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**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

**January 10, 2016**

**Palm Sunday**

**John 12:12-16**

**Prayer:** *Father, I just again, I thank you for this church, I thank you for the blessings that you've given us, I thank you for the fact that Easter is a time when really there are channels that are opened to the world, channels to -- opened for us to share the gospel, and I pray for this week, I pray for anybody who might come to the service next Easter, I just continue to pray that your grace would be extended there. I pray for today as we are again looking into your word particularly about Palm Sunday, that you would give us your grace, your wisdom and especially the power of your Holy Spirit, open up our eyes, give us the ability to see, open up our ears, give us the ability to hear what your spirit is saying and again, may it be of permanent value. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Our text this morning is taken from *John 12*, it's 12-16, it says: *The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who*

*comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!" His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.*

Well as I said, today is Palm Sunday and it is about, it's about promises, it's about pictures, and it is about prophecies all accomplished with a precision that was nothing short of miraculous. Most of us are aware of the events of palm Sunday, I mean, Jesus is triumphantly welcomed into the city of Jerusalem by the crowds. That's the public perception of what took place. What was actually taking place was far more intricate and far more wonderful to behold when you look beneath the surface. And when we look beneath the surface, we'll see that this event was, first of all, an answer to a promise that had been made from the very beginning of time in the Garden of Eden, that had been pictured repeatedly in the Old Testament, prophesied in the books of Daniel and Zechariah and spelled out with absolute precision by Jesus in the New Testament. Palm Sunday marks the beginning of the most significant event in the history of mankind. I mean, God in the flesh fought for and won the ransomed souls of every last one of his sheep this week. And if you happened to be visiting Jerusalem back then, well, you

probably would have seen nothing more than the opening act of the execution of an obscure religious figure named Jesus of Nazareth. And you know, many in the 21st century still see it the same way. Our common understanding of the events of Easter makes it appear as if Jesus triumphantly entered into Jerusalem and then there was this series of tragic and evil events that wound up costing him his life being crucified at the hands of the Jewish leaders and the Roman government. Well, in fact Palm Sunday marks the beginning of an event that was so extraordinarily planned for and so exquisitely executed that every single aspect of what took place can be seen as a plan unfolding that was laid down in the Garden of Eden.

One of the reasons why we have these palms that you see is directly connected to the fact that the crowds who welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem *"took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel!'"*. Here's the amazing thing. This is the very same crowd who cried out only days later that Jesus be crucified. And when Pilate washed his hands saying, *"I am innocent of this man's blood,"* this is the same crowd that shouted out, *"May his blood be on us, and on our children."* I mean, how is it possible to go from being triumphantly welcomed into the city to being so despised as to deserving the most hideous execution that could be imagined? You know, most people tend to think of the

crucifixion as this unfortunate cascading of events that started with Jesus being wrongfully accused by people who hated him. Certainly that much is true, I mean, he was wrongfully accused and he was accused by people who truly did hate him. But the fact is there is nothing about these events taking place during Easter week that was by any chance whatsoever. These events beginning with Palm Sunday were the most promised, prophesied, and precisely planned for events ever to take place, because the events of that week were the most important events since the dawn of time.

You know, we all tend to view Easter from our side of the equation, it's springtime, you know, it's lovely, it's green, there's parades, there's all kinds of neat things going on. Easter's about rebirth, it's about new life. But there is much more that lies undiscovered and unappreciated about what God intended and accomplished through the events of this week that started with Palm Sunday. Christian tradition often equates Easter with this bad news/good news scenario. We have the bad news which is obviously the cross and we have the good news which is obviously the resurrection, but I can't help but think that between those two pivotal events, something frequently gets lost, and it's the God side of the equation. You see, if you read your Bible from cover to cover, you're going to see that it's about God, it's about man, it's about Christ, and it's about our response to what Christ has

done, and the center point of what Christ has done is the cross. The cross alone broke down the barrier that separated a sin-filled mankind from a holy God, and there Christ offered up his life of perfection for our life of sin. And so everything about our existence as human beings centers around the cross, and every single thing about God's interaction with us centers around the cross. And the whole process began with Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem that we celebrate as Palm Sunday.

