

The King on a Colt

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 March 2018

Preacher: Eric Scott

[0 : 0 0] Good morning again. If you don't know me, my name is Eric. I'm one of the guys on staff here at Watermark Church, and it's great to be with you today and to get to share God's Word with you today. As I just mentioned, we've been going through this series looking at who is Jesus, who is this King. And throughout the series, one of the themes that's been coming up again and again is that Jesus is a glorious King, but that he shows his glory in unexpected ways, often in ways involving sacrifice and humility. And today, we're going to look at another story that sort of shows these similar things about Jesus. It shows his glory in humility. But before we do that, we're going to take a step back and look at who Jesus is in himself before we look at how he interacts with the crowds. And what we're going to see is that Jesus is the King who has authority, but who acts humbly for us so we don't need to fear. So we have the King with authority, the King who acts humbly, and the King who casts out fear. And before we jump in, let's just pray quickly together. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for speaking to us. We thank you for just the amazingness of who you are and who Jesus is. We pray that as we look at your word today, that you would show us yourself, that you would give us a deeper love for you. And in Jesus' name, amen. So like I said, we've been looking through these stories of Jesus the past several weeks. We've been seeing again and again how he acts in humility.

And I think if we constantly focus on the way that Jesus acts in humility, it can sort of become easy to take that for granted. Of course, Jesus acts in humility. He always acts in humility. You know, why would we expect anything else of him? But when we take a step back and we look at the bigger picture of who Jesus is and how the Bible shows him to us, we see a very different picture than what we may expect from what we've heard the past several weeks. We see this big picture of Jesus. And before we start looking at his humility today, I want to take a step back and just show us a little glimpse of his greatness so that when we look at his humility, we have some context to put that into. You with me?

Cool. So when we start out, the first thing that maybe we need to know about Jesus is that he has existed forever. Like not just since the beginning of time, but since before there was a thing called time, Jesus has existed. John chapter 1 tells us in the beginning, Jesus was there. And in the beginning, Jesus was God. The Bible tells us that Jesus has existed as part of the Trinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, three persons, for eternity, forever. There was never a time or a time before time when he did not exist. And one day, God decided to create everything that exists. And John chapter 1 tells us that Jesus created everything that exists. If you can think of it, it exists. And if you can think of it and it exists, Jesus created it. Everything. Little, small, subatomic particles, the Milky Way galaxy, everything was created by Jesus. And not only was it created by him, but Colossians tells us it was created for him. It exists at this moment and has existed throughout history for his sake. And as if that wasn't big enough, do you know how he created it? By speaking. It's not like it was this big, arduous task that he had to go through. It was a simple act of speaking. And he has such immense power and authority in his voice that he was able to speak everything into being and bring life into existence through speaking. So, so far we have, Jesus is God, has existed forever, made everything by his voice, and it exists for him. So already we have, if your only picture of Jesus is poor Jewish carpenter, homeless teacher, we have a picture of Jesus that needs to be shattered. He's so much bigger than that. But it doesn't end there. In Colossians chapter 1 verse 17, it tells us that he holds everything together by the word of his power. That means the reason that the universe continues to exist moment to moment is that Jesus continues to sustain it. The reason your chair is holding you right now and doesn't collapse and drop you to the floor is that Jesus keeps your chair together. The reason your body is able to eat and breathe and process food is because Jesus keeps it working in proper

order. The reason the earth is just the right distance from the sun that we don't freeze or burn up and that we don't get sucked into the sun by its gravitational pull or hurl out into space because we're too far away is because Jesus, at every single moment of history, has kept it in exactly the right place by speaking.

Do you realize, and I know I'm speaking to myself when I say this, do you realize how much of a difference it would make in our lives if we really believed that Jesus was this big on a day-to-day basis? Like if we're at work today this week and stuff is just going terribly wrong and everything is falling apart, if we truly believed that we have a God who controls every atom of the universe at every moment, how much peace would that give us? I know I need to remind myself of that a ton because it would make a huge difference in my life if I was able to believe that and live like that on a day-to-day basis.

[6 : 00] And having this type of power is just part of what it means for him to be God. There's a pastor from the 1900s called A.W. Tozer and he has this great quote. He said, were God lacking one infinitesimal modicum of power, that lack would end his reign and undo his kingdom.

