

This is Palm Sunday. It marks the beginning of what many people call holy week. In the Reformed churches, we don't like to call it holy week. Only Sunday is holy, per the fourth commandment. But we have to call it something. Our culture calls it holy week. If we want to be accurate, we could call it The Final Week of Christ's life on earth.

This is why we are studying John 12 this morning, where the final week began. Here we are studying the final account of Christ's Triumphal entrance into Jerusalem for His final week of His earthly ministry.

After the other three Gospel writers had written their inspired accounts of this Palm Sunday event in Matthew 21, Mark 11, and Luke 21: more than 30 years later, the last living Apostle, John, sat to write the final words that describe that final week.

John wrote ten chapters about Christ's Final Week. John filled in what Matthew Mark and Luke wrote, as the Spirit of God gave us even more precious details. What we have is an amazing record of the most powerful week ever to take place, since the creation of the world in the first place, in the space of a week.

The final week of Christ's life is captured for us in the New Testament across 28 chapters out of a total of 89 chapters that make up the Four Gospels.

Just for perspective: out of the 89 total chapters:

- The rest of Christ's 168 weeks of ministry is described in 61 chapters.
- Then, to describe Christ's Final Week, God gave us 28 chapters.
- We know more about Christ's final week, than any other week in the Bible.

It all starts with The Palm Sunday event. This event we study now triggers the countdown: to greatest week of earth's history since the creation of earth.

Think of how the universe itself, shackled by the bondage to sin, groaning in anticipation of being liberated, must have so rejoiced in the climactic, redemptive events of this final week. Ready?

On Palm Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem at exactly the time that the Passover lambs were chosen.

He proclaimed Himself as the Promised Messiah by riding on a donkey exactly as prophesied in Zechariah 9:9. Listen as I read about the promised coming of the King: *“Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”*

Let me ask you a question to get you thinking about why the events of Palm Sunday happened as they did, and what is hinted about the kingship of Jesus. Since Jesus truly is the King of Israel, why did He not arrive on a white war horse, but instead arrived on a very young donkey? It would be like the president not arriving in the presidential limousine, but instead, arriving in a child’s Radio Flyer wagon. But let me ask the more important question – since Jesus is the king of Israel, why did He get crucified within a week of this royal arrival into Jerusalem?

Now are you ready?

It seems to me that the world fails to honor Jesus as King, precisely because He was crucified on Friday of this week. The world keeps forgetting about the events of Palm Sunday. It is a good thing that we get Palm Sunday annually to remind ourselves. This is the main point of my sermon today:

**Because Jesus has the power of The King, we must honor Him.**

Palm Sunday hints at the power of this King, and so does Lazarus.

### **1. Power to raise the dead. (v.9,17,18)**

Jesus raised Lazarus. You remember that story. Lazarus died and was buried and four days passed, so that his dead body even smelled like a dead body. Jesus raised Lazarus. On Palm Sunday, the presence of Lazarus hints at the power of our King that the world will see in exactly one week.

It all starts at a dinner they were having for Jesus, and Lazarus was one of the dinner guests. Martha was serving food. Mary anointed Jesus with perfume. Judas criticized about the money used for the perfume. Jesus said the perfume prepared for His burial. That should have been a hint of the coming events of this week, but many people missed that hint. Then our text begins in John 12:9, *“When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of Him but also to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead.”*

How do I know that the large crowd of people missed the hint of Lazarus, showing us the power of The King? Because of the next verse. Verse 10, *“So the*

*chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well,”*

Did you understand that? Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, and what is the response of the chief priests? They want to put Lazarus to death a second time. Don't they realize the power of Jesus, that if they did put Lazarus to death a second time, that Jesus could simply raise Lazarus from the dead a second time? They missed the hint about the power of Jesus.

What would motivate the chief priests to want to kill Lazarus? The next verse tells us. Verse 11, *“Because on account of [Lazarus] many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.”*

Their motive to kill Lazarus was that they were losing people from following them to following Jesus. Do you know what the chief priests should have tried instead? Raising the dead! It seems to attract a lot of people. Raise more people from the dead than Jesus has raised from the dead. Jesus has raised one person. See his one person, and raise two persons. It makes no sense to want to kill people. Why kill the one person that Jesus raised?

