

All Hail King Jesus

The King Has Come

Matthew 21:1-17

March 29, 2026

Introduction

Let's begin with what I have found to be a rather difficult question this week: *(slide) What is ruling you, and what kind of ruler is it?*

I know you think you don't answer to anybody. Deep down, we all think we're libertarian. But I think if you'll give this the attention I have this week, you'll discover at least one thing that is ruling you, at least functionally.

- For some, politics has become a functional king. It tells us who the good guys are, who the bad guys are, what to fear, and where to place our hope. But it is a terrible savior. It can mobilize us, but it cannot redeem us.
- Some people are ruled by approval. Their emotional weather is determined by whether they feel liked, wanted, needed, admired. But approval is a nervous king. You have to keep feeding it, and it never grants peace for very long.
- For some of us, what rules us is anxiety. We wake up serving it, making decisions to keep it calm, organizing our lives around what might go wrong. And anxiety is a cruel king. It promises safety, but never lets you rest.
- Money makes a convincing king because it promises protection. But it never says, "Enough." It always asks for one more raise, one more buffer, one more possession, one more reason not to trust God.

All of those rulers make promises, but none of them can welcome us in our failure, strengthen us in our weakness, or rule us in love. you in your guilt, heal you in your brokenness, or rule you in love.

This is really what Palm Sunday is all about. It's the Sunday that marks that moment in Jesus' life where he clearly and definitively declared himself to be the king. Not just the king of the Jews, but the king of nations. Our text today makes the case that Jesus is king, but it also tells us what kind of king that He is. *(Slide) What I hope that you'll see today is that **King Jesus is gentle enough to welcome us, strong enough to change us, and great enough to rule us.***

Body

(Slide) Gentle Enough to Welcome Us

When Matthew tells us that Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey, he does not want us to miss the meaning. This is not a random travel detail. *(Slide) Jesus is deliberately fulfilling Zechariah 9:9: “Behold, your king is coming to you; humble, and mounted on a donkey.”* In other words, Jesus is openly declaring, “I am the King.” But he is also declaring **what kind of King** he is. He does not come on a war horse, signaling conquest and immediate judgment. He comes lowly, humble, gentle. His authority is real (he’s the king!), but his posture is merciful. He comes not first to crush rebels, but to call them; not first to destroy sinners, but to save them.

And the context of Zechariah makes this even richer. *(slide) Zechariah 9:9–10 says this King comes with salvation, and that he will “speak peace to the nations.”* So from the beginning, Jesus’ gentle kingship is not narrow or tribal ... that is, it’s not strictly Jewish or Israeli. He comes to Zion, yes, but not for Zion alone. His gentleness is part of his global welcome. He comes as Israel’s promised King, but also as the King who brings peace **to the nations**.

And in our text in Matthew 21, you can see that welcome start to unfold in the temple. After cleansing it, Jesus does not turn the place into a shrine for the elite. *(Slide) Matthew says, “the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them” (Matt. 21:14).* That is remarkable. The very people often pushed to the margins were coming near to the King in the temple, and he received them.

(Slide) And when Jesus explains the cleansing of the temple, he quotes Isaiah 56:7: “My house shall be called a house of prayer.” But in Isaiah, the full line is “a house of prayer for all peoples.” That chapter explicitly mentions foreigners being brought near and made joyful in God’s house. So Jesus’ actions are not only about purifying worship; they are about opening access. The gentle King makes room for the outsider, the needy, the one who has no standing except mercy.

That is why “gentle enough to welcome us” is such good news. Jesus is not gentle in the sense that he is passive or weak. He overturns tables. He confronts corruption. But his holiness does not cancel his welcome. He removes what blocks access to God so that the needy can come near. His gentleness means that sinners do not have to hide from him. The broken can approach him. The outsider can be brought in. The child can praise him. The blind and lame can come into his presence and find mercy there.

