

## TEXT SERMONS – PALM SUNDAY

**THE KING COMES TO TOWN**

Matthew 21:1-11; Luke 19:28-44

***“As He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, saying: “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!’ Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” (Luke 19:37-38)***

Years ago a preacher pastored a church that was filled every Sunday. People traveled miles on foot just to hear his messages. One day, as people were exiting the church after the service, a passerby asked one of the people in the church why this preacher’s messages were so compelling. The church member replied, “This preacher will take you up to the mountain and back down to the valley; he will lead you through deep waters and bring you out into green pastures; he will bring you to laughter and to tears; he will have you saying, ‘Father, forgive me’ and then later, ‘praise the Lord!’ You will be lifting your hands in praise and bowing your head in worship; but by the time he is finished, he will always have you at the foot of the cross.”

That is where this Palm Sunday journey with Jesus will take us all if we follow the story all the way to the end. Jesus’ journey into Jerusalem, on what is called Palm Sunday, is the prelude to His passion week.

Let us review again the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem and prepare our hearts for the amazing climax to the earthly life and ministry of the Lord Jesus. Consider first,

**THE ROYAL PREPARATIONS THAT WERE MADE.** Luke 19:29-35; Matt. 21:1-7

The setting of this episode takes place on the Sunday, just prior to the crucifixion later that week. (John 12:1,12) It was a springtime Sunday in about the year 30 A.D. The holy city of Jerusalem was crowded with pilgrims who had come for the annual Passover celebration.

Jesus had, in recent days, performed a most remarkable miracle: He had raised a man named Lazarus from the dead after he had been buried four days. This was a miracle so unique and so astounding, that it became the talk of the town. Multitudes went out of Jerusalem to Bethany, about two miles distant, to see Lazarus. Having seen Lazarus, whom many witnesses verified had been dead, they drew the inference from this miracle that Christ must be the promised and long anticipated Messiah.

Jesus had spent many months traveling through the towns and villages of Palestine. He preached about the kingdom of God and healed the sick wherever He went. He knew His mission was almost finished. As they traveled to Jerusalem, Jesus warned His disciples that He would soon be put to death, and after three days He would rise again.

In the meantime in Jerusalem, they learned that Jesus, the One Who raised Lazarus from the dead after four days, was coming to town. Crowds of people, gathered from everywhere for

the feast of the Passover, went to meet Him. The scene is now set for the appearance of Jesus.

***The Service of The Disciples Is Engaged.*** Luke 19:29-31

*“And it came to pass, when He drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mountain called Olivet, that He sent two of His disciples, saying, “Go into the village opposite you, where as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Loose it and bring it here. And if anyone asks you, ‘Why are you loosing it?’ thus you shall say to him, ‘Because the Lord has need of it.’”*”

As they came near Jerusalem, they first came to a village called Bethphage on the western slope of Mt. Olivet. Jesus sent two unnamed disciples into the little town to obtain a donkey for use in the remainder of his journey into the capital city.

***The Sovereignty Of The King Is Displayed.*** Luke 19:32

*“So those who were sent went their way and found it just as He had said to them.”*

Notice the supernatural aspects related to the acquisition of the animal on which Jesus was to ride into the city:

- Christ informed the disciples that as they entered the village they would find a female donkey “tied”;
- Matthew records that Jesus also said that with her would be a colt (Matt. 21:2). The disciples were to “unloose” and bring back both animals;
- He said that the disciples would be questioned by the animals’ owner as to what they were doing. (Luke 19:31) Their response was to be, *“The Lord has need of them.”*
- Jesus foretold all these details and we read, *“So those who were sent went their way and found it just as He had said to them.”* (Luke 19:32)

This was not a pre-arranged agreement; rather, it provides a dramatic example of the Lord’s exercise of supernatural knowledge whenever the circumstances demanded such. It is worthy of note as well that the owners of these donkeys were obviously disciples of the Master, as indicated by their unhesitating response to the designation *“Lord.”*

On the one hand we see the divinity of the Lord Jesus displayed, when He foretold where the colt would be, etc., however, we also see His humanity when He said to the disciples, *“the Lord has need of it.”* The Lord has need? What a startling statement! He Who created all the animals now *needs* a lowly colt.

When the Savior’s disciples returned, donkeys in tow, the two animals were adorned with the outer garments of the disciples, reflecting perhaps the fact that they did not know which of the two beasts of burden he would choose. Jesus selected the colt, upon whose back no man had ever sat (Mark. 11:2; Luke 19:30). It is not without significance that the young animal made no resistance illustrating Jesus’ divine sovereignty over the animal kingdom.

***The Significance of The Colt is Communicated.*** Luke 19:34-35

*“And they said, “The Lord has need of him.” Then they brought him to Jesus. And they threw their own clothes on the colt, and they set Jesus on him.”*

Jesus chose to ride into Jerusalem on a donkey, which was a fulfillment of Messianic prophecy. *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.”* (Zech. 9:9).

