

Ride On to Exaltation

† **Appalling because of our sin (vv.13-14)**

† **Triumphant grace on the nations (v.15)**

In the name of Jesus, our triumphant King, dear fellow subjects and faithful servants of God:

You may remember the deep disappointment I told you about recently. While waiting for the nurses to finish with one of our members, I saw a devotional booklet on a reading table. The “Servant Songs” of Isaiah on the cover caught my eye. At first I was glad that patients could read such a great message for this season of Lent. But when I looked inside, there was nothing about Jesus. The author in his or her arrogance wasted an entire page explaining why the “Servant Songs” in Isaiah could not have been written by Isaiah. Do you know this scholar’s “proof”? The “Servant Songs” speak of redemption which they assume could only be the release of Jews from Babylonian Captivity. But that was too many years after Isaiah. Worst of all, the greatest “Servant Song” in Isaiah 53 with these introductory verses, wasn’t even in the devotional booklet. It’s like getting a Culver’s cone without the custard. It’s a steak with no meat. It’s a drink with no liquid. It’s the excitement of some Jews that first Palm Sunday when they shouted glad, “Hosanna’s,” but had no clue what lay ahead for the LORD’s Christ. We must explore this awful irony as we cheer our Savior to **Ride On to Exaltation**. Look closely at Jesus. He truly is...

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Why does He come riding on a donkey’s colt? Why no white stallion like the victorious King He is? Again, the scholars have to show off their self-proclaimed erudition by insisting that many ancient kings put on a show of humility by riding donkeys. I keep waiting for them to mention a single example from antiquity. And always they ignore the fact that in the years right after the Babylonian Captivity, Zechariah prophesied to down hearted refugees returning to Jerusalem from the Exile: ***“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”*** (Zechariah 9:9 NIV) That ought to sound familiar since we just read it as our First Lesson for Palm Sunday. 500 years before it happened, God said it would happen. And it happened at just the right time in the life of this Rabbi from Nazareth in Galilee whose entire life fits all the other hundreds of prophecies about the coming Messiah of the Jews. If there were other ancient kings mocking humility by riding donkeys, maybe Dr. Martin Luther was right: “Satan is God’s ape.”

That always reminds me of a family vacation passing through Ghost Town, Idaho in the 1960’s. A huge ape behind the glass would not mimic any of the rest of us seven kids, only my older brother Roc. I was jealous. Why wouldn’t the ape copy me too? Maybe he didn’t like my glasses. I don’t know. But I do know that when Luther said, “Satan is God’s ape,” he was right. The old enemy from hell mimics everything good from God in order to mock God’s goodness and lead people into sin, despair and death.

But I see life in my Savior Jesus Christ. Throughout His thirty years and on up to Jerusalem that first Palm Sunday, Jesus was ***“acting wisely”*** as the Suffering Servant of the LORD. He told His disciples where to find the donkey and her colt and how to answer objections. Then Jesus proceeded to ride the offspring on which no one else had ever sat. Just once I’d like to take some of these scholars out to visit some of my old friends on cattle ranches in the Dakotas and Montana. What a hoot it would be to put these city slickers with their pointy pens and pda’s on a colt that had never been ridden. I know cowboys who would love to keep it up until the bright boys would either confess Christ as Creator or at least learn a lesson about unbroken donkeys. With its mother right there, Jesus rode a donkey’s colt in majesty, the Creator on His own creation, riding into town to die for His rebellious subjects.

Yet we see His glory only with the eyes of faith. Natural man has been face down in the barnyard after too many a spring rain. He cannot open his eyes to see nor understand because he wants everything without Christ. Can't you hear the mockery? "How can you Christians say he will *'be raised and lifted up and highly exalted'*? How can his *'appearance'* be spoken of in the past tense as if it already *'was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness'*? You Christians point to the cross and say it happened there to Jesus, but other criminals had been crucified before. What made your Jesus' more contorted than they? And why would you want a crucified Christ anyway?"

Our children know because they can see that Jesus was born to die. Yes, other criminals were crucified, one on either side of Jesus. But none were like Him, the Christ of God. One even admitted they were getting what they deserved. But Jesus was innocent in four trials – two Jewish and two Gentile. Even false witnesses could not pin a single crime on Him or convict Him of sin. Yet under God, Jesus was more guilty than any other human being who ever lived. We will see Him again on Good Friday fulfilling another prophecy from 1000 B.C., where Jesus said, *"Darkness is my closest friend."* (Psalm 88:18) Behind that three-hour darkness from noon to 3:00 PM, God's wrath came down on His Servant-Son. Suffering our hell is what contorted His face and frame as none other. It took the infinitely loving, infinitely holy Son of God to pay for our infinite sins. *"Disfigured beyond that of any man...his form marred beyond human likeness"* – we could not urge Him to **Ride On** unless we knew that His great state of **Exaltation** lay beyond the cross. For we have learned by experience God's...

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There was already bloodshed that first Palm Sunday. Early in the morning at sunrise the Jewish priest had taken another innocent male lamb to the temple, slit its throat and drained its blood on the ground. He then burned the entire body as the morning sacrifice – and again every evening. Just the day before on the Sabbath, he had sacrificed two little boy lambs in the morning and two more in the evening. Under Moses' law from God at Mount Sinai (1500 B.C.) the morning and evening sacrifices were forever: first with innocent animals whose blood could never wash away a single sin, then with the one self-sacrifice of the single *"Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."* (John 1:29) As the priest sprinkled the blood of the Jewish sacrifices on the people to prepare for the coming Christ, so Jesus the true Messiah would *"sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him."*

Why do American presidents hold their tongues and not open fire on their enemies across the country and around the world? They have weapons that Hitler and Stalin never dreamed about in their wildest, evolutionistic, atheistic, satanic imaginations. But if they had had the power, they would have relished using it. Sadaam Hussein in his trial this past week said the countless thousands of Iraqis he gassed and executed deserved to die, and so do Americans. There is always a difference in the way Christian rulers use the power at their disposal compared to those who reject Jesus as the Christ of God. Pray for our rulers to always admit that in the end they too will answer to God .

The LORD's Christ makes a habit of forming kings from the **nations** who sit with Him on His exalted throne and rule with Him through their prayers and offerings. We cannot possibly repay our Palm Sunday King for the gifts He came to bring. Our foolish pride and arrogance He carried on His own back to that cursed tree. From His wounded head, hands and heart Christ poured out the innocent blood that washed us clean before God. And because He did **Ride On to Exaltation**, He has sprinkled **Triumphant grace on the nations**, on Gentiles like us far beyond the land of the Jews. *"For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand."* This is what parents keep telling me and what I saw in my own children growing up. They come out with wise words far beyond their age and say, "Pastor said that." But you check back, and Pastor only said a fraction of what comes out of their mouths. We sow the seeds, but God makes them grow in kids and kings from **nations** that triumph by the **grace** of God in Christ. We have no life without Him. We want nothing besides Him. Lord Jesus Christ, **Ride On** until we join you in **Exaltation** to God's eternal glory and praise. Amen.