

When Jesus rode down from the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem, His actions announced the arrival of God's peaceful king. This journey, at this time, on this animal, in this way – Jesus is claiming to be Israel's Messiah, something many of His followers have wanted him to do for quite a while.

The disciples' response in v. 38 confirms that they understood this, as they begin to sing Psalm 118 about Jesus: "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" The Pharisees are shocked and offended, and so they ask Jesus to correct His disciples. This is His chance to clarify that He's not the king, the heir of David, the fulfilment of the hopes of God's people. He's just another prophet, a rabbi, a teacher.

These are the two options that have been surrounding Jesus since day one. Is He someone that gives instruction and points the way, a good example and a good teacher, or is He someone to be worshiped, someone to submit to and entrust yourself to?

And people still face this choice today. There are those who believe that Jesus was a reforming rabbi who never meant to get caught up in the swirl of messianic fervor that ultimately got Him crucified. The Jesus whose words were appreciated never meant to become the Jesus who was welcomed as King and worshiped as God in the flesh.

But those people are wrong, just like the Pharisees were wrong. *They* were the ones who misunderstood Jesus. The ones who laid their garments before Him, who broke out in loud songs of praise, who blessed the coming King and gave glory to God, those were the ones who saw Jesus rightly. They received Him as God's Messiah, because that's who He presented Himself to be.

And so this morning I want us to look especially at verses 37-38, and to learn from the disciples how to welcome King Jesus. *Silence* is the wrong response; mild *appreciation* or *toleration* of Jesus is the wrong response. How should disciples of Jesus respond when He publicly proclaims His kingship?

In these verses, 37-38, we see the disciples exulting, exalting, and extolling King Jesus, and as we commemorate His passion, we should do the same: exult, exalt, and extol. Clearly, these actions are related, but they aren't the same.

By **exulting**, I mean that we should feel and express delight and joy over the fact that Jesus is King. The Triumphal Entry and what it means is not simply data that we've encountered or information that we've gathered. Exulting in King Jesus means rejoicing, which is only possible for those who believe in Jesus. Here's the difference: the Pharisees were *aware* that Jesus was entering Jerusalem as king; the disciples were *glad*. Be glad that Jesus is King!

And *show it!* The inner joy that the disciples felt burst out of them in loud shouts of praise. Privately exulting in your heart is not enough; get loud! If you've ever wanted to say "amen" when Jesus is being preached or praised, this verse is your commission! Please don't think confuse preaching with lecturing. It may be *rude* to interrupt a professor as he teaches; it is *right* to respond joyfully when Jesus is set before you as King, which is what faithful preaching is all about. You won't bother me if you make some noise; you might bother Jesus if you never make noise! The stones might have to do your job for you!

We see the fuel for exultation in v. 37: the disciples praise God with a loud voice *for all the mighty works that they had seen*. When you consider what God has done for you in Christ, when you see Christ for who He really is, then your heart responds, and you find yourself exulting: He pardons your sins! Heals your diseases! Redeems your life from the grave! Crowns you with steadfast love and mercy! So when you remember these things, when you set them before your mind's eye once again, when Scripture reminds you or when you see in your own life something wonderful that Jesus has done for you, this is the spark that ignites the fire of exultation!

This also means that when you don't feel like exulting or when your delight in Jesus is growing dim, you know what's wrong. If you don't feel like exulting, it's because you've lost sight of God's mighty works. So look for them! Call to mind the great deeds of God! Read His Word! Remember His goodness! Stir up exultation through meditation. Refuel your heart by setting God's mighty works before your eyes.

The second aspect of responding to King Jesus is **exalting** Him. Exulting is what is going on in your heart; exaltation is what comes out of your mouth. You're taking the response of your heart *public*.

This is v. 38: “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!” This isn’t an observation: “Oh, look, He’s blessed.” You aren’t *describing*, you’re *ascribing*. You are recognizing something good and wonderful and glorious, and openly acknowledging it to be so. The Pharisees weren’t exactly happy that the people were exulting over Jesus, but that would have been okay if they hadn’t also been exalting Jesus. As long as it stays contained in your heart or your home, it’s okay, and Caesar won’t get upset. Once word gets out, though, that’s when the Pharisees try to stop it. But exulting without exalting hides your light under a bushel.

On the other hand, if you exalt Christ with your mouth without first exulting in him in your heart, then your praise is empty. If you celebrate Jesus when you think that He’s about to take down Herod and expel the Romans, but then turn on Him when He goes to death on the cross, then all you were really excited about was your own dreams of how life should be. You weren’t really exalting Jesus. Remember, there will be many who say, “Lord, Lord,” but don’t actually follow Jesus. Exalting without exulting is hypocrisy, not honor. But when your exultation is genuine, your exaltation will be real as well.

And so the disciples bless Jesus, because He is the King. He has been given a position of majesty and honor, set apart and set above all other pilgrims on the road to Jerusalem because He has been entrusted with rule and authority and power and dominion. To exalt means to lift up, to raise above, and the disciples are lifting Jesus up over everyone else by making Him the special object of their praise.

In particular, this King comes not in the name of Rome or Jerusalem, but in the name of the Lord. He’s not coming to do what’s best for Rome, or what’s best for the most powerful and wealthy members of Jewish society. This King is coming to serve and protect and defend God’s people, from the least to the greatest. He isn’t coming to rule the way He wants to rule, like Caesar or Herod. He’s coming to rule the way God wants Him to rule! The disciples are absolutely delighted to have that kind of King, and we should be, too!

The disciples’ exaltation of Jesus is an inescapable criticism of their current rulers, and an expression of loyalty to Jesus. This is what Herod was afraid of from the moment he heard of Jesus’ birth. The Jewish people have been waiting for the restoration of the kingship to David’s

house, waiting for Zechariah's prophecy to be fulfilled, waiting for God to act to deliver them. And so when they see their king coming on a colt, just like Samuel anointed David with oil, they anoint Jesus with their praise: "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord."

The final aspect of their response is to *extol* this Blessed King. As it relates to themselves, they are *exulting*. As it relates to Jesus, they are *exalting* Him. As it relates to everyone who will listen, they *extol* their king by describing why it is they are so full of joy and praise. Why are you so happy? Because our king is coming! Who is this king! Jesus is God's chosen king! Why is it so wonderful that Jesus is king? Because King Jesus brings about peace in heaven and glory in the highest!

These are the benefits that Caesar and Herod haven't provided. Roman soldiers might keep the peace in the Judea, but they cannot bring about peace in heaven. Herod might make the temple glorious with his rebuilding project, but that's the kind of glory that an army can quickly reduce to rubble.

And Luke, who it seems is writing especially with Gentiles in mind, swaps out Matthew and Mark's Jewish "hosanna" for the word "glory". Although they don't mean exactly the same thing, the connection is clear: God's glory is revealed through the salvation that this King is bringing about. Why all this exultation and exaltation? It's because no other King will bring about such a glorious salvation and peace as the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the King who brings true peace and lasting glory to God's people!

My hope is that as we remember the last days of Jesus and as we look forward to the celebration of His glorious resurrection that we will once again be moved to exult in Jesus for all these mighty works. And I hope that both here in worship and everywhere we go this week, we will exalt the blessed King who comes in the name of the Lord. And when others ask us why this week is so special for followers of Jesus, that we will extol the works of King Jesus, how He established peace in heaven through the blood of His cross, and how we are being caught up into the glory of God through the salvation that is found in Jesus Christ. Let us exult in Christ; let us exalt our King, and let us extol His glories now and forever.

- *In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.*