The donkey “was an appropriate mount for one who came on a mission of peace.” (*Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi — Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1972, p. 166). A King would come riding upon a horse when he intended to wage war. He would enter a city upon a donkey when he was coming in peace. This action of Jesus is a sign that he was not the warrior figure men dreamed of, but the Prince of Peace.

An atmosphere of mob hysteria prevailed. The people looked for the Messiah to come and deliver them from the heel of Roman domination. They were looking for a political Kingdom, not a spiritual one. They looked for a Messiah of their own desires and wishful thinking, not the Messiah whom God sent. The Prince of Peace entered the city of David while riding upon a colt, not upon a horse, as if ready for war. This confused the masses and they asked, *“Who is this?”* (Matt. 21:10)

**THE ROYAL PROCESSION THAT WAS HELD.** Matthew 21:8

*“And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road.”*

“Since it was Passover, there were probably about 2 million people in and around Jerusalem. This was the only time in His ministry that Jesus actually planned and promoted a public demonstration. Up to this time, He had cautioned people not to tell who He was, and He had deliberately avoided public scenes.” (Wiersbe’s *The Bible Exposition Commentary*)

As the Savior rode down the road toward the capital city, two throngs of people converged upon him – a massive crowd coming out of the city; another group following him (Matt. 21:9; Mark 11:9). These were mostly disciples who had been awed by the effect of the Lord’s miracles – especially the recent resurrection of Lazarus (Luke 19:37; John 12:17).

Some “paved” the road with their garments; others with layers of leaves, at least some of which were from palm trees (John 12:13), hence the expression “Palm Sunday.” Spreading garments before a dignitary was a symbol of submission. (2 Kings 9:13) “Palm branches were employed also as a token of victory.” (Suetonius, *Caligula*, 32). Some Jewish coins from the first century had palm leaf engravings with the accompanying inscription, “the redemption of Zion.” Note the “palm” symbolism that is portrayed in the book of Revelation (7:9). The Jewish disciples doubtless were expressing the hope that Jesus would be the one to lead them to victory over their oppressor, Rome.

Jesus was full of surprises. The manner in which He began His life on earth was a surprise.

The manner in which His life on earth ended was a surprise to most. The manner in which He began His last week before His death was a surprise to His enemies. They were not prepared for what happened and they reacted with a vengeance.

This was not an official reception organized by the Jerusalem leaders. The celebrants were initially His disciples as Luke states: *“as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen.”* (Luke 19:37) The excitement attracted a spontaneous crowd that joined in out of curiosity.

The purpose of this manner of entry into the city was to force the officials to proceed with their apprehension of Him so that He could move on to the fulfillment of the purpose for which He came.

**Prophecy Was Fulfilled.** Matt. 21:4-5

*“All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: “Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.’”* (Matt.21:4,5)

Both Matthew and John contend that this incident was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. The former cites Zechariah 9:9 specifically: *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your king coming unto you; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon a donkey, even upon a colt, the foal of a donkey.”*

**Praise Was Rendered.** Matt. 21:9 & Luke 19:37-38

*“Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: “Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD! Hosanna in the highest!”* (Matt. 21:9)

*“Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, saying: “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”* (Luke 37-38)

The people determined that now they would make him King, and that now he should lead them against the hosts of Rome. He, intending no such thing, nevertheless overruled their enthusiasm that by it he might have an opportunity of performing that which had been written of Him in the prophets.

“You must not imagine that all those who strewed the branches in the way and cried “Hosanna” cared about Christ as a spiritual Prince. No, they thought that He was to be a temporal deliverer, and when they found out afterwards that they were mistaken they hated Him just as much as they had loved him, and “Crucify him, crucify him,” was as loud and vehement a cry as “Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” – (Charles H. Spurgeon)

**Pharisees Were Unhappy.** Luke 19:39-40

*“And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, “Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.” But He answered and said to them, “I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.”*

The devil wants to rain on God’s parades. You too can cheer or criticize; you can be a part of the praise parade or stand on the sidelines and find fault.

“When they (the Jewish leaders) saw the spontaneous demonstration of the people, they concluded that Jesus had to be destroyed. The prophetic scriptures required that the Lamb of God be crucified on Passover. This demonstration of Christ’s popularity incited the rulers to act.” (Wiersbe)

“The strange thing is that Jesus was rejected not by the common folk but by the Pharisees – and the Pharisees were Messianic experts. They were specialists in the doctrine of Messiah. They were reckoned to know everything about Him. Night and day they had studied the Old Testament with a zeal that was little short of heroism. Yet when Messiah came they failed to recognize Him, though they had given many a learned lecture on Him.” – George H. Morrison

There were several groups waiting for Jesus in Jerusalem:

***The Critics.***

The religious leaders. They hated Jesus. They saw him as a threat to them. They wanted nothing more than to kill him. They wanted him gone, forgotten. They considered Him a threat to their religious system, their authority and prestige.

Not much has changed. The world has plenty of critics of Jesus. Some say that He never existed; some that He was not God; some say He was just a great teacher; many say that He is not the only way to heaven – so they want to remove any reference to Him in public prayers, Christmas displays, etc. They want to obliterate any reference to Him from our country and world today.