So Palm Sunday tells us not only that Jesus is King, but that he is the kind of King people like us can approach. If he came only in greatness, we might fear him. If he came only in strength, we might hide from him. But he comes humble and mounted on a donkey. He comes with salvation. He speaks peace. He opens the house of prayer. He welcomes the needy. **Jesus is gentle enough to welcome us.**

(Slide) Strong Enough to Change Us

And Jesus is also strong enough to change us. Jesus does not enter Jerusalem merely to be admired. He enters as King, and kings do not simply receive applause; they set things right. That is why, after riding into the city in humility, Jesus goes straight to the temple and overturns the tables of the money changers and the seats of those selling doves. The gentle King is not weak. He is strong enough to confront corruption where it lives. *(Slide) When he says, “My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you make it a den of robbers” (Matt. 21:13)*, he is not just criticizing a bad practice. He is acting with royal authority to judge what has gone wrong in the worship of God.

And again, the text Jesus cites makes the point even sharper. *(Slide) In Isaiah 56, the Lord promises a coming day when foreigners will be brought to his holy mountain and made joyful in his house of prayer, “for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples” (Isa. 56:7)*. So when Jesus cleanses the temple, he is not only tearing down what is corrupt; he is making room for what God always intended. **His strength is not destructive for its own sake. It is restorative. He removes what keeps people from God.**

That matters for us, because **we often want a Jesus who welcomes us without confronting us. But the King who comes gentle enough to welcome us is also strong enough to change us.** He loves us too much to leave us to false worship, disordered loves, and the religious habits that keep us far from God even while we appear close. He overturns what needs overturning. He drives out what does not belong. He cleanses before he heals because real change requires holy power.

And that is exactly what we see next. *(Slide) After Jesus cleanses the temple, Matthew says, “the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them” (Matt. 21:14)*. Notice the order. He clears away what is false, and then he restores what is broken. He is strong enough not only to expose sin, but to reverse its effects.

This is where Isaiah 35 helps us understand what Jesus is doing. *(Slide) The prophet says of God’s saving reign, “Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come... He will save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer” (Isa. 35:4–6)*. In other words, when the King truly comes, he does not merely issue commands; he brings restoration.

So Jesus’ strength is not the strength of intimidation. It is the strength of holy authority and healing power. He is strong enough to drive out what defiles and strong enough to mend what is damaged. Strong enough to confront our sin and strong enough to restore our lives. Strong enough to cleanse our worship and strong enough to make us whole. The same King who overturns tables also opens blind eyes and strengthens lame feet.

That is why Jesus as King is such good news. Lesser rulers can demand behavior, but they cannot change the heart. They can manage appearances, but they cannot heal what sin has

broken. Jesus can. He welcomes us in our need, but he does not leave us in our ruin. He is strong enough to change us.

(Slide) Great Enough to Rule Us

Yet even more than those two wonderful things, ***Jesus is also great enough to rule us.*** Jesus does not merely come as a gentle King who welcomes the needy, or as a strong King who changes what is false and broken. He also comes as a great King who is worthy to rule us. And in Matthew 21, that greatness is seen in the praise he receives and the way he explains it.

(Slide) As Jesus enters Jerusalem, the crowds spread their cloaks on the road and cry out, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” (Matt. 21:9). Those are royal words. The title “Son of David” is messianic, kingly language. The cloaks on the road echo the way kings were honored in Israel. And then, later in the temple, the children take up the same cry: “Hosanna to the Son of David!” (Matt. 21:15). In other words, the city is being confronted with a question: **What do you do with a Jesus who is being welcomed like a king?**

The chief priests and scribes are indignant. They ask, “Do you hear what these are saying?” And Jesus answers, essentially, yes—I hear it, and I accept it. That is already astonishing. Any merely human teacher with even a shred of humility should have corrected them if their praise were misplaced. But Jesus does not silence it. He receives it.

(Slide) Then he does something even more striking. ***He quotes Psalm 8: “Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise” (Matt. 21:16).*** In Psalm 8, that praise is directed to the Lord himself: “O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” **So Jesus not only permits praise fit for a king; he explains it with a psalm about praise given to God. He places himself in the category of the Lord whose name is majestic in all the earth.**

That means Jesus is not asking to be one authority among many. He is not requesting a place somewhere in the hierarchy of our loyalties. He is claiming the kind of greatness that demands our allegiance, our obedience, and our worship. He is great enough to rule us because he is more than a moral example, more than a political hope, more than a private spiritual comfort. He is the Son of David, yes—but he is also the Lord whose praise comes from the mouths of children.