And so I want to spend some time this morning looking at the events of Palm Sunday not just as some kind of spontaneous event that unfolded but as part of God's sovereign plan for his people that started, it started with a promise. It was a promise that was planned for long before you and I ever existed, and it was put into place starting from the very first time that we rebelled against God. Understand one thing. Before Adam ever breathed his first breath, God knew he would have to go to the cross in order to rescue his chosen ones from their own sinfulness. In fact, God's plan for the events of this week was first announced as a promise in the Garden of Eden. And it was announced after Adam and Eve had decided to side with the serpent against their creator. God tells Adam and Eve and the serpent what their fate is going to be. They're all kind of lined up waiting to hear "their sentence" and as he's telling them their sentence, he makes this very cryptic

statement to the serpent, he says this in *Genesis 3:14*, he says:  
*The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."* God tells the serpent that for all time there's going to be enmity between his offspring and the woman's and that at some point her offspring will bruise the head of the serpent while the serpent's offspring bruises his heel. I wouldn't blame you if you look at that and said what in the world is that? But what God was saying here in very poetic language was that for all time there was going to be this enmity that existed between the serpent's offspring which is the powers of darkness and the woman's offspring which was to be the Lord Jesus Christ. You have to remember something here, something that I think is incredible. It's that Jesus came into the world through the agency of only one human being. That human being was a woman. I mean, think of the honor that God has bestowed on women. They were the agency through which God became flesh. There was no human male involved whatsoever in God becoming man. Mary was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit and thus began her pregnancy that ended in Jesus's birth. Jesus was the baby that would be the serpent's undoing. If you remember, Herod, the very beginning, remember Herod's desperate

attempt to kill the baby Jesus? Herod's part of the offspring of the serpent. Herod's somebody who knew what a threat that Jesus was. You see, the serpent's destruction would not be from anything other than Mary's offspring, the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, there would be enmity between the serpent's offspring and the woman's offspring. In fact, in *1 John 3:8* it says: *The reason the son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.* See, the cross itself, as brutal and as awful as it was, would be only a temporary bruising of Jesus's heel that would occur as he was crushing the serpent's head.

Now, I imagine most of you have seen Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*. If you've seen that, if you remember back at the very beginning of it you see a filmmaker's interpretation of how that prophesy played itself out. If you remember, the movie opens with this horrific portrayal of this fog-shrouded darkness of the garden of Gethsemane, and there's Jesus in his agony and he's praying and at some point as Jesus is praying, the snake begins to slither out over his limbs and Jesus is absolutely aware knowing that the cross is about to unfold, he rises to his feet and he stomps on the head of the snake. See, the cross was Jesus's answer to a promise made by his Father in the Garden of Eden. Think about this just for a second. Rather than the cross being this whole series of unfortunate events, understand that as something planned out by God

the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit from the moment we in the form of Adam and Eve messed up. I mean, when you start to wonder about the love of God, realize that he planned to offer up his life for yours even before he laid the foundations of the earth. God knew that to give us the freedom to choose him, he would have to give us the opportunity to reject him as well, and this is precisely what Adam and Eve did. You know, they sided with the serpent. They sided with the serpent against the God who had given them everything with only one proviso: They would not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but instead they believed the serpent when he told them that God was withholding from them the chance to be like he was. So thinking they could become like God, they disobeyed God and thus gave up everything about them that was like God. And now as fallen creatures, they were estranged from the very God who had created them. But you know, when Adam and Eve rebelled against God, God was not taken by surprise. He immediately started implementing the plan that would rescue us from our own folly. It was a plan that involved God becoming one of us, living the life that he intended each of us to live, and then dying in our place as a sacrifice for our sins. You know, you want to talk about -- talk about planning. All of human history that flowed from that mess up in the Garden of Eden was pointing to one single event, and it all started with Palm Sunday.



