

1. I can't help it. I judge a book by its cover! And being a printer by trade – I'm fussy about how things look – that's how I was trained.

I like a book with a nice embossed title, good use of colors and an eye-catching image that grabs my attention – or I don't want to read it.

At ALC while I was studying, there was nothing worse for me than being told to read a book in the library – only to discover a ragged, worn out book, with ugly brown pages and bad printing.

It was hard to get motivated to make a start...

This is a problem. And not the book's problem, it's my problem.

That book with ragged brown pages, a not-so-catchy title and old book smell turned out to be one of the best books I've read in 7 years of study!

I could've easily missed out on it because I didn't like how it presented on the shelves.

Now if that's how I pick out my books...what are my prerequisites when I'm voting or looking for a leader?

What do you look for in a leader?

It seems to me that there are a lot of people in Australia who pick their leaders like I pick my books.

Isn't that why politicians pay such massive money – to smear each other's image in the media? The TV commercials are shocking!

Politicians and leaders these days have image consultants!

An image consultant is a new career that came about because we judge a book by its cover.

All the statistics show it and the politicians and CEO's and high flyers of this world know it. They know that they have to wear the right clothes,

- have the right hairstyle.
- They know they have to accessorize to please.
- We want to see that – and if the image is up to spec, like it or not, agree with it or not - statistically they'll have a much better chance of getting elected, or getting ahead in their career, or getting us to support them and their cause.

2. So what on earth was God thinking on Palm Sunday sending a King on a donkey? “They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them.”

- No motorcade.
- No royal procession.
- No golden chariot.
- Just a man on a donkey.

Is this what the people expected? Was it even what they wanted?

Shortly after Jesus had fed five thousand people with five barley loaves and two small fish, people were ready to take him by force and make him king.

After all, *we want our kings to be powerful and to make our lives easier.* **Jesus had shown promise in both areas.**

But now Palm Sunday presents us with a puzzling scene:

the Son of God rides into Jerusalem on a donkey.

- Couldn't he have done better?
- Couldn't he have trotted in on a Clydesdale or the fastest and most reputable horse in the area – the winner of the Jerusalem cup?
- Couldn't he have given us a little glitz, a little dazzle?

We want our leaders to do great things but we also want them to look the part.

On Palm Sunday, did Jesus “look the part”?

What does Isaiah say about Jesus? **“He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him”** (Isaiah 53:2).

Jesus was not the ruler the world wanted. When he was born in Bethlehem’s manger...when he was brought up in lowly Nazareth...even when he humbly rode into Jerusalem he was telling us and everyone that he was no ordinary King.

He didn’t come to bring political peace or to raise wages and drop income tax or to fix our hospital and healthcare system.

Instead His lowly entry into Jerusalem serves as a snap-shot of the lowly work he was about carry out there.

Jesus may not be the King the world wanted or expected or hoped for, but he is exactly what the world needs!

3. Let’s set the scene...

The Passover was just a few days away.

Jerusalem would have been filled with a copious number of visitors coming into town for the celebration.

But this particular day was filled with a little more electricity than normal. There must have been a buzz all around town

– **Jesus was coming.**

- He was the one who did so many miracles.
- He was the one who raised Lazarus from the dead in a little town just two miles away...and now he was coming here.
- **He is the one who rescued Aisha-Jayne from Sin, death and the devil this morning in the waters of baptism!**

Maybe you can imagine - some people were curious. Others were excited. And some were already meeting together, trying to figure out a way to trap and kill him.

But even amongst all the different opinions and emotions that day...even amongst the different activities and festivities of a Passover celebration...things unfold just as Jesus wants and expects.

He was in control from the very beginning.

Know for certain that:

- It wasn’t by accident that the disciples went to the village and found the donkey with her colt nearby.
- It wasn’t by coincidence that 500 years earlier Zechariah had predicted a king riding into Jerusalem on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
- He may look like a man on a donkey and nothing more, but this is the Son of God, the long-awaited descendant of David...**the one who comes in the name of the Lord. The One who IS LORD!**

And as Jewish families are thinking about selecting their lambs for the upcoming Passover sacrifice, the Lamb without blemish and defect, hand-picked by the Father of Heaven and Earth, rides into Jerusalem on his own terms and in his own way.

“See, your king comes to you.”

He will not come to spill the blood of his enemies, but to shed his own blood.

He would not come to overthrow the oppressive Roman rule, but to throw off the oppression of sin.

He will not come to wear a jeweled crown and sit upon a golden throne, but a crown of thorns and his throne a cross.

“See, your king comes to you.” This is what the world needs.

A sin-bearer.

- If we had no sin to take away, we would have no need for Jesus.
- If our thoughts were always pure, the Lamb of God would not need to be led to the slaughter.
- If our motives were always Holy, praiseworthy and honorable, the Holy One - Jesus would not need to be punished.
- If all our deeds were always noble and selfless and upright, the King would not need to ride into Jerusalem and face such a terrible fate.

“See, your king comes to you.” He is a king like no other the world has ever seen.

- He let little children interrupt his meetings with his inner circle disciples.
- He let people like Zacchaeus and Mary Magdalene taint his public image when he hung out and ate with them.
- He let crippled and deformed people monopolize his time – because he valued them the same way He values the life of every person.

What kind of King is this? What kind of King is Jesus?

- He is your King –who is in control of all things – he knows every detail of your life.
- He knows about the upcoming surgery.
- He knows about the big decision you have to make.
- He knows about the hurt you carry with you. And he comes to give you strength.
- *He is your King – who comes to you not with shallow displays of pomp and circumstance...but with his ironclad, unchangeable rock-solid promises.*
- He is your King – who doesn’t put you on hold or ask you to take a number or wait in line...he invites you to come to him anytime in prayer...find him anytime in his Word...for he is always there for you.
- He is your King – who empties himself so you can be filled with every good blessing.

4. See your King – no ordinary King – comes to you.

Will you also come to him? Will you receive him like the people in Jerusalem did? Will you praise him in song? Will you wave palm branches?

Or will you hold Jesus at arms length and distance yourself from him?

What about this week? What does this encounter with your King mean for your life and your interaction with others? As we worship here – gathered as the King’s Royal Priesthood of believers...As we listen to his Word willingly and enthusiastically...As we make decisions that are God-pleasing and adopt attitudes that are Christ-like and God honoring...What happens? What happens is that we’re shouting loudly and clearly and directly in our context:

“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

This is the victory cry of people who follow Jesus and who know and trust in what their King has secured for them. So what kind of King are you expecting this week as we approach Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Day?

A King who needs an embossed title, eye-catching colors or an image consultant? Is that your kind of King? Or Jesus...on a donkey...a servant King heading towards the cross for you and me?