All of us are inclined to give our highest loyalty to something less than Jesus. We will gladly let many things influence us—career, family, reputation, politics, money, comfort, success—but Jesus does not come merely to influence us. He comes to reign. His greatness means he has the right to order our lives, define our loves, command our obedience, and receive our worship.

(Slide)

- ***If he were only gentle, we might come to him for comfort.***
- ***If he were only strong, we might come to him for help.***

- ***But because he is also great, we must come to him with surrender.***

This is what Palm Sunday presses on us. Jesus is not campaigning for office. He is revealing who he is. He is the King. And because he is great enough to receive the praise that belongs to God, he is great enough to rule every part of our lives. Not just our Sunday songs, but our loyalties. Not just our beliefs, but our obedience. Not just our crisis moments, but our whole selves. Jesus is great enough to rule us.

Conclusion

Individual

(Slide) So you see, ***King Jesus is gentle enough to welcome us, strong enough to change us, and great enough to rule us.*** Which leads me back to our very first question.

(Slide) The question is, ***“Who or what is ruling me right now?”***

Because every person has some ruling authority in life—self, success, money, fear, comfort, approval, politics, pleasure, security. Something functionally sits on the throne.

And Matthew 21 gives good news to people like us: ***King Jesus is gentle enough to welcome us, strong enough to change us, and great enough to rule us.***

(Slide) ***He is gentle enough to welcome you.***

- You do not have to clean yourself up first.
- You do not have to stop being needy before you come.
- He comes on a donkey, not a war horse.
- He welcomes the blind, the lame, and the praise of children.

(Slide) ***He is strong enough to change you.***

- He does not merely accept you as you are and leave you there.
- He overturns your tables.
- He cleanses you of false worship.
- He heals what is broken.
- His kingship is not sentimental; it is transformative.

(Slide) ***He is great enough to rule you.***

- He is not just a helper or an advisor.
- He is not one loyalty among many.
- He is worthy of your allegiance, your obedience, and your worship.

You are invited this morning to stop resisting Jesus' rule and start trusting it—because the King who has the right to rule you is also the King willing to welcome and restore you.

Hear me: ***You can come to Jesus as you are, but you cannot come on your own terms; the King who welcomes you also means to change you and rule you for your good and His glory.***

Church

If Jesus is this kind of King, then his people must become this kind of people.

If we belong to this King, then we should reflect His kingdom. A church under King Jesus should look like the kind of place Jesus is making in this passage. (One slide, 4 lines on it)

1. ***A welcoming people.*** Because Jesus is gentle enough to welcome us:

- we do not build a culture of spiritual intimidation
- we make room for the weak, the doubting, the needy, the outsider
- we do not act like the kingdom belongs to the polished and strong

2. ***A holy people.*** Because Jesus cleanses the temple:

- we do not make peace with false worship
- we do not use religion for self-interest
- we let Jesus confront what is crooked in us

3. ***A healing people.*** Because Jesus heals the blind and lame:

- we move toward broken people, not away from them
- we care about restoration, not just attendance
- we embody the mercy of the King

4. ***A worshipping people.*** Because Jesus receives the praise of children:

- we gladly give him what he is due
- we become humble, not self-important
- we praise him not merely as an example, but as Lord

(Title slide) Beech Haven, we are called to become the kind of community that reflects our King. ***Because Jesus comes gentle enough to welcome us, strong enough to change us, and great enough to rule us ... then His church at Beech Haven engages in relationships, is humble in service, walks with integrity, and worships with joy.***

Prayer

Lord Jesus, We praise You as our King ... gentle enough to welcome us, strong enough to change us, and great enough to rule us. Forgive us for the many lesser rulers we have trusted and obeyed. Draw near to us in Your mercy, cleanse what is false in us, heal what is broken, and teach us to bow before You with joy. And make us, as Your church, a welcoming, holy, healing, and worshiping people who reflect the beauty of Your kingdom.

In Your name we pray, amen.