everything. This is the deep meaning of worship. Worship is not just a ritual or a gesture; it is pouring out one’s heart and life and love in an act of reverence. This is love that knows no limits, love without restraint. There must have been stunned silence. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. No doubt not only then, but for a long time afterward. For however long that lasted it would be a constant reminder of her costly devotion.

On the other hand, Judas Iscariot was not happy. He objected to Mary’s act of worship, saying, “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.” John indicates that Judas said this because he was a thief. As the keeper of the moneybag, he used to help himself to what was put into it (6). Simply speaking, Judas loved money more than Jesus. To him, pouring out the perfume on Jesus was a waste. Judas was one of Jesus’ disciples. For three years he heard Jesus’ teachings, saw his miracles and had fellowship with Jesus. But he never accepted Jesus as his Savior or the Messiah. He did not see Jesus as God, worthy of worship. He had no real relationship with Jesus; he only wanted to get something from Jesus. How did Jesus respond?

“Leave her alone,” Jesus replied. “It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial” (7). It is not certain that Mary knew she was anointing Jesus for burial. Rather, she was simply worshiping Jesus with all her heart. But Jesus accepted her act as a most precious offering and included it in his gospel history. Jesus honored Mary highly. In Mark’s gospel Jesus says, “Wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her” (Mk 14:9). According to Jesus our acts of worship are not a waste, but the most precious offering that remains forever in his history. Jesus wanted to help Judas and said, “You will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me” (8). Jesus did not discourage giving to the poor. But at that crucial moment, Jesus wanted Judas to recognize him as the Messiah and worship him.

Here we learn from Mary how to worship Jesus. Like Mary, we all have our own treasure. For students it may be time, energy or a precious thing that we collect. When we really know Jesus, we gladly and willingly pour out our treasures to worship him. Jesus is worthy of our worship. When we see Mary’s sacrifice, we realize how precious Jesus is. M. Sarah Barry was so busy in teaching the Bible to students that she missed a chance to marry. She gave her marriage to Jesus. Through her life of sacrifice, we realize once again how precious our Lord Jesus is. Christopher J.H. Wright said, “Worship is ‘worth-ship’ and acknowledgement of the worth of Almighty God.” Jesus is Almighty God. Jesus is our joy, our hope, our meaning, our love, our life, our all. When we really know Jesus and worship him, we can sing, “Jesus is the joy of Living; He’s the King of Life to me. Unto Him my all I’m giving, His forevermore to be. I will do what he commands me; Anywhere he leads I’ll go. Jesus is the Joy of Living; He’s the dearest Friend I know.’” (Hymn #369)

**Second**, Jesus is the king who is worthy of our praise (9-19). A large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was in Bethany and they came to see him, as well as Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead (9). Lazarus had become a celebrity. His testimony was attracting many people to come over to Jesus’ side (11). Upon seeing this, the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well because they felt their positions of leadership were threatened (10). While the leaders were plotting murder, a great crowd of ordinary people who were in Jerusalem for the Passover were buzzing with excitement. They had been looking for Jesus (11:56), and they now heard that he was on his way to Jerusalem (12). Jesus was entering Jerusalem publicly. We call it “Jesus’ Triumphal Entry” because he was coming to reign as the eternal King who destroys the power of sin and death. People of the time did not understand this. But they had high expectations of Jesus, for they knew he had raised the dead, healed a paralyzed man, given sight to the blind, and demonstrated the power and love of God in many ways. They perceived that he was the Messiah. So they took 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!” (13)

The words they shouted were a quotation of Psalm 118 in which the Jews welcomed the deliverer from their enemies as he entered Jerusalem in triumph and went to the temple. The crowd expected Jesus to deliver them from the Romans and all oppressors and restore the glory of Israel. The word “Hosanna” literally means “save us now.” They cried out to Jesus for salvation. They suffered from poverty and disease and bondage under Roman oppressors. To make matters worse, they were heavily burdened by legalistic Jewish leaders. But they believed that Jesus had come to save them. They welcomed Jesus as the Messiah, the King of Israel, and Jesus accepted their praise. In this way Jesus deliberately proclaimed that he is the king who fulfilled the prophetic aspect of Psalm 118. Jesus is not only our teacher, shepherd, healer and friend. Jesus is our king who reigns with power and authority. Jesus is the king who is worthy to receive our praise.

