

[Sandwich Slide] Expectations meet reality. The sandwich looked good on the menu, but it didn't look so good when it was served. [Photo I.D. Slide] You thought you had taken a great picture, but now you want a retake. [Packed Car Slide] You thought loading the car for the trip would be easy, but your children wanted to bring way too much stuff. Expectations meet reality.

[Jesus on Donkey Slide] That's what Palm Sunday is all about. Great expectations meet bitter realities. Christ's Palm Sunday parade into Jerusalem wasn't the city's only parade that year. Roman historians tell us that the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate, regularly held military parades—Roman cavalry and soldiers marching into Jerusalem.

[Pilate on Horse with Soldiers Slide] Pontius Pilate would lead them on horseback. Each soldier was clad in leather armor. Their swords and spears were crafted from the hardest steel. Golden helmets gleamed in the bright sunlight. Drummers beat out the cadence of the march. The message was clear. Peace comes through Roman military might and muscle. They called it *Pax Romana*—Roman peace.

[Palm Sunday Slide] On Palm Sunday, Christ's disciples expected Jesus to defeat Pilate and the Romans. That's why the crowd, shouted, "*Hosanna to the Son of David!*" The word "Hosanna" is a Hebrew word that means, "Save us now!" Hosanna was a cry for Jesus to save Jews from Roman occupation. The crowd expected Jesus to demonstrate the military might and muscle of King David—Israel's greatest warrior. "*Hosanna to the Son of David!*" That's what they expected.

[Zech. 9:9 Slide] Here's the reality. "Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King comes to you—righteous and having salvation. Humble and riding upon a donkey." (Zech 9:9) Let's unpack this verse.

[Slide->] **Behold, your King**—Behold is a command to "see," "look," "gaze," "take note." "Behold" means, "This is the whole point of what I'm saying!" The word "king" implies authority, power and might. This isn't the king, his king, her king or their king. This is "*your King.*" Rejoice and shout aloud! Why? Your King ...

[Slide->] **Comes to you**—The “you” here is singular, not plural. It’s “you” not “you all.” The singular “you” tells us that it’s a focus that’s individual and intimate, particular and personal. You are more than a drivers license or Social security number. You are more than a cog in a machine, doomed to die and destined to be forever forgotten. Behold, your King comes to you.

[Slide->] **Righteous**—Your King is righteous. A righteous king was pretty much a contradiction-in-term throughout Israel’s history—a fact often pointed out by prophets. All nineteen northern kings were unbelievers. In the south, twelve out of twenty were unbelievers. *Behold your King comes to you, righteous.*

[Slide->] **Having salvation**—When you have something you can either keep it or give it away. Zechariah describes this King as having salvation but who doesn’t keep salvation. He gives it away. This King gives salvation away freely, generously, repeatedly, everlastingly.

[Jesus on Cross Slide] Salvation has a name—Jesus. Salvation has a place—Golgotha. Salvation has a day—Friday. Salvation has a time—9:00

in the morning until 3:00 in the afternoon. Salvation has a cost—the blood of God’s only Son. Salvation has nails, a hammer, a spear and a crown of thorns. Behold, your King, comes to you righteous having salvation—giving it away.

[Slide->] **Riding on a donkey**—In the ancient Near East, a donkey was not something you would ride if you were out to impress people. Horses and chariots were what dazzled people. They were the winners. Horses and chariots meant ultimate power. But instead, **this** King comes riding on a donkey. Not a warhorse, not a stallion. He has no chariots, no army, no sword, no helmet, and no spear.

[Man with Palm Branch Slide] This is a different kind of King who gives a different kind of peace. He delivers peace with God so we can experience the peace **of** God. *Peace with God so we can experience the peace of God.* God’s peace calms our fears, settles our hearts and lowers our anxiety. How does God do it? Zechariah 11:12, the King will be sold for 30 pieces of silver. Zechariah 12:10, he will be pierced through with a

spear and die. Zechariah 13:7, the King will be struck and the sheep will scatter. Expectations (defeat Rome) meet reality (a God-forsaken cross).

By Friday Jesus is hanging on that cross, under a sign. Matthew 27:37 states, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” Looking for a king who would crush Rome, people missed the King who crushed Satan, shame and sin—bringing us lasting peace!

To prove it, God turned the darkness of Good Friday into the light of Easter. God turned death with great suffering into life with great joy. God turned the shadow of the cross into everlasting peace for you. That’s what Zechariah 9:10 says.

[Zech. 9:10 Slide] “And I will cut off chariots from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the bow of warfare will be cut off. And he will speak **peace** to the nations. And his rule will be from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.”

(Scribbles Slide) “He speaks peace to the nations.” Jesus speaks peace to you. Christ’s gift of peace brings order out of chaos; goodness out of tragedy; hope out of despair.

[Tapestry Slide] Please look at this beautiful Palm Sunday tapestry, sewn together from thousands of random threads. This is what Jesus does. *This is what Jesus does for you.* Jesus takes all the random threads of our lives and creates beautiful, colorful, symmetrical, ordered, calming peace. What's it all mean?

It means pandemics don't have the last word. Panic doesn't have the last word. Jesus has the last word. And what would that be? Peace. John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." John 16:33, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." John 20:25, "Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'"

[Jesus with Cross Slide] Let's be honest. There are times when we feel that Jesus doesn't meet our expectations and we want a new Savior. A Savior who instantly rights our wrongs, heals our hurts and delivers us from disease, depression and all sorts of doom and gloom. Expectations meet reality! The reality is that Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey.

The reality is that he suffers, bleeds and dies. The reality is that sometimes prayers don't get answered the way that we wanted, hopes are dashed, and deliverance from pandemics doesn't happen nearly fast enough.

[Jesus on Donkey Slide] There is so much we don't have—yet. But there's so much more that we **do** have—now! Here He is. Trust Him. Embrace Him. Believe Him. “Behold, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, riding on a donkey and giving you His perfect peace!” Amen.