They missed the hint about the power of Jesus, because they are not thinking straight at all. They are thinking murderously.

Here is what murderous thinking misses. These three words spoken by Jesus. *“Lazarus, come out.”* He who had died came out. This is the voice that said *“let there be light, and there was light.* This is the voice that in John chapter 5, said to the man lame for 38 years, *Arise, and he arose.* There was a hint that they missed. Jesus healed a man 38 years lame by saying the word *Arise.* Here is another three words of Jesus that they will miss the meaning of when the same voice says *“It is finished”* and the work of our salvation will be finished.

You know what the hint leads to on Sunday, and you want me to say it anyway, so that you can worship right now. King Jesus has the power not only to raise Lazarus from the dead, but to raise Himself from the dead. Two chapters earlier, John wrote down another hint, which was when Jesus said in John 10:18, *“I have authority to lay [My life] down, and I have authority to take [My life] up again.”*

By laying down his life, Jesus openly declared that He was beginning His Kingly reign. Not only would the King lay down his life in that week, but He would take it up again that week. Not only did Jesus arise from the dead that week, but Jesus *“made us alive together with Him.”* Ephesians 2:5.

This is exactly how the King spoke of believers back in John chapter 6:40, *“everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise Him up on the last day.”*

Let me read John 12:17-18, *“The crowd that had been with [Jesus] when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised [Lazarus] from the dead continued to bear witness. The reason why the crowd went to meet [Jesus] was that they heard*

*[Jesus] had done this sign.”*

Let me spell out what Jesus hinted at in John 11:35, when Jesus said to Martha, grieving for her dead brother Lazarus, and Jesus responded, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Here is the full meaning - this King controls all movements from the realm of the living to the realm of the dead, and all movements from the realm of the dead to the realm of the living.

Just notice the contrast between Jesus’ power to raise Lazarus from the dead with a verbal command in 11:43, with the powerlessness of the chief priests in chapter 12:10 to fulfill their plans to put Lazarus to death a second time. Lazarus had been raised from the dead by divine power of the divine king. No human counsel of people could reverse what He had done by His kingly power.

This is why Christians die safely.

This is why at funerals we do not grieve as those who have no hope.

Our King has power to raise the dead. That is point one.

## **2. Power to fulfill all prophecies. (v.13-16)**

Our king controls all predictions and all prophecy about the future. Jesus is able to control all prophecies, fulfill all prophecies, and to grant any and all understanding of any and all prophecies.

In verse 12, the large crowd heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.

In verse 13, they famously took palm branches, and this is why we call it Palm Sunday – and they went out to meet Jesus crying out “*Hosanna!* (Which means O Lord rescue us!) *Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.*”

In verses 14-15, “*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!*” This was direct actions of Jesus to fulfill prophecy about Him.

In verse 16, Jesus even controlled when the disciples would understand His prophecy. “*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.*” That is because when Jesus was glorified, Jesus sent His Spirit, and the Spirit worked with the disciples in the power of Christ.

The point John is giving us here is that our king controls the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. In Genesis 49, Jacob prophesied the fact that, from the tribe of Judah, one would come with a donkey’s colt. In Daniel 9, Daniel prophesied of the exact time of His coming. In Zechariah 9, Zechariah prophesied the exact manner of His coming – namely, to SIT on the donkey’s colt. Jesus gave the ancient prophecies through Jacob, Daniel, and Zechariah concerning Jesus’ coming, and then Jesus fulfilled them all when He came.

The written Word and the incarnate Word never conflict. Jesus always did “as it is written. Just as at the arrival of Jesus into this world, wise men in Matthew

2:5 announced to Jerusalem the birth of the King of the Jews “for so it is written,” so also at the departure of Jesus, he was again hailed in Jerusalem as the King of Israel. No matter what His parents, His family, His enemies, or His disciples did between His birth and His death, Jesus always saw to it that every prophecy was fulfilled.