Now, many years after the fall of Adam another event took place whose significance again would only be established at the cross. Mankind from Adam onward continued in his sin and his rebellion and his just walking away from God, I mean, after all, Adam's first two children, Cain and Abel, they were the perpetrator and the victim of the very first murder. Mankind grew so wicked that God wiped them out except for Noah and his family, and then after they had reestablished themselves, the rebellion that had now become part of their nature reasserted itself at the Tower of Babel. And so God separated all of us into different groups based on the confusion of language that he sent to us, but in the midst of that judgment, God still had a plan. Again, it was a plan that unfolded, starting with Palm Sunday. And the plan involved a picture. You see, God had called this guy, just a guy, a man named Abram, he called him out of Ur of the Chaldees and said you, you are going to be the one. He told this man that he would create an entire nation from his loins and that the nation would become a nation of priests who would demonstrate to the world that God was a holy God and that mankind was in rebellion to him. But again, even at that stage God had a plan to reconcile man to himself. You see what he did is he designed a whole series of sacrifices in which the blood of an animal would be used to cover those who came to God acknowledging their sin. And what God is doing here is he's starting to paint a picture that would only be completed by his son and his death on

the cross. And so over and over again, God is reiterating to the Jewish people that the only way that sin will be taken care of was through the shedding of blood. And God made it very clear saying in *Leviticus 17:11*: *For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.* You know, God would go on to make this great nation out of Abram turning his name into Abraham and the very history would point to the absolute importance of this shed blood of an innocent lamb.

Now if you follow the history of Israel, you know that at some point in history they became enslaved in Egypt. All of this was by design. All of this was part of the planning that led directly to Palm Sunday. All of God's efforts to free his people from slavery were painting an elaborate picture of what God was actually going to do in order to free his people from slavery to sin, and again it's directly connected to Palm Sunday. Now understand, Palm Sunday is a celebration of the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. And the reason why his entry was so triumphant was because Jerusalem was filled, it was filled to overflowing because the people of Israel had gathered to celebrate an event. That event was known as the Passover. Now, Passover was a time of celebration commemorating what God had done to free the Jews in Egypt. I mean, most of you knew that the Jews were under the

domination of the Egyptians for over 400 years and that God had raised up Moses as this leader who would lead the Israelites out of Egypt to the promised land. We know about these different confrontations that took place between Moses and Pharaoh, Moses confronts him with a demand that God let his people go and Pharaoh repeatedly refuses. God sends a plague, Pharaoh relents, Pharaoh changes his mind, he refuses to allow the Jews to leave Egypt. Pharaoh once again gets hit with another plague. God sends another and then another, and then a confrontation continues through nine different plagues ranging from flies to boils to frogs to blood to darkness and hail. We know the story. Moses says, "Let my people go," and Pharaoh says okay, okay, I'll let your people go, and then he reneges and he refuses to let them go. Finally Moses gets to the place where he's ready to give out the tenth plague, and he tells Pharaoh if he doesn't let God's people go, God's going to send the angel of death to take the life of the firstborn of all of Egypt. Well, when Pharaoh refuses, God sends the angel of death to kill the firstborn of all the Egyptians. And before that angel comes, he gives specific instructions to the Jews in Egypt as to how to protect themselves from this coming destruction. This is what he says in *Exodus 12:21*, it says: *Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go and select lambs for yourselves according to your clans, and kill the Passover lamb. Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the*

*basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning. For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you. You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and your sons forever."*

So they were to take a lamb, they were slaughter it and smear its blood over their doorposts and lintels, and all of this, understand, is to paint a picture. It's to paint a picture that would not be complete for hundreds of years. It would not be complete until Christ went to the cross. So God is telling his people if they obey and when the angel of death comes into Egypt, it would pass over their household because it was protected by blood. Hence the name Passover. And so the Jews obeyed God and the angel of death swept into Egypt killing the firstborn of all of Egypt not protected by the blood and of course this was the plague that broke Pharaoh's will. This was the plague that wound up setting the Israelites free.

Well, centuries later on that very first Palm Sunday, everybody's gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the fact that God had saved all of the Jews who obeyed him by hiding them under the protection of

the blood of a lamb. What they didn't realize is there was a picture that was beginning to unfold. And what I want us to see here is the exquisite detail that God put in to planning the events that started with Palm Sunday. There was this promise I just said made in the Garden of Eden that one day the offspring of the woman would crush the offspring of the serpent, but there was also this painted picture of the lamb whose blood would protect and save.