That one stray atom of power would belong to someone else and God would be a limited ruler and hence not sovereign. Every single atom in the universe is under the control of Jesus at every single instant throughout all of history. That's his power. He is huge.

But what else is he like? Well, John 1 tells us that in him is light. But this light is beyond our capacity to comprehend. Okay? And here's what I mean. In Exodus chapter 33, Moses is having a conversation with God. And Moses is like, hey God, show me your glory. Show me who you are in his fullness. And God says, no Moses, I won't do that because man cannot see me and live.

There's a level of brightness there that we have no category for. Right? We can think of bright things. We think of light bulbs. We can think of really bright things like the sun or a laser that if you stare at it, you go blind. But the Bible says Jesus is so bright and powerful that a glimpse of him and we're done. We cease to exist. We don't have categories for this in our thinking. He's huge.

And again, if we really believed that he was this powerful, how much of a difference would that make in our day-to-day lives? And I know even explaining it, I feel like I can't even do it justice to how big he is. And the crazy thing is, despite being so big and so powerful, he wants to know us.

[8 : 09] Weak, powerless creatures that we are. Let's look at one more thing. In the Old Testament, God sent a lot of prophets to his people, telling them about a rescuer who is going to come and rescue them from all of their troubles. He said things like, behold, the Lord will come in fire. His chariots like the whirlwind to render his anger and fury and his rebuke with flames of fire. These are pictures of strong, bourseful judgment, overthrowing kingdoms that are pointing towards Jesus. Or in the book of Daniel, it says, behold, with the clouds of heaven, the clouds of heaven, sorry, not you, the clouds of heaven, there came one like a son of man, and to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. It says he is going to reign and he is going to reign forever. Try something with me.

Close your eyes. Think of forever. Now as we think of forever, our way of thinking forever has to do with our concept of time. We can only think of it in terms of like hours or days or years or millennia, and there comes a point where we run out of numbers to express how far into the future we can go. If you're still going, you can open your eyes now. But there comes a point where the number is so big, we don't even know the name of a number that big, and we're still within a finite amount of time, right? And it says he's going to reign forever. We run out of numbers. Just trying to wrap our minds around this, if you're anything like me, it gives me a headache if I keep going for too long. Just trying to think of how long forever is. And that's the point. He's so big that trying to wrap our minds around a tiny part of what it means to be him gives us a headache because he is so much bigger than us. And so as we come today and we look at Jesus, the king on a donkey, this is incredibly important for us to understand because this is who Jesus is. These images of his power and his glory, they haven't been thrown out the window because, oh, we got this poor carpenter and homeless teacher. No, these are who he is in his being and in his essence. They're core fundamental truths about his reality. And their reality is, again, if we get these into our heads, they're going to reshape the way that we live. And what makes his humility so amazing is that because of how great he is, we owe him complete and total allegiance every moment of every day. And we live our lives as rebels against him. And instead of coming down to us in judgment and

crushing us like we deserve, he comes to us in humility. He comes to us as a rescuer. And so as we start to look at today's passage, I want us to keep this in mind, who Jesus is in himself so we can catch more of the weight of what it means for him to come to us on a donkey. And again, the stuff that I've just explained barely scratches the surface of how great he is. But hopefully it gives us a little more context as we look into John chapter 12 and we start to see not only the king who has authority, but the king who acts humbly. So as we come to John chapter 12, it's time for the Passover in Jerusalem. The Passover was a very, very important time of year in Israel.

[12 : 11] It was a time where they would celebrate God rescuing them from slavery in Egypt. And it was the time when everyone from throughout Israel would come to Jerusalem. It was crowded. It was packed.

And the people are there and they're excited because Jesus has just done a great miracle. Jesus has just raised a man from the dead. Again, just to give us some context, we've just had the Olympics, right? You go to the Olympics, you compete in the Olympics, you win a gold medal, you go back to your country, people celebrate you.

And why do they celebrate you? Because you did something lots of other people can do, a little bit better than everyone else can do it. And for doing that, they will throw you parades and put you on TV shows and it's wonderful and everyone wants to celebrate you.

Jesus just raised someone from the dead. He didn't take something everyone else can do and do it a little bit better. He smashed the categories of what it means to be human and what is possible for a human to accomplish. The people are coming to him out in the streets to celebrate.

