

He Loved Me...

He Loves Me Lots

The Gospel of John

Text

John 12:12-26

Topic

Jesus rides a donkey into Jerusalem to shouts of "Hosanna" and the waving of palm branches

Title

"Palm the King on the Donkey"

"How many horses you got under the hood?"

I can't help but think Muscle Cars when I hear "horsepower." Number One on most 1970s lists is the Chevrolet Chevelle SS454. 450 HP, Muncie 4 speed transmission, 12 bolt rear end with positraction, F41 heavy duty suspension, and functional cowl induction hood.

I have no idea what any of that means. I looked it up; my 2019 Toyota CHR tops out at 140 HP. I've never popped the hood to show someone the motor.

Horsepower was adopted as a measurement in the late 18th century by Scottish engineer James Watt. If you're wondering, Yes, the 'watt' was named after the Scotty engineer. He needed a way to compare the output of steam engines with the power of work horses being replaced by them.

You don't hear too much about donkey power

One DP is $\frac{1}{3}$ of 1 HP. It is equivalent to 250watts.

Donkey power of another kind is on display in our text.

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The Gospel of John 12:12-26

"Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: 'FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION; BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SITTING ON A DONKEY'S COLT' " (v14&15).

The spiritual donkey power of that moment was off-the-charts immeasurable.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Your King Came On A Donkey And Conquered**, and **#2 Your King Is Coming On His Horse To Claim**.

#1 - Your King Came On A Donkey And Conquered (v12-19)

"Don't put the horse before the donkey."

Jesus **is** coming, in the future, riding upon a heavenly horse. In chapter nineteen of the Revelation we are told, "Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God" (v11-13).

When Jesus returns, He easily defeats the armies of the world in the Valley of Megiddo engaged in the Battle of Armageddon. He establishes His throne in Jerusalem, from which He reigns with a rod of iron for a millennia.

Did something go wrong at His first coming? Did Jesus not get it right and have to 'circle back'? No.

Jesus had 'donkey business' to conclude before He would claim the kingdoms of the world.

He had to conquer some pretty powerful foes. Sin, Satan, and Death had reigned over humanity since our parents disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden. In verse thirty-one, we will read that Satan is "the ruler of this world."

How could a holy God judge sin but not condemn sinners to the eternal penalty they deserved? He must die in their place, thereby remaining *just* while being able to *justify* those who believe.

Matthew wrote that Jesus came, **“LOWLY, AND SITTING ON A DONKEY, A COLT, THE FOAL OF A DONKEY.”**

It seems as if every day a friend on social media posts a picture and says, “Caption this.” How would you caption this picture of Jesus riding in to Jerusalem triumphantly on a donkey?

“Lowly” is the word to caption it. “Lowly” could caption Jesus’ entire campaign against Sin, Satan, and Death. In eternity past, Jesus humbled Himself by volunteering to become a man. He became man by adding humanity to His deity via the virgin birth. His lowliness is described by the apostle Paul in his letter to the Philippians:

Being in the form of God, [He] did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (2:6-11).

Jesus was the King when He entered Jerusalem. But in His first coming, lowliness by obedience was His greatest weapon to defeat evil. The humble, lowly, donkey is the perfect steed for the Savior.

Joh 12:12 The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

Joh 12:13 took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: “Hosanna! ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’ The King of Israel!”

The “feast” was Passover. On Friday, Jesus would be examined by the religious authorities and be found faultless. He was nevertheless condemned by both Israel and Rome to be crucified.

Jesus would die at the exact moment the lambs in the Temple were being sacrificed.

The crucifixion was no miscalculation. Throughout His ordeal Jesus was in charge, right up to dismissing His own spirit. Jesus was born to die on the Cross. It was mission critical.

“Branches of palm trees” had only recently become a prominent national symbol of Israel. One hundred fifty years before Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the Jews celebrated a deliverer with palms.

Simon Maccabaeus expelled the Syrian forces from the Temple and Jerusalem. In the does-not-belong-in-the Bible history book of First Maccabees, we read, “And [Simon] entered into [Jerusalem] the three and twentieth day of the second month in the hundred seventy and first year, with thanksgiving, **and branches of palm trees**, and with harps, and cymbals, and with viols, and hymns, and songs: because there was destroyed a great enemy out of Israel” (13:51).

