Matthew 21:1-11
THIS IS JESUS

This is Jesus?

You can almost imagine that was the next line in the conversation at the end of our Gospel for today. Jesus entered into Jerusalem, the crowd was shouting and following him, the whole city was stirred and asked who this was that was coming into their city that everyone was getting so excited about. They asked and the crowd answered. This is Jesus.

This is Jesus? Surely the crowd and the shouting and singing were a sight to see and hear. That wasn’t really the reason for the question. The people had heard about Jesus. They figured that the one called Jesus deserved such a welcome. After all, Jesus was a renowned miracle worker.

The people had heard the account we just heard again last week. Jesus was the one who raised his friend back to life from the dead. They had heard other things about him, too. The one who turned water into wine? Jesus. The one who made the lame walk? Jesus. The one who made the deaf hear again and the blind to see again? Jesus and Jesus. Jesus had quite a reputation built up around him. And...this is Jesus?

No tramp of soldiers’ marching feet with banners and with drums, no sound of music’s martial beat: The King of Glory comes! To greet what pomp of kingly pride no bells in triumph ring, no city gates swing open wide: Behold, behold your King (CWS 716, v. 1).

If the man who did all of those amazing things was coming into town, you might imagine a little more fanfare. Yes the hosannas and the palms were pretty impressive but they have somewhat of a “last-minute” feel to them, don’t they?

Where was the band? Where were the troops to go ahead and flank behind? Where was the opulent chariot overlaid in gold, drawn by a team of sturdy horses? And really, that’s not even mentioning the man, himself. This is Jesus? By his descriptions of strength, wisdom, and power, you would imagine a much more impressive appearance; not some run-of-the-mill, average, commonly dressed Jewish man.

It may have surprised the crowd to see Jesus in this way, though it doesn’t really surprise us, does it? This is typical Jesus. This is the way we would expect to find him, based on how he spoke and acted throughout his life.

When our God became man on the first Christmas Day, there was no great crowd to meet him. He didn’t have a silver spoon, a golden pacifier, or a cradle made from the finest cedar. He was born into a poor family, in a barn, among the animals, and found his first bed to be a feeding trough.

It wasn’t much different for his inauguration ceremony, his friendships, his home, or his day to day life. Everything was so...normal. And if it wasn’t normal, it was so much worse than what it seems like it should have been. But, friends, this is Jesus. This is who he was and who he is. And this Palm Sunday account really just reflects the work that he came here on earth to do; the work that only he could complete in the way that he completed it, and the way that he continues to work in you.

Do you remember why Jesus was entering into Jerusalem in the first place? Yes, he rode in on the donkey to fulfill the prophecy we heard in our first lesson for today. Yes, eventually, this entrance into the city served as his final steps toward the cross. But, there was a reason why it had to be Jerusalem and why it had to be this time of the year.

Jesus was going, like any good Jewish man would do, to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. He was going to eat a special meal with his close friends; a meal that served as a reminder of God’s deliverance. It was a memorial meal that reminded God’s people of when they left their slavery in Egypt hundreds of years before and how God saved their lives by means of a sacrificial lamb’s blood.

Jesus went into Jerusalem on that very first Palm Sunday with the intention of celebrating the Passover, but his intentions were to celebrate it in the best way possible...by fulfilling the Passover.

This is Jesus. He is the true Passover Lamb. He was without blemish or defect. He was killed in a sacrifice. His blood saved his people from death.

When Jesus made those final steps to the cross, he did it innocently. He was not the one who was supposed to
But, because he took your sins on himself, he took the death that you deserved, too. He sacrificed himself to please God so that no more sacrifices would ever have to be made. And, because his death was in place of the one that you deserved to die, his shed blood saved you. Whenever God looks at you, he sees that blood that Jesus shed covering you, and he does not give you the eternal death that you deserve.

This is Jesus. He is not the king that people expect to see. He is the king that all people truly need. And, your king continues to serve you in ways that you would not expect.

Your Jesus not only completed the work of your salvation for you, but, because he knows that you would not know of it or believe it to be true on your own, he works faith in your heart.

It must have seemed somewhat silly to see Jesus riding on a donkey on that first Palm Sunday. It seems just about as silly to the world around us that when Jesus enters into our hearts, in faith, he does it also by simple means.

With words written on a page, preached from a pulpit, or whispered into the ear of infants by their mothers, Jesus rides into our hearts. In droplets of water sprinkled on our heads, he rushes in, washes away the sin that stains our hearts, and takes up residence there. With the most common of foods and such an ordinary drink, he is ingested into your system to nourish you, strengthen you, and satisfy your spiritual hunger.

This is Jesus. This is who he is and what he has done for you. This is how he continues to work in you. This is Jesus. He is your salvation. Amen.