They don't even know what because they can't wrap their heads around how amazing it is that someone could raise a person from the dead. And as they come out to the streets, remember these prophecies from the Old Testament about the rescuer who's going to come, they knew these, they had them memorized.

[13 : 40] And they had a deep, deep longing for these prophecies to be fulfilled because they saw themselves not just as the people who were the great, great, great, whatever grandkids of the people those promises were made to. But they saw themselves as part of this story. They read these promises and they heard God speaking directly to them. And they had been living under Roman rule for the past hundred years and they were ready for someone to come and set them free. And as they're waiting expectantly, they hear about a man who's just shattered all their perceptions of what it means to be human.

And they think maybe, maybe this is the guy. Maybe this is the moment that God's going to choose to rescue us and set us free and overthrow our greatest enemy, Rome. So they run to the streets to welcome him with palm branches. Palm branches were a nationalistic symbol in Israel in that day. This, this was basically an act of treason. It would be like taking a French flag in the middle of occupied France in World War II and waving it around in opposition to the Nazis. If you're doing this and they find out, it could cost you your life. This is a huge act. They're calling for him to do something amazing. They line the streets and they shout out, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel. Now this is from Psalm 118. Hosanna! It's a prayer that means God save us.

And this, this Psalm was one that the Israelites would recite every year at the end of Passover as a prayer that God, just as you rescued our fathers from Egypt, rescue us again today.

They're lining the streets. They're ready to make Jesus their king. Again, acts of treason. They're ready for war. And if you're in the middle of this crowd, what are you expecting at this moment?

[15 : 43] You're expecting Braveheart. You're expecting this great, larger-than-life political figure to march into the city as the fulfillment of the hopes and dreams that his people have had for hundreds of years.

He's going to raise up an army. He's going to lead them into battle. He may be victorious. He may die. If he's victorious, they'll make him the king. If he dies, his willingness to sacrifice for his people is going to raise up even greater armies that are going to continue to fight until the battle is won and his people are set free. And everyone on the streets is waiting for this moment to happen, for him to turn to them and say, go grab your sword. It's time to fight.

Literally, if he had turned to them and said, go grab your swords. It's time to fight. Remember, the entire nation of Israel is gathered in Jerusalem at this moment. He would have had an army of tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of people at his back by nightfall. This is a super

charged, tense environment. Everyone is waiting for a fight to break out and they are pumped. They're ready to go. And the next verse shows us that what we would expect and what they expected is not at all what Jesus has planned. That he refuses to be put into their box and conform to human expectation.

See, how does he respond to all this praise and attention? Does he walk up and be like, finally, you guys figured it out. Come on, come join me. No. Does he find a nice shining suit of armor and ride in on a large, powerful stallion so that everyone can see his power and greatness? No. He rides in on a donkey. And not just any donkey, a young donkey. In our culture, we may miss this, but this is a huge, huge political statement by him.

[17 : 43] If you look this up in the commentaries, the commentators will tell you donkeys throughout Israel's history in the Old Testament were the animal of choice to ride if you are someone who is seeking peace. So we have Jesus riding into this supercharged environment where everyone's saying, we're ready to fight. Let's go. And he says, let's, let's seek peace.

Which is shocking, right? He, he gives up the chance to be catapulted into this place of honor for the sake of pursuing peace. And, and if you're really skeptical and cynical, you might look at this and be like, yeah, well, he knew how powerful Rome was. He knew that if he raised up a rebellion, he would just get crushed and die really shameful, horrible death. So he was just protecting himself. But if you've read the story, you know, Jesus does this because he knows that he's on the path to the cross. Jesus doesn't do this to avoid the consequences for himself. Jesus does this despite the consequences for himself. He passes up the opportunity to be thrown into the kingdom, to be thrown into the position of King so that he can come and sacrifice himself for them and for us. Because the fight that he had to fight is one that the crowds couldn't join him in. In fact, it's one where they would turn on him and reject him within the week. And he was willing to endure that for their sake, for your sake, and for my sake. And for the people watching, this had to be super confusing, super perplexing, right? How could the man who does such wonderful things and powerful things not be the one coming to save us?

