# Kenosis: The Self-Emptying King

Matthew 21:1–11

**1. Palm Sunday: Joyful but Misunderstood**

Palm Sunday is a festive day—palm branches, children singing, celebrations. But we must not miss the deeper meaning behind the joyful scene. Many Bibles label this the “Triumphal Entry,” but Jesus didn’t enter Jerusalem as a typical king seeking glory or military victory.

**2. What the Crowd Expected vs. What Jesus Embodied**

People shouted “Hosanna!” quoting Psalm 118, a liturgical psalm sung during Passover, evoking past salvation (Exodus, return from exile). They laid down cloaks and palm branches—just like they did for King Jehu (2 Kings 9:13), who was celebrated for purging idolatry.

Palm branches also recalled the Maccabean revolt, when Jewish fighters reclaimed and purified the Temple. These symbols pointed to political and military hope—the crowd wanted freedom from Roman oppression.

**3. Jesus Subverts Expectations**

Jesus didn’t ride a warhorse, but a donkey—a symbol of peace and humility (cf. Zechariah 9:9). He chose a different kind of power: love, humility, service.

“He came not to destroy, but to love; not to condemn, but to help; not with weapons, but with love.”

**4. Kenosis: The Power of Self-Giving**

Kenosis (Greek: κένωσις) means **“self-emptying**” (Philippians 2:6–8). Jesus willingly laid aside His divine privileges, choosing to serve and suffer.

Two kinds of power: (1) Worldly power: asserting, controlling, dominating. (2) Kingdom power: submitting, serving, empowering.

**5. Jesus Demonstrates This Power at the Last Supper**

John 13: Jesus washes His disciples’ feet. Then He says, **“Love one another as I have loved you” (John 13:34).** Maundy Thursday gets its name from 'mandatum' (Latin: commandment).

**6. Love as the Ultimate Power**

People assumed Rome was the enemy—but Jesus came to defeat the root of evil. The cross shows that true power is not in force, but in sacrificial love.

**7. Modern-Day Illustration of Kenosis: Mister Rogers**

Fred Rogers—ordained minister and host of Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood—lived out servant leadership. In 1969, he invited Officer Clemmons, a Black man, to share a pool and towel during segregation—a quiet but powerful act of love.

**True leadership doesn’t require a title. It requires love.**

**8. Holy Week Challenge: Live the Way of Kenosis**

As we begin Holy Week, don’t just remember what Jesus did—live it.

What small act of self-giving love can you offer this week?

“Jesus emptied Himself to serve you. How might you empty yourself this week—to serve others?”