Palms were additionally used to celebrate Simon’s brother, Judas Maccabaeus, when he rededicated the sanctuary after it had been profaned by Antiochus Epiphanes.

The Palm Sunday crowd looked at Jesus, but the Messiah they ‘saw’ was a Maccabee.

One historian, commenting on the carnage of WWI wrote, “In the course of four long years, one of the most iconic weapons of World War I was responsible for a massive amount of death and debilitating injury. The machine gun revolutionized combat efforts and quickly drove out nations with their horse-drawn carriages into submission.”

A donkey, not a horse, was the perfect steed for Jesus to drive out Sin, Satan, and Death. Vincent de Paul wrote, “The most powerful weapon to conquer the devil is humility. For, as he does not know at all how to employ it, neither does he know how to defend himself from it.”

“Hosanna! ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’ The King of Israel!” are quotes from Psalm 118, celebrating the Messiah. “Hosanna!” means *save, save now*.

Joh 12:14 Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written:
Joh 12:15 “FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION; BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SITTING ON A DONKEY’S COLT.”

Matthew, a former tax collector, was probably good at inventory. He mentions *two* animals, a donkey *and* her colt. Probably the colt *and* the female donkey were brought to Jesus, and both made the trip to Jerusalem. Donkey trainers recommend you not ride a donkey in its first year.

Since the colt never had been ridden, or even sat upon (as stated by Mark and Luke), its dependence upon its mother is very understandable (as implied by Matthew). The journey to Jerusalem, with multitudes of people in pressing Jesus and the donkeys would have been much easier for the colt if the mother donkey were led nearby down the same road.

Joh 12:16 His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and *that* they had done these things to Him.

Jesus was “glorified” by the entirety of the events: The Cross, His resurrection from the dead, and His ascension into Heaven.

The “things” they “did not understand” were “things which were written about Him.” The disciples were unaware that they were participating in the fulfillment of prophesy.

So are we participants, but we *are* aware of it.

Jesus promised to send the gift of the Holy Spirit to indwell and empower His church on Earth. We go in that power and make disciples. It is like being in our own paragraph in the Book of Acts. Or the Appendices. I’d settle for a footnote.

Joh 12:17 Therefore the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness.

You had street cred if you were among those who had witnessed Lazarus come out of the tomb. Talking to one of them was as close as you could come to being there.

Joh 12:18 For this reason the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign.

The Sanhedrin forbid it, but Jews ignored them, and “met Him.” Raising a man from the dead overcame their fear of excommunication.

Raising Lazarus was a “sign” Jesus was their Messiah. A few thousand years later, it remains a sign.

Joh 12:19 The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, “You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!”

The “world” is an exaggeration meant to emphasize their frustration. It is like us saying “everybody,” or, “nobody,” when we don’t mean it; we simply feel that way.

No matter what they had attempted, Jesus continued to thwart them. There is one thing they had not tried which would have solved everything: Believing in Jesus.

When you ‘look’ to Jesus, is it as the King on His donkey? The Church Age is a time of spiritual warfare against desperate, conquered powers in the unseen realm.

The “weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds” (Second Corinthians 10:4). God’s power is revealed in our weakness. We fulfill the sufferings of Jesus. To die is gain. The word for “witness” is *martyr*. Every believer is a martyr, and some will experience martyrdom.

“Lowly” is a one-word caption of our life while waiting for Jesus. It is the tone of the Church Age. We are to be lowly the way He was, by yielding ourselves to the Holy Spirit Who enables us to obey God.

#2 - Your King Is Coming To Claim (v20-26)

Tick, tock, tick, tock...The sound of a ticking clock generates anxiety.

- The countdown clock on the show, *24*, is called by many the most stressful in television history.
- Tick-Tock the croc terrifies Captain Hook.

Jesus said, “The hour has come.” Only hours remained before the Crucifixion. Tick-Tock.

Joh 12:20 Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast.