And what they didn't recognize is that he is the one coming to save, but that the way that he saves can't be determined by their demands. They're confused because they want to honor him and make him king, but they're only willing to do it on their terms, and he refuses to follow their terms. And how often do we you do that? We say, you know, Jesus, you're my savior, and here's what that means for you to be my savior. You have to do this and this and this and this for me. And when he doesn't do just that, we respond with confusion, maybe some anger towards him. But just like with them, he refuses to be put into our box. He is the glorious king who upholds the universe, who every moment of every day keeps everything functioning together by speaking. We expect him to just submit to our plans?

Seems a little ridiculous when we look at it that way. And this is why it's so important for us to continually see Jesus as the great glorious king that he is. Because until we see that, we're going to try to fit him into our boxes. We're going to try and make him fit into our expectations for him, rather than submitting to his plan, which is so much greater. So Jesus is the king who has authority.

[20 : 54] He's the king who acts humbly. But what does that mean for us? It means that he is the king who casts out fear. You know, something we see throughout the stories of Jesus in the Bible is that he has this knowledge about things in the future that everyone else lacks, especially when it comes to why he is here on earth. If you look at the stories, he tells his disciples again and again and again, I'm going to die, but don't worry, because three days later I'm going to rise again. I'm going to die, but don't worry, because three days later I'm going to rise again. I'm going to die, but don't worry, because three days later I'm going to rise again. And then he dies, and do they sit back and be like, ah, don't worry about it, he'll be back in three days. No, they freak out, right? They think the world is over.

They run away, they go back to fishing. Nobody gets what he's doing except for him. Everyone is so convinced that they have Jesus figured out that when he says something that's outside their expectations for him, they don't even know what to do with that, because it doesn't fit into their box of what he should be. So when Jesus rides into Jerusalem on this donkey, John tells us in verse 16, the disciples didn't even understand these things. Like, we had no idea what was going on here.

Only Jesus knows what's going on, and it's only when they are able to see the story looking back that they're able to see why he did this. But as John looks back, and he sees what Jesus did, and he understands why he did it, he gives us context for interpreting what Jesus did, and it's right here

in verse 15, where he says, fear not, daughter of Zion. Behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt. Now this is a quote from Zechariah chapter 9, verse 9, but interestingly, it's not an exact quote. You can see the comparison up here. Zechariah 9, 9, the original says, rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, your king is coming to you, righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Now if you're paying attention, you'll notice that he's done two significant things here. One, he changed the start of the verse, and two, he left out a huge chunk of the middle of the verse. Now with the middle of the verse that he left out, not actually a huge deal. See, quoting the Old Testament in their day is a little bit different than quoting in our day. In our day, we leave something out because we don't want to include that in what we're saying. In their day, the people would have known the Old Testament. They would have read what John said, and it's sort of like a hyperlink, a word or phrase that unlocks a world of meaning for them. So when they see what John wrote, they fill in the blanks. Oh, this means he's righteous. He's bringing salvation. He's humble. This is great. [23 : 49] So leaving out the middle of the verse isn't a big deal, but what is significant is that he changes the start of the verse. Notice it says, rejoice greatly, but then he says, fear not. And that's super significant for us because John is interpreting to us what Jesus' action means for us. He's saying, not only is Jesus coming in on a donkey a reason to rejoice, not only does it mean that he's righteous, bringing salvation, and humble, but it means because he's doing all these things, we have no more need to fear. Now, how does that connect? Why does Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey mean that we don't need to be afraid today? Well, let's start by looking at why we fear. The reality is it's probably a lot of the same reasons that the people in this story feared. I mean, yes, they were oppressed by a foreign ruler, but what did that do? It meant that they felt hopeless. It meant that they felt powerless.

They probably felt inferior, like they didn't quite measure up. And I think those are the same things that we have going on in our lives and our world today. We're worried about things and afraid of things like, what if things don't get better in the future? What if I never accomplish anything significant with my life? What if my parents never applaud me? What if I never find a spouse? We feel hopeless, feel powerless. We feel inferior. We feel like we don't measure up. And the Israelites in this story, they had a solution to all of these feelings. Their solution was place all of us. We feel like we're going to be able to do that. We're going to be able to do that.

