

Sermon Title: **“King, Hero, and Jesus”**

Bible: **Luke 19:28-40 & Philippians 2:5-11**

When: on Palm/Passion Sunday, April 13, 2025

Where: about 25 people (plus YouTube Live viewers) at Gilroy UMC

Opening Prayer

O Lord, let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.

1. Palm/Passion Sunday

Today is the Palm and Passion Sunday! Let us shout out Hosanna together. Please see the screen. “Leader: Hosanna to the Son of David! / People: Hosanna in the highest heaven! / Leader: Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord. / People: Hosanna in the highest heaven!” The literal meaning of Hosanna is “Save now!” or “Please save.” If we look closely at the Gospel of Luke that we read today, there was no mention of Hosanna, unlike the other Gospels. The responsive Hosannas we just did are from the Gospel of Matthew. While the other three Gospels mention the festival branches; only the Gospel of John mentions the festival branches being branches of palm trees. Even though the words hosanna and palm leaves are not included in the Gospel of Luke, the spreading of the cloaks on the road signifies Jesus’ royal and triumphal entry into Jerusalem!

Actually, the Hosanna acclamation came from Psalm 118, a Song of Victory, which is the usual greeting for Passover pilgrims. Let me read Psalm 118:24-27, ^{“24} This is the day that

the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. ²⁵ Save us, we beseech you, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech you, give us success! ²⁶ Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord. ²⁷ The Lord is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.” The expression “Save us” here is “Hosanna” in Hebrew. One distinctive difference in the Gospel of Luke is adding the word “king.” So it is not “the one,” but “the king” in this expression, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” Our Lord Jesus Christ is the king. But our King Jesus Christ is not like the kings on earth.

2. What is a King?

What does a king look like? What image comes to you when you think of a king? Is a king a powerful and violent one who conquers other peoples and other lands with swords and spears? Taoism, one of the philosophies in Asia, explains 4 types of kings in a very interesting perspective. This is from chapter 17 in the book of Tao Te Ching: “The supreme kings are hardly known by their peoples. The lesser are loved and praised. The even lesser are feared. The least are despised. Those who show no trust will not be trusted. Those who are quiet value the words. When their task is completed, people will say: We did it ourselves.” Which one is the best description for our King, our Lord Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ came to us not to be served, but to serve, even though he was the king. Even though many of his disciples and followers did not understand his way, his suffering, his death, or his resurrection, Jesus walked his own royal way, while sharing his wisdom and his teachings.

Even though he had the power to save himself, Jesus did not use it for himself. Even though he was betrayed and abandoned, Jesus was merciful to forgive others and did not stop following his truth. When his disciples healed the sick, cast out demons, and shared the good news, Jesus said that it was all because of their faith! Jesus was the king, but Jesus was not like the kings on earth.

3. What is a Hero?

Who is your favorite superhero? Many superheroes have a lot of superpowers, talents, and skills. Like a superhero, Jesus Christ had superpowers. He did many miracles. But if you search for a hero in the dictionary, it means a person distinguished by exceptional courage and nobility and strength, even in challenges or obstacles. I believe that you know many heroes in your lives and in our societies. How about unsung heroes? Do you know any unsung heroes whom only you know? Unsung heroes make a significant impact on our lives and societies, but they are not well noticed, and their efforts are sometimes taken for granted. I believe that you know some of the unsung heroes, too. Can Jesus be your hero or unsung hero?

4. Our Lord, Jesus Christ

If we look at the Old Testament, God's image sounds like the most powerful secular king, who conquers other peoples and other lands with military and violent power. So some people do not like reading the Old Testament, and sometimes wonder how the Divine one could be so violent and fearful. If we look at the Gospels, Jesus did many miracles, healed the sick,

calmed the storm, walked on the water, fed five thousands, raised the dead, and more, just like superheroes who have superpowers. So some people do not like and cannot understand Jesus' suffering, cross, death, and resurrection.

How did God become a human being? How did Jesus experience suffering? How did Jesus, who was God, die on the cross? These things demonstrate how our God loves us. That's because our God wants to be with us in this broken world, even in our pain and suffering. Some people might expect Jesus to be a secular, powerful king. Some people might expect Jesus to be a superhero. But the Divine one came to us, just like us— we who are weak, fragile, and vulnerable. Jesus decided to be one of us to partake in our joys, our suffering, and our real lives. The death on the cross used to be a symbol of the cruel form of punishment, or a symbol of despair and pain. But the cross became a sign of God's love, grace, and mercy. Jesus showed the way of life to us through the cross and the resurrection. During this Holy Week, let us remember that we are not alone in our lives, especially in our suffering. Let us remember that Jesus is with us day by day. Jesus walks with us step by step. And Jesus will show the way.

Closing Prayer

O Lord, during this holy week, we come to you. Sometimes we misunderstand who you are. But you came to us as Jesus, who is God and who is a human being. With Jesus' suffering, cross, death, and resurrection, we experience your love and grace. Thank you so much for your love and grace! In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.