

March 29, 2026

Paul Purdue preaching

There was no fast fashion, no jumbo pack of tube socks at the Dollar Tree, nor Tshirt vendors hawking Passover Festival 33AD hoodies. In the ancient world, everything was handmade and many people owned only what they were wearing and little more. The law told a lender they could not hold a cloak overnight as a security, *“How could they stay warm without their coat?”* (Exodus 22) It was a costly and loving act to spread out your cloak as a red carpet for the Lord.

What do you see when you imagine Jesus riding the donkey, his feet dragging the ground, the crowd waving palm frond pom-poms? Surely some thought of Zechariah 9 *“Look your king comes humble riding on a donkey”*. Jesus did not ride a war horse like King David or sit enthroned in a gold chariot like Caesar. If you were to make a sign pointing people to Jesus, what would it say? What chant might you lead?

Today, we might text, tweet or post but Mark’s crowd chanted : *“Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!”*

David was Israel's most charismatic king. Rudy good looks, youngest son of a shepherd, lion tamer, crack shot, giant slayer, fearless warrior, military genius, political visionary, Jerusalem’s founder, Palace builder, Temple benefactor, alliance maker, global capitalist, guitar picker, poet, singer-song writer, worship leader, fierce lover, and beloved hero. They wanted that but did they remember how David’s kingdom ended in chaos? David had terrible “me too” moments. For lust, David betrays the code of military conduct murdering Uriah the Hittite, one his “Might Men”, his next door neighbor, and one of the Joint Chiefs. David ignores one prince’s criminal palace misconduct. Seeking vengeance for his sister, Tamar, Prince Absalom a tall, athletic, regal, warrior with beautiful wavy hair “steals the hearts of the people” and declares himself king. Absalom drives David from the palace, but David rallies a divided nation only to weep wishing he had died in battle instead of his son Absalom. (1 & 2 Samuel)

Had the Palm Sunday crowd even heard Jesus preach? Did they want to follow, or to use Jesus to bless what they had in mind? Why are we forever bending Jesus to fit our preferences, our politics, our marketplaces?

Did the Palm Sunday crowd remember, their nation engaged in a second civil war and King Solomen enslaving citizens to build the Temple? (1 Kings 5) Did the crowds seek the truth or backstroke through the nationalistic hogwash? Did they remember how the

prophet Samuel told the nation that bowing before a king was a rejection of God's laws and a roadmap to subjugation and oppression? (1 Samuel 8) Did they forget how Pharaoh subjugated and oppressed them and God gave them the law of Moses and the judges to govern them? (Exodus 3 and beyond) Did they forget Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Miriam, Elijah and Isaiah never wore a crown?

Did they forget their hymns?

Rejoice, the Lord is king;

The Lord sits enthroned upon the throne!

The Lord is great, exalted over all the people.

Praise the Almighty King,

Who loves justice,

Who establishes equity

And brings about justice

Rejoice, the Lord alone is king

Worship God alone

(Paraphrase Psalm 99 with some Exodus 20)

I think they forget Isaiah warning that corruption, injustice and oppression destroy a nation from within and how in 584BC the Babylonians leveled David's Palace, Solomon's Temple and the rest of their Holy City? *"Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. No one defends the orphan, and the widow's case is dismissed. Oh, Jerusalem has sold herself out! She once was full of justice, but the capital has become a den of robbers and a home for murderers! God declares "I will turn my hand against you; I will smelt away your dross until you are redeemed by justice."* Isaiah 1

At times we love power more than justice and comfort over equity. We too easily forget how long vengeance and resentment lingers when we lash out, seek an eye for an eye, or drop a bomb (literally or figuratively). Retribution, violence, and revenge can never break the cycle of evil, injustice and oppression.

They longed for David- not Jesus. Right now, our secretary of defense wants to be a secretary of war. He vows revenge instead of justice and preaches *"maximum lethality, not tepid legality"* and *"violent effect, not politically correct."* He sees human rights and the Geneva Convention as weak, having no time for what he calls *"stupid rules of engagement."* He adds *"There's a direct through line from the Old and New Testament Christian gospels to the development of Western civilization and the United States of America."* Friends, if we prayerfully examine our history with native peoples and our

enslavement of African peoples, we will find we have more in common with Pharaoh and King Herod than Moses or Jesus.