If we can get our country back, then we can make sure everything is right in the world. We can make sure that we've done something significant in our lives. We can have an identity to be proud of. We can have hope for the future. If only we can get Israel back. That's why they try to make Jesus the king. Because if he's the king and they can get their country back, then they can be free. And Jesus riding on a donkey is his way of telling them, you're coming to me in the wrong way because you want me to be the wrong kind of savior for you. And guys, we do the same thing. We don't try and start revolutions, hopefully. But what do we do? We say, I'm going to do everything I can to make sure that my future is secure and that all the boxes are in order so that everything's going to be okay in the future. And then I'm going to pray and ask Jesus to just sort of help me with my plans.

[26 : 37] Make sure that everything goes exactly as I hope that it will. And just as Jesus was saying to them, you're looking to me to be the wrong kind of savior. He says the same thing to us.

He refuses to fit inside the small box that we try to put him in, which is fantastic news for us. Why is that fantastic news for us? Because our response and the response of the people in this story places our hope in places that can never fulfill the deepest longing of our hearts and give us the true freedom we desire. See, what Jesus is saying by riding on a donkey is, look, you get rid of Rome. That's great. You please your parents. That's great. You find a spouse. You do something significant with your life. That's great. But you can do all these things and still not have the peace and freedom that you desire because you can do all these things and still be separated from God. But if you have a proper relationship with God and you understand how great and glorious and powerful he is, it doesn't matter what your circumstances in life are, you can have hope. You can have peace.

You can know that you are loved. You can know that you are accepted. The deepest longing and desires of your heart can be fulfilled and you can be truly free. That relationship with God is the one thing that we need more than anything else. And how can he make this claim? Because he is God.

The God with all authority. One of the biggest reasons we struggle with fear is because our lives are so consumed with the present. We can't like get ourselves to think past today. Some of us maybe even like 10 seconds from now. We're so consumed with the present. And Jesus is saying that we need a bigger perspective.

Think about it. If it's true that Jesus is the king of heaven and earth who made everything and sustains everything, every moment of every day, and it's true that this king of the universe died to set us free from our sin, our fear, and death, and that he rose in victory over the grave, and that he promises to raise us with him and to set all things right, what valid cause can we ever have for fear? [29 : 12] Literally, if all those things are true, the only thing we ever need to fear is not knowing him. And great news, the Bible tells us how we can know him.

Jesus, by coming humbly on a donkey, he shows us that actually all these things are true of him, that he is the king of the universe, that he did come to sacrifice himself for us. And he shows us this because rather than raise up an army, he goes into Jerusalem where he's betrayed by one of his closest friends. Rather than taking the royal robes and the crown that the crowd is so ready to give him, he gets clothed in mocking robes and a crown of thorns. His victory doesn't come through a great show of strength, but by being hung up on a cross like a common criminal. And in that moment, he pays the price for all your sin and my sin and all of our rebellion against him, setting us free from our sin, from death, and from any reason for fear that we could ever have.

Because of the king on the donkey, you and I are able to follow this command to fear not. Because of the king on the donkey coming to rescue us, the ruler of the heavens who humbled himself to come down.

It means that this week, when the market's in turmoil from a trade war, and you're going frantic, wondering what's going to happen to all your investments, fear not. Jesus is the king who has all authority, even over the markets, and he's with you.

It means this week, when your kids come home from school with a note from the teacher about their bad behavior, fear not. Jesus is the king who humbly bore all your shame and all your guilt to set you free.

[31 : 15] It means this week, when you're in class, and your teacher drops an extra assignment on you, and you're like, oh no, how am I ever going to get all this done in time? Fear not.

Because Jesus is the king who casts out fear. Jesus, the ruler of the universe, the king on the donkey, is able to cast out our fear, because he's also the king of glory who reigns in the heavens, and the humble king who set himself on the path to the cross for our rescue.

Let's pray. Jesus, we are so in awe of who you are. We're amazed by your greatness. We're amazed by the fact that you have such power that we can't begin to comprehend it, and yet that despite your great power, you would choose to come to us in humility.

That you would come to us not to destroy us and judge us, but that you would come to us as a rescuer to save us. And that you would save us in such a way that it's not just a future salvation, but it's one for today that can set us free from the fear that we so easily fall into again and again and again.

God, I pray that as we go throughout this week, we would realize the truth that you are the king of the universe, that you're also the God who humbly came to us to rescue us and set us free, and that we would be empowered to live without fear, to live for you.

[32 : 48] In Jesus' name, amen.