***The Curious.***

There were always crowds around Jesus. It isn’t that they really cared about Him, they just wanted to see the show and eat the bread and the fish. They wanted miracles. They had a casually curious interest in Jesus.

Most of the people did not understand what kind of King Jesus would be. They expected their Messiah to be a great political and military leader who would free them from the tyranny of the Roman Empire. But the kingdom of God is not of this world. It is a spiritual kingdom that is now growing in the hearts of people who put their faith and trust in Him.

***The Committed.***

These were the disciples. These were persons who loved Him, knew Who He was and were committed to Him. They comprised the vast majority of those who welcomed Him as He rode triumphantly into Jerusalem. In which group are you? A critic, just curious or committed?

**THE ROYAL PREDICTION THAT WAS GIVEN.**

*“Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, “If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace!”*

***The Brokenhearted King.*** v.41, 42a

Unique to Luke’s record is the fact that as Jesus came near to Jerusalem, he looked across the Kedron valley and *“wept over the city.”* (Luke 19:41) This is one of the three instances when Christ is said to have wept. (John 11:35; Heb. 5:7).

He knew that in a few days after His entry into Jerusalem, the tide of public opinion would turn against Him. According to John’s Gospel, on the day of His entry into Jerusalem He said, *“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”* (John 12:32). John tells us that Jesus said these words *“signifying by what death He would die”* (John 12:33).

Some of the same people who had cut down palm branches to welcome the Son of God into their city would soon stand in front of Pilate’s judgment hall and cry out for the death of the Lamb of God. The apostle John records the scene as Pilate presents the innocent Jesus to a stirred-up Jewish mob. *“Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, ‘Behold your King!’ But they cried out, ‘Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!’ Pilate said to them, ‘Shall I crucify your King?’ The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar!’ So he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away.”* (John 19:14-16).

The applause and acclamation that greeted Jesus as He entered the city did not deter Him from His purpose in coming into the world. He was, however, heartbroken because He knew that, for the most part, these people would reject Him and would suffer the consequences of unbelief.

***The Bondage in The Future.*** v.43-44

*“For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”*

The very peace they sought would be taken from them and, in its place, would come their enemies, the Roman armies and Jerusalem would be destroyed, which happened in 70 A.D.

***The Blinded Citizens.*** v.42b

*“But now they are hidden from your eyes.”*

Why was bondage in their future? Because these people were blind to Who He was and what God was doing in their midst. The Man of Sorrows grieved over the fact that so many of his people had closed their eyes to the truth of His identity and mission. *“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”* (John. 1:11)

The majority of the people did not know who Jesus was. *“And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, “Who is this?”* (Matt. 21:10,11) After three years of unparalleled ministry of miracles and messages, the likes of which they had never seen, they asked, *“Who is this?”* No wonder Jesus wept! Jesus said to Phillip on one occasion, *“Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip?”* (John 14:9)

- Who is this, Who was born of a virgin in a manger in Bethlehem while angels sang?
- Who is this, Who healed sickness and diseases?
- Who gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf and cast out demons?
- Who turned water into wine, calmed a sea storm and brought the dead to life again?

Many ask those same questions today. John tells us Who He is in his gospel. He says that He is: the Word, the Lamb of God, the only begotten Son of God, the Savior of the world, the Great Physician, the Bread of Life, the Water of Life, the Light of the World, the Door, the Great Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life, the Lord, the Way, the Truth, and the Life!

May I add my testimony to that of John? Jesus Christ is:

- my Friend who sticks closer than a brother;
- my Great Physician for my soul sickness;
- my soul’s Bread when I am hungry and Water when my soul is thirsty;
- my Wonderful Counselor when I am confused;
- my Peace in the midst of life’s storms;
- my Joy when I am sad;
- my Savior and Lord who died upon the cross for my sins and He rose from the dead!  
And if you put your trust in Him, He will be the same to you!

## CONCLUSION

- On Palm Sunday Jesus was carried on the back of a colt into the city. By week’s end He would carry on His back a cross out of the city.
- The fickle crowd that shouted “Hosanna” on Palm Sunday would shout “Crucify Him” before week’s end.
- This entire episode was a reception that became a rejection. But, thank the dear Lord, that is not the end of the story. The best was yet to come – there was resurrection! But we get ahead of ourselves.

The Triumphal Entry became a Triumphal Exit a few days later. Yes it did! Jesus did not exit Jerusalem a Victim or Vanquished but as a Victor. Jesus Christ did not come to reign as King on a temporal throne but to be offered as the Lamb of God for the sin debt of the world.

If the Triumphal Entry had been a total success; if Jesus had been accepted by all the people and enthroned as King, where would that have left us? Answer: without a Savior! If He had not exited the city to go to Golgotha He would not have triumphed! He would have been a King with a crown but there would have been no cross.

As Jesus exited the city on His way to Calvary He did so triumphantly for He was

accomplishing the purpose for which he came into the world. He died triumphantly! We have a Savior!

And now sinners who invite Him into their lives can look forward to entering triumphantly into the New Jerusalem He has gone to prepare. The King is coming back to town some day! Are you ready to greet Him and shout, "Hosanna"?

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