Now I opened up our text this morning, our message this morning with this text from *John 12*. It said: *The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.* Well, the feast they all were coming for was the Passover, and that was not by coincidence. You see, I want you to view the cross the way God viewed the cross, as something God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit had planned for centuries before it would actually take place. I want you to understand that Jesus knew precisely what he was doing when he entered Jerusalem triumphantly and that he knew to the exact moment every single event that would unfold, how it would unfold, and what significance it would have, not just for that day but for the future even unto this day. You know, the timetable of Jesus's entry into Jerusalem was absolutely precise. Jesus' sacrifice of his own blood was to be timed to the great Passover celebrations that were going to be taking place during this very week. Here's

the picture that God was trying to paint. See, as thousands of these Jewish families are gathering to celebrate their Passover, little would they realize that the very act their Passover symbolized is going to be played out right in their midst.

To allow the full impact of the symbolism of Passover, you have to understand a statement first that was made by John the Baptist when Jesus came to him asking to be baptized. And again at this point in history, remember the nation of Israel has had for literally thousands of years been slaughtering lambs and using their blood to cover their sin to save them from death. But covering sin is not the same as forgiving it. And God made it clear that it was nothing inherently redemptive in the blood of an animal and that the covering of sin by that blood would be a symbolic act that just demonstrated the faith of the one who was trusting God for his deliverance. *Hebrews 10* says: *For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.* See, the blood of the Passover lamb was only a picture, but it was a picture of the blood that was going to be shed for sin, and God took great pains to leave no doubt as to whose blood that was going to be. There's this magnificent statement made by John the Baptist when he sees Jesus coming toward him to be baptized, and John the Baptist speaking like a prophet makes this statement in *John 1:29*, he says: *"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*

You see in that one very public statement, John the Baptist identifies what all the thousands of lambs sacrificed over hundreds and hundreds of years were all pointing to. The entire sacrificial system of the Old Testament was designed to paint a picture of the one great sacrifice that God himself would make for his children. Jesus was the lamb of God. You know, people constantly think of Jesus as coming to this planet to be a great teacher or maybe a great philosopher a great example of what it's like to live your life to the fullest and he was all of those. But that wasn't the purpose that he came for. I mean the purpose that was laid out all the way back in the Garden of Eden to Adam and Eve was that he was there to crush the serpent's head. The only way to do that, the only way to literally take away the power of death that the serpent had over all of us is a power rooted in the perfection of God's justice that could not allow sin to go unpunished. Well, the only way to deal with that was to deal with it directly on the cross. That power was crushed when the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world allowed Roman soldiers to open up his veins and let his perfect blood spill out on to the ground. You see, it is beyond astounding to realize the exquisiteness of the timing of Christ's crucifixion. At the precise moment that Jesus's blood is being shed on the cross, thousands of lambs all across Jerusalem were having their blood shed in order to reenact the symbolism of that Passover night. Thousands of families had no idea that that

night there would be perfectly picturing the sacrifice that Jesus was about to endure. And anyone who by faith took refuge under the blood of an innocent lamb would be saved from the angel of death. And here on the cross was the Lamb of God at the very same time shedding his blood to save all those who placed their faith in him from death.

It is stunning how exquisitely the timing and the symbolism come together in the horror of the cross, but that's not the only example of how precise and how choreographed this sacrifice was. I mean, not only was it promised in the Garden of Eden, not only was it perfectly pictured in the Passover but it was also stated prophetically in numerical fashion in the book of Daniel. Nothing attests to the precision of the way this grand sacrifice was planned and executed than the prophesy made by Daniel centuries before the event even took place. Now we've been studying the book of Daniel and one thing we've learned is that it's a book of prophetic predictions that were so accurate that people now for the last couple hundred years have claimed that it was a fraud, they just said it's way too accurate, it has to have been a fake because nothing could be that accurate. Well, there's a prediction in the book of Daniel that relates directly to Palm Sunday. You see, Daniel had been studying his Bible, and he was reading the prophet Jeremiah and he became convinced that his people were nearing the