Often in the New Testament, the term "Greeks" refers to Gentiles who come from any part of the Greek-speaking world. In the Bible, if you are not a Jew, then you are a Gentile.

They came to Jesus. They represent Gentiles coming to Jesus and being saved in the Church Age. It is appropriate to at least hint to the reader that Jesus' mission was to the whole world of mankind, Jews *and* Gentiles.

Joh 12:21 Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

It was because he "was from Bethsaida of Galilee" that these Greeks approached Philip instead of one of the other disciples. Why that was important, we are not told.

"Hey, Calvary Chapel," a popcorn vender shouted to me in New Orleans Square at Disneyland. I was wearing one of our shirts. I stopped and we chatted with him a while. Could be something like that attracted these Gentiles to Phillip.

Joh 12:22 Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

Phillip solicited Andrew to help. They seemed hesitant.

Jesus didn't break down to the disciples exactly how Gentiles would fit in to God's plan. He said He was sent to "His own," the "lost sheep" of Israel. It was a hard call for them to determine whether or not Jesus would be talking to Gentiles.

Kudos to them for deciding it was better to err on the side of grace and bring them.

Joh 12:23 But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.

The 'hour' is the appointed time for Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension, all of which contribute to His being "glorified." He will be the first to be raised from the dead never to die again. In so doing, He is the Firstborn from the dead, to be followed by His believers being resurrected or raptured. It is all glorious, is it not?

There is one thing about it that we can say with hindsight. When Israel as a whole rejected their Messiah, the Gospel went out to the Gentiles. It is still going out to the whole world as we await the Lord to return for His Church.

After the resurrection and rapture off the Church, God will resume His direct dealings with Israel during seven years of Great Tribulation. One of the Old Testament names for the Great Tribulation is the Time of Jacob's Trouble (Jeremiah 30:7). When you read about it in Matthew 24, Jesus makes it clear that the Jews are the focus of those years.

Joh 12:24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

Jesus' death was the germination of life for a great harvest. The harvest continues in the Church Age... In the Great Tribulation... And in the Millennium.

Joh 12:25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Idioms can mean something different than what the words normally do. We tell performers, "Break a leg." They understand it is encouraging. The love/hate contrast reflects a Jewish idiom that articulates *preference*, not hatred.

D.A. Carson writes,

"The person who loves his life will lose it: it could not be otherwise, for to love one's life is a fundamental denial of God's sovereignty, of God's rights, and a brazen elevation of self to the apogee of one's perception, and therefore an idolatrous focus on self, which is the heart of all sin."

To love your life is what I call the Sinatra Syndrome. The crooner is famous for his rendition of *My Way*.

*For what is a man, what has he got?
If not himself then he has naught
Not to say the things that he truly feels
And not the words of someone who kneels
Let the record show I took all the blows and did it my way*

Joh 12:26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

A Christian follows Jesus in 'lowly living' that results in heavenly honor.

That's what Jesus modeled throughout His life and in His death. So can we. Andrew Murray writes, "Fellow-Christians, do let us study the Bible portrait of the humble man. And let us ask our brethren, and ask the world, whether they recognize in us the likeness to the original."

Historians divide history into *eras* or *ages*. The Roaring Twenties, the Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War, are examples of eras or ages in the United States.

We often use the term, Church Age:

- It started with the coming of God the Holy Spirit upon the disciples gathered in an Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost.
- The Church Age ends when Jesus returns in the sky to resurrect those who die during the Church Age, and rapture living believers who have been awaiting his imminent return.

The Great Tribulation and the Millennium are two following ages.

After we are resurrected and raptured, we read in the Revelation, "And there were loud voices in Heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!' " (11:15).

Jesus was Donkey King in His first coming. He was the incarnate God-man who crushed persons and powers in the unseen realm by His lowliness. His display of obedience to God the Father by dying on the Cross is the only way mankind could be redeemed, and creation set right.

He is coming on His white horse, and we will follow with Him, on our own steeds.

In 1962, Chubby Checker had a hit record, *Limbo Rock*. The limbo requires the dancers to pass under a progressively lower bar on their feet while leaning backward. "How low can you go?" is a literal challenge.

In your walk with Jesus, "How low can you go?"