

Read: Matthew 21:1-11

Our King comes in gentleness

Matthew 21:1-5

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”

This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

“Say to Daughter Zion,
‘See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The president of the United States rides in a limousine nicknamed “the Beast.” It’s a fitting name! His car has armor plating and bullet-proof glass; it carries weapons and rides on tires that can’t go flat. When you see a car like that coming down the street, you know a powerful leader is coming.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem to die for our sins, he wasn’t riding anything like that. He wasn’t in a chariot or riding a powerful horse. He was riding on a small, young donkey. But he was coming to be a King.

There were at least two reasons why Jesus rode a donkey. Hundreds of years before this, God made a prophecy—a promise!—through one of his prophets: When God’s true King came to his people he’d be riding on a young donkey. God said, “When you see this sign, pay attention. You’ll know I’m keeping my promise.”

And riding a donkey showed what Jesus was like. You wouldn’t ride a donkey out into war. Donkeys were lowly and humble. Gentle. Jesus wasn’t coming to attack people; he was coming as a gentle King who would lay down his life for his people.

Jesus still comes to us today. We’ll celebrate Christmas soon and rejoice in the miracle of God coming as a baby. But there’s a miracle taking place, even right now. God comes to us in his Word. He promises he’s speaking to us through the Bible. So are you reading the Bible tonight? Are you going to church soon? Then, pay attention! God’s keeping his promise to you.

And it shows what God is like, too. He doesn't come to us in a thunderstorm or an earthquake, but in words that help us see our sin and promise us salvation. He doesn't want to scare us; he speaks gently because he wants us to know him. That's the kind of King you have.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What kind of animal did Jesus ride into Jerusalem?
- What did that show about what Jesus was like?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- How did Jesus riding on a donkey actually show that he had complete control over what was happening?
- Jesus is described as "gentle." How else in the Bible do you see Jesus' gentleness?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Jesus entered Jerusalem in this way as he was getting ready to die. Explain how his "gentleness" wasn't the same as "weakness."
- List as many ways as you can that this reading shows us that Jesus is a powerful king and a loving king.

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, when you entered Jerusalem on a donkey, you came exactly the way you promised, but so many people didn't recognize you. You promise to come to us in your Word. As we read it tonight, as we worship you on Christmas Eve, help us to recognize you and receive you as our gentle and loving King. Amen.