

With Waving Palms and Shouts of Praise

1674

Author Jan Davis McGuire

Composer English melody

Matthew 21: 8-16

Mark 11: 1-11

John 12: 12-16

Thoughts on the Text

This is one of the great moments in the gospels. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey links the glorious moments of his birth and his resurrection. This scene is an earthen bridge between our sin and God's salvation. Jesus rides across it first. He rides on a donkey; we ride on his scarred back. "Ride On, King Jesus" says the classic spiritual. "Ride on" say those who shout "Hosanna" and wave palm branches.

Of course children play a prominent role in this scene. Jesus had said earlier that unless we become as children we cannot enter his Kingdom. The little examples and models are running around in this scene in a victory dance that they don't even realize, and that we still struggle to understand.

People waved branches of God's creation and one of God's animals carried the center of attention on her back. Believers praised and doubters scoffed, but both were present, and one imagines that both sensed this little parade was a big deal. Ride on, King Jesus, all of creation is in your wake and will be redeemed by the disturbance you create starting today.

In the third stanza, McGuire's line "the Son of David's tree" to reference Jesus' royal lineage, and we who know wince. The "tree" has cast its shadow across this happy moment. Jesus rides to a tree of another sort; the cross. In this scene, only Jesus knows about the tree that awaits. We know about the tree, but we don't want to think about it yet. We step into the scene as followers, excited to see our king, uplifted by His message, and full of hope. We are not pretending. We are remembering, and from our chronological vantage point, we are pondering.

The singing of this hymn and our return to this scene cause us to consider again the sacrifice of Jesus and the upside down, unlikely, strategy of God's salvation. Ride on, King Jesus. We don't understand all of this, in your day or in ours. But we know we need your grace. We know we need your sacrifice. We know we would never ride such a donkey.

Our pride sings this hymn and turns away. Our love of power sings this hymn and hangs its head. Our sense of logic and reason sings this hymn and quickly checks its wristwatch. Ride on, King Jesus. With waving palms and shouts of praise, we make our hearts, once again, watch *your* parade.

Terry W. York

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