

THE PROMISE OF THE KING

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*The Lord is our Judge,
The Lord is our Lawgiver,
The Lord is our King;
He will save us. Isaiah 33:22*

For many centuries Christians all over the world have celebrated Palm Sunday. You probably know the story well. Jesus descended from the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem. The crowds were wild with excitement. They were so jubilant they tore branches from the palm trees. They waved them joyously in the air. They made a carpet out of them and their outer garments for the Lord's donkey to tread upon. But what was all this excitement about? It was because the Lord, for the first and only time, showed the people while He lived on earth that He was their King. On Palm Sunday, the Lord entered the city of Jerusalem just as ancient kings had done on their way to being anointed.

So Palm Sunday was a glorious occasion. But to understand why we celebrate this day in the New Church we have to go back to another great event that the Word tells us about. Let's take our minds way back to Christmas.

How long ago does Christmas seem to you now? Do you remember anything that happened to you last Christmas? How easily our memories forget. Even some of the happiest times in our lives can fade away. But we all remember that the Lord came on earth at the first Christmas. At that time He made a promise.

In the book of Luke, the angel Gabriel was sent by the Lord to Mary. Gabriele told Mary that she would have a baby. He said "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:33). Of course it is a king who reigns over a kingdom. A promise was made right then that the baby Lord would someday become a king.

So, let's think more about this promise. A promise is a pledge or a vow that someone will do something. When someone makes a promise to us we expect them to keep it don't we? When the Lord makes promises He *always* keeps them. And the amazing thing is that His promises are good for all time. They are just as good for us today as they were for people long ago. His promise to be King was shown to be true on Palm Sunday when those huge crowds stood along the path to Jerusalem praising and humbling themselves before Him.

Have you ever thought of the Lord as a King? The Lord's disciples and the Jewish people who had seen His amazing miracles thought that the Lord was heading into Jerusalem to take over and become the ruler. They thought He would go to the palace and dress in fine robes. Then they expected He would gather armies to make them a powerful country. Maybe He would even chase away the Romans who were controlling them.

But did they get what they expected? Did the Lord take over? We know that in less than a week the same people who cheered for the Lord on Palm Sunday wanted Him killed, crucified. And He was. But the surprising thing is that the Lord really did become a King. Think for a moment—what makes the Lord a King? Let's think about what a king does for His people and that can help us to see what the Lord does for us as our King.

Let's pretend you are a good king. Now who does a good king care about most of all? It is his subjects, his people. A good king wants most of all to help his people to live good and happy lives. He protects them from enemies. He takes care of them in many different ways.

So how does the Lord take care of us as a king would? How does the Lord protect us as our King? The most important thing a king can do is to keep good order in his kingdom. To do that he leaves his people in freedom, but he also has laws of order that everyone must obey, even himself. The Lord does just that. He leaves us in freedom to think and feel good thoughts or bad thoughts. He does not force us to be good. But He has laws of order that will make us happy if we obey them. The Lord asks us to choose to obey these laws to be good citizens of His kingdom. We know many of the laws are contained in the Ten Commandments.

Now every kingdom has a few problems. People can tend to be selfish at times. They break the laws, and this causes trouble for themselves and for other people. So a king needs to be a good judge when people in his kingdom have problems and don't get along. He uses his laws to help people do the right thing and never uses the laws to hurt people or to his own advantage. But when people break the law they have to face the consequences. They need to learn that it brings harm to others and to themselves, and so sometimes people have to be punished.

It is the same way with the Lord as our King. When His laws are broken, people bring harm on themselves, and they are no longer happy citizens of His kingdom. When we break the Lord's commandments or hurt other people, we take away the Lord's protection, and evil spirits invade us and make us very unhappy. If we turn away from our selfishness, then a good order can return and, along with it, happiness.

Are you happy? Would you like to join the crowd that shouted for joy that the Lord was their King? If so, watch for the Lord. For He is coming to you, just as He came to the people on Palm Sunday. Follow Him by reading and obeying His Word, for this will lead you to Him in the Holy City New Jerusalem which is His heavenly kingdom. And there the Lord will dwell with you and you will dwell happily among His people.

Amen.