end of their captivity of 70 years, and so he began praying and fasting in earnest, confessing the sinfulness of his people, asking God for forgiveness on behalf of his people, and while he's praying, scripture says the angel of Gabriel came to pay him a visit. This is what he told Daniel. This is *Daniel 9:25*. He said: *Know therefore and understand that from the going out of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with squares and mote, but in a troubled time. And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing.*" Well, the angel had laid out a timetable that told Daniel the exact date of Palm Sunday, of the first Palm Sunday, the precise day when the Messiah that is the anointed one would enter Jerusalem. Now understand, figuring this out can get very, very complicated and to reduce it to its simplest terms, the angel said there were going to be 69 weeks of years. 69 weeks of years from the rebuilding of Jerusalem to the coming of Messiah who would be cut off and killed. Well, 69 weeks of years is 69 times 7, that's 483 years from Jerusalem's building, rebuilding to Jesus's triumphal entry. Now I don't have the time to go into any of the depth here, but many scholars have, if you just Google the 70 weeks of Daniel, you'll see an enormous amount of information that's been assembled about how precisely God's timetable for this event was laid out. God said there would be 69

weeks of years from the time of the start of the rebuilding of Jerusalem to the very day when Jesus would enter the town riding on a donkey. And by the ancient calendar, that is using the Julian calendar, that comes out to 173,880 days. This is astounding to me the precision of this, but these scholars can demonstrate that 173,880 days to the exact day after this prophecy was made, Jesus was sitting on a donkey outside the gates of Jerusalem.

I mean the promise had been made in the Garden of Eden, the picture had been demonstrated countless times in the Passover, the prophecy had come down to one specific day identified 173,880 days before. The precision of this prophecy is breathtaking. And make no mistake about it, Jesus knew precisely what day it was to be. I mean at numerous times during his ministry he referred to a very precise timetable and his adherence to it was absolutely impeccable. If you remember near the end of his ministry, Jesus's own brothers insisted that he go to a feast. They wanted him to publicly demonstrate who he was because at this point even they didn't believe in him and they just wanted to kind of force the issue by a public display of his power, but the timetable wasn't right. It was not the right time and Jesus refused to go. This wasn't the Passover feast, this was the Feast of Booths. Now Jesus's own family, understand, their family is clueless. But Jesus knew exactly where and when he was going to present himself

as a sacrifice because he knew he was on a very strict timetable. This is the incident as it's laid out in *John 7*, it says this, it says: *Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand, so his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples may also see the works you are doing. For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." For not even his brothers believed in him. Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it, that its works are evil. You go up to the feast. I'm not going up to this feast for my time has not yet fully come."*

See, Jesus knew to the exact day when his time would fully come. I mean, he knew it would never be at the festival of booths. He knew that it had to be during the Passover celebration in order to fulfill what the Passover was all about. And when that day came, he identified it, and he willingly stepped into it. Listen to what he said in *Matthew 26:18*: *He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, 'The Teacher says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.'" You see what Jesus is doing here? As Jesus is entering into Jerusalem, we see the promise being fulfilled, we see the picture being perfectly drawn, we see the prophecies being perfectly fulfilled, and it wasn't just the "when" of a precise date. There was also the*

exquisite precision of the "how" part of Palm Sunday. We know from Zechariah 9:9 how the Messiah would present himself to Jerusalem. See, hundreds of years earlier, the prophet Zechariah said this in *Zechariah 9:9: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is come to you; He is just and having salvation. Lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey."* See, Daniel and Zechariah had prophesied when and how this very moment would take place. Jesus made sure it would happen that way. I mean, remember our scripture this morning. This is what I opened up with, I said -- this is verse 14: *And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!"*

Jesus made certain of every single detail. I mean, you talk about precision. We tend to think of Palm Sunday as this series of chance encounters, oh, look, Jesus, here's a donkey. Why don't you hop on that? Nothing could have been further from the truth. This was Jesus's instruction to his disciples as he prepared to enter Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. This is from Mark's gospel. This is *Mark 11*. It says: *Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on*