Look at verse 14. “Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written. Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.” Commonly, after conquest, kings and army generals make their triumphal entries into their capital cities on a black or white stallion, to express their power and honor, and to inspire awe and fear in their subject people. But Jesus entered Jerusalem on a colt. A colt is a baby donkey. So instead of towering imposingly over the throngs, Jesus entered at eye-level, with his sandals dragging on the ground. Still the huge crowd of people acclaimed Jesus as the Lord’s Messiah. In this way Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. Here we learn the nature of Jesus’ kingship.

First of all, Jesus is a humble and gentle king. The word “king” implies the authority to rule. This scares people. They would rather not approach, but keep a distance from one in authority. Many leaders take advantage of this and present a powerful appearance. They want to rule people through intimidation. A Roman Emperor Caligula said, “I don’t care if they respect me as long as they fear me.” But Jesus is quite different. Jesus has great authority over all things (13:3). But he humbled himself and rode a young donkey so that no one would be afraid of him. He wanted everyone to feel free to approach him. Jesus came to be the friend of all kinds of people. Jesus invites us to come to him as we are. Whenever we come, Jesus receives us. He reigns over us as a humble king who gives us comfort, peace and true rest for our souls (Mt 11:28-30). Hebrews 4:15-16 says, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses…Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may find mercy and grace to help us in our time of need.” Jesus came not to rule us by intimidation and fear, but to die on the cross as the Lamb of God. By doing so, Jesus came to free us from the slavery of death. He came to free us from the fear of death, fear of punishment, fear of failure, fear of future security. The power of sin is real. It destroys our personalities, relationships, marriages, families and society. But Jesus has the power to save us from our sins. Not only so, but Jesus is our King who reigns over us to keep us free from sin and enables us to serve him in holiness and righteousness.

Historians say that when a king rode a donkey he was coming in peace. This time he came in peace to die. But when he comes again, he comes in war to judge. Revelation 19:11 says, “I saw heaven standing open and there before me a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war.” At first Jesus’ disciples did not understand the meaning of his entry riding on a donkey’s colt. But later, after Jesus’ death and resurrection, their spiritual eyes were opened. Then they realized that he entered Jerusalem as King in fulfillment of Scripture (16).

What does Jesus’ reign mean practically in daily life? It means to live as citizens of his kingdom. It means to lives as a royal priesthood. 1 Peter 2:9 says, “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” Even if we don’t get recognition in this world, we give our hearts to Jesus. But Jesus’ reign is not limited to our personal lives. Jesus is the King of our homes, our community, our nation and the world. The Bible says that one day, people of all nations will bow before Jesus and worship him as King of kings (Rev 7:9-12). See, your King is coming! Let’s give Jesus our treasures and worship and praise him with all our hearts. May Jesus’ kingdom come!

Henry C. Morrison was a great missionary who served the Lord in Africa for over 40 years. On the way back to United States, he began to wonder “will anyone remember us? Will anyone recall who we are? Will anyone meet us at the boat?” Well, unknown to Henry Morrison and his wife, Teddy Roosevelt, President of U.S., was also on board that ship. He had gone to Africa for a hunting trip. When ship pulled into New York harbor he looked to see if anyone had come to welcome them back home. Thousands of people were there cheering. Bands were playing. There were signs, banners, and billboards everywhere saying, “Welcome Home.” Henry and his wife were so excited about the crowds of people that were there to welcome them home and they went down to get their luggage, came back to the deck of the ship to get off and they realized that the parade of people were already gone. They had come to welcome Teddy Roosevelt. Henry Morrison went to his hotel room with a heavy heart. As he sat there on the bed, he asked his wife, “Honey, I just don’t get it…for 40 years we poured our lives into ministry and service. And yet we come back to America and not a single soul comes to welcome us home!” His wife came and sat down next to her husband, she put her hand on his shoulder, and comforted him with words that he would never forget, “Henry, you have forgotten something, you’re not home yet!”