

**Palm Sunday (C)**  
**April 10, 2022**  
**The Messiah-King's Peace**  
**by Garth Wehrfritz-Hanson**

During a run over Kassel, Germany, in World War II, Elmer Bendiner's B-17 bomber took a barrage of flack from Nazi anti-aircraft. He could feel the plane being hit, yet he and his crew returned to base after a successful mission. Bendiner was even more amazed when he was told that a **20-millimeter shell pierced the fuel tank but did not cause an explosion.**

He started to ask the crew chief for the shell as a souvenir of their unbelievable luck. But the crew chief told him that not just one shell had been found in the gas tanks, but eleven. **Eleven unexploded shells?** It truly seemed to be a miracle. The shells were sent to the armorers to be defused, after which intelligence officers came by to retrieve them.

The armorers reported something even more mystifying. When they opened the shells, they found no explosive charge in any of them. They appeared to be empty and harmless.

One of the shells, however, was not completely empty. It contained a carefully rolled piece of paper. On it was scrawled a message in Czech language of a prison camp worker. The message read, **"This is all we can do for you now." It was a miracle all right, not of misfired shells, but of peace-loving hearts.**

Today is Palm Sunday, and in our gospel today, we learn that Jesus was so determined to go into Jerusalem to suffer and die there, that he had planned, ahead of time for his disciples to fetch him a donkey to make his triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The deliberate choice of entering Jerusalem on a donkey was in fulfillment of the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9: "Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey." A donkey is a humble animal, as well as a symbol of peace.

So Jesus, by entering Jerusalem as the Messiah-King riding on a donkey is making a clear statement.

He is telling everyone that, unlike other kings who ride stallions to **emphasize their political and military victories and power**;

Jesus riding on a donkey is the Messiah-King who lived and died as a humble, loving servant and bringer of God's peace.

Like the Czech prisoners of war who saved life by making empty shells; Jesus as God's Messiah-King was destined to save humankind by his peace-loving ministry, suffering, death and resurrection.

His peace is rooted in **God's love, mercy and forgiveness**—not military and political aggression and manipulation.