*which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'" And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street and they untied it. And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it.*

Okay. Couple quick questions. How did Jesus know that there was a colt tied outside in a village they had never yet entered? How did he know no one had ever ridden on it? How did he know the owner would let it go merely by hearing the words of the disciples saying the master needs it? Well, the answer to those questions is simple. Jesus was no ordinary man. This was God in the flesh. This was God in the flesh fulfilling a promise he had made in the Garden of Eden painting a picture that Israel had painted thousands and thousands of times before in the Passover, fulfilling the prophecies of time in Daniel and style in Zechariah by entering Jerusalem on a donkey.

Matthew's gospel describes the event this way. It's a slightly different -- slightly different view. He says this: *Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of*

*Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once. This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them.*

You see, we've grown so used to hearing the Palm Sunday story that I think we forget to picture what it was Jesus was really doing here. You see, he was entering into the city and there was a way that you're supposed to triumphantly enter into a city, it's the way that the generals always used to do it when they had won a war when they were going in to demonstrate their complete victory, they would be on the biggest, badest stallion you could ever find. The whole idea of a triumphal entry was something that Jesus is turning on its head. He's spinning it upside down. He rode into Jerusalem not on a -- even a full grown donkey but on a baby donkey that nobody had ever ridden before. The picture is the exact opposite of what you would expect to be a depiction of triumph. In fact it's almost humiliating to imagine Jesus, the king of the universe, at the time of his greatest triumph plodding along on this little

baby donkey. You know, Matthew's gospel concludes: *This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them.* They did what Jesus asked them but they had no idea why. Again, I want to refer to the scripture that I opened with this morning and it ends with this statement in verse 16, it says: *His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.*

See, so much of what Jesus did among and for his disciples was utterly lost on them during his time with them. They simply could not appreciate the enormity of who he was and what he was doing for them, and so it is with us. You see, if you are a child of God, if you are one of his sheep, pause for a moment and consider how blessed you are. I mean you're the recipient of a promise that God made in the Garden of Eden that the offspring of the woman would crush the offspring of the serpent. You are the beneficiary of thousands and thousands of Passover lambs shedding their blood to paint a picture of the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world, who would take away your sin on the cross. You are also the result of the prophecies made in time by Daniel that God was so

set and so certain of his plan that he could say 173,880 days before it would take place precisely what day it would be, and Jesus would announce it by saying: *"My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples,"* and then humbly present himself going into Jerusalem on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

One thing I think we've established here and that is that Jesus knew with absolute precision exactly what was unfolding and that nothing, absolutely nothing down to the very last detail was by chance. What Jesus was stepping into was the most hideous and terrifying battle that would ever take place. God himself is going to be stretched to God's maximum, not for his sake, but for ours.

You know, we spent this -- this Sunday, Palm Sunday kind of looking at all of the externals that Jesus accomplished in order to pay for the sins of the sheep that he would call. Next Sunday, Easter Sunday, we're going to look at the internal battle that was about to take place, and before that we have this Good Friday service that's a great introduction as to what that was all about. I hope you all come to that 'cause it's going to be a blessed time. We're going to see that God himself would become your sin, God would become my sin, he would offer himself up to the justice of God in order to secure forever our release from the penalty of sin. And



again, it says very clearly, Jesus' disciples did not understand these things at first. I submit to you neither do we. I also submit to you that it will take all of eternity for us to fully understand "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." Let's pray.

Father, I just -- I marvel, I marvel at the incredible precision of what took place during the events that flowed from Palm Sunday. We just see what was taking place, we see the promise in the garden, we see the picture that was painted by all of those different Passovers, we see the prophecies laid out in Daniel, laid out in Zechariah, and we see what you, God, was doing every single thing according to a precisely laid out timetable. We thank you for the love that went into it, we thank you for the sacrifice that went into it, and we pray, Lord, this week especially that we would be tuned in and sensitive to the opportunities that we have to share this good news with others who don't have any sense of what it is you've done. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.