Why is it that citizens with faith in many nations forget that when God blessed Abraham and Sarah God said *“I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.... and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves.”* (Genesis 12 & 22) If we are chosen or blessed by God we are blessed to share our blessings: food with the hungry, shelter with the unhoused, welcome with the immigrant, reconciliation with enemies, and offer blessing even when we have been cursed. (Matthew 25 & Luke 6)

So what sign will you hold up this Palm Sunday? What kind of King is Jesus? What kind of kingdom did Christ come to build? What chant mantra or verse will ground our morning prayers and guide our days?

In Luke 9 Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power... over all evil spirits and to cure diseases, and Jesus sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick... So they went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere. Will we hold up a message of “good news of great joy for all people”? (Luke 2) Will we march for affordable healthcare?

Do you remember the only crown that Jesus wore? It was a crown of thrones. Amid our worst: denial, betrayal, false arrest, judicial misconduct, police brutality, mockery, capital punishment, Jesus reminds us of life’s ultimate concern: *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”* (Luke 23) Seeing such radical compassion, how do we buy lies like Divine Right or Christian Nationalism? Why do we keep falling for the Devil’s path of kingdoms, crowns, and glory? (Matthew 4) And dear progressive friends, warriors for justice, holy empowered table flippers, Jesus’ compassion for soldiers and misguided masses should shake us up as well. Even while wearing a crown of thrones, King Jesus, the Prince of Peace, the King of Love, sees through our ugliness and longs for our redemption and restoration. On Easter, Jesus does not lead a retribution, recrimination and revenge tour. In Luke 24, the Risen Lord proclaims, *“the Messiah had to suffer and to rise from the dead (so that) repentance and forgiveness of sins (could be) proclaimed in Jesus name to all nations.”* Who is chanting, singing, remembering “Blessed are those who forgive”? Who is holding up signs of reconciliation and forgiveness?

Perhaps we force God to fit our politics, preferences and marketplaces because our prayers so often just ask God to do something for us. We ask God to bless what we were already planning to do. These were not Jesus’ prayers, no this week we remember

Jesus prayed “Lord, not what I want but your will be done!” The center of the Lord’s Prayer is “Your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as in heaven”. What if on this Palm Sunday, instead of longing for some king cast in our image, we sought God’s direction on our living. What if we held Jesus approved signs?

Blessed are the poor, and blessed are the poor in spirit
 Blessed are the hungry and blessed are those hungry to do the right things
 Blessed are the humble, they are citizens of heaven.
 Blessed are those who mourn
 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
 Blessed are the merciful and those with pure motives .
 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
 Blessed are those who are persecuted for speaking up.

Blessed are you who Love your enemies;
 Blessed are you who do good to those who hate you;
 Blessed are you who bless those who curse you;
 Blessed are you who pray for those who mistreat you.
 Blessed are you who turn the other cheek
 Blessed are you who do not judge, who do not condemn,
 Blessed are those who forgive,
 Blessed are those who give,
 Blessed are those who love, expecting nothing in return.

Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High,
 for God is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.
 Be merciful, just as our Creator is merciful. (Luke 6 and Matthew 5)

What Scriptures are you gently chanting, what verses are guiding your morning prayers? How are Jesus’s words becoming your words? Are the Beatitudes seasoning our speech, our letters to congress, the signs we hold up to the world? When did you last pray Jesus’ garden prayer, “Lord, not what I want, but Your will be done?” Who is this Jesus, riding humbly on a donkey, his feet dragging the ground? What did we last spend time trying to discern God’s direction for us? How well do we know our Lord, our savior, our hope and salvation? Let us stop using Jesus as a tool to meet our ends, but allow Jesus to shape our decisions, words and signs to the world. And may God bless us, so that we can be a blessing to our neighbors, our community, our enemies and the whole world. Amen