Our King even controlled new prophecies, while He was fulfilling old prophecies. Back in chapter 11:51, while the high priest Caiphas’ action was unconsciously prophetic that Jesus would die for the people, and in chapter 12, verses 3 and 7, while Mary’s action to put perfume on Jesus was unconsciously prophetic that Jesus would soon be buried, while the crowd’s action was unconsciously prophetic that Jesus is the King of Israel who came to save His people, Jesus’ own action was CONSCIOUSLY and INTENTIONALLY prophetic in His purposely finding and sitting on the donkey in accord with Zechariah 9:9. The other accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke, also show that Jesus’ acquiring of the donkey was quite intentional, prophetic, and tightly controlled by Jesus.

The words of the Pharisees in verse 19, were also unconsciously prophetic that the Pharisees were gaining nothing and that “*the world has gone after [Jesus].*” It is prophetic that they did not say Israel has gone after Jesus, but rather they said the world has gone after Jesus. The fulfillment of that would come in verses 20 and 21, when not the Jews, but the Greeks were the ones who famously said, ‘*Sir, we wish to see Jesus.*’

Jesus was again consciously prophetic in verse 32, in being lifted up from the earth, He would draw not Israel to Himself, but rather all men to Himself.

So, the statement “The world has gone after him” was prophetic that first Palm Sunday, but has continued to be prophetic of 2,000 Palm Sundays since then, right down to today. We, being Gentiles, have gone after Jesus as a result of Him being lifted up from the earth, and drawing us to Himself on His cross.

### **3. Power to restrain people. (v.10-12,17-19)**

This passage shows that Jesus had the power to restrain people. The clearest example is that while the chief priests made plans in verse 10 that they might put Lazarus to death, they were not able to do so. Rather, Jesus the King over Lazarus, had power to restrain their evil plans to kill His protected servant Lazarus. Jesus had power not only to raise Lazarus to life, but then to preserve Lazarus’ life in this world and into eternity.

But along a whole other line of thought, the writer shows us Jesus’ power to restrain people in this passage. Why are the religious leaders losing popularity, while Jesus was gaining popularity? In other words, the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, what we call the triumphal entry, why was the triumphal entry triumphant? The answer is that Jesus chose NOT to restrain it.

Palm Sunday's triumphal entry really is a remarkable event because of how rare it is. Previously Jesus had been restraining people FROM crying out public praise of Him. But now that Jesus' ministry is ending with his death on Friday of that week, Jesus was no longer telling people to remain quiet about Him. In fact, over in Luke's account of the Triumphal Entry, in Luke 19:40, Jesus said that if the people remained silent, the very stones would cry out. Why? Because it was time for Jesus to be announced as triumphant, and Jesus controlled the people to do the announcing. Jesus no longer rebuked people when they cried out His praises. Jesus took off the restraining muzzle, because the time had come for Him to be crucified. By seeing Jesus remove the restraint on people, we learn that Jesus had power all along to restrain people. The power had been exercised until that moment.

The main topic of conversation in chapter 11:56 was whether or not Jesus would attend the feast. In order to restrain the praise of people, Jesus only had to slip away, stay away, hide himself, or even to merely arrive secretly. But Palm Sunday's arrival was very different. Jesus chose to arrive very, very publicly this time. We see the response that the multitude had. A large crowd set out at once to meet Jesus in this famous and curious scene of Jesus entering. It shows the power of Jesus to previously restrain people by not allowing them to gather and to praise Him publicly and with chanting and with branches of palm trees.

Who were all of these people? John 11:55 tells us that they were people from the country as well as from the city. "*Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves.*" By writing about these people from the country, John was alluding to the Galileans, who John told us back in chapter 6:15 had tried to take Jesus by force and to make Him their king. Jesus, the King who remains in control of all people at all times, had simply withdrawn Himself from the crowd of Galilean people in the countryside, not allowing them to make Him their king, because the time was not right. Jesus restrained that previous public showing of support for His kingship by withdrawing.

How would we know of Jesus' power to restrain people, if we did not see the restraints hinted at in the Bible, and then in the Triumphal Entry, what happens when those restraints are removed? Jesus alone has the power to place restraints on people and Jesus alone has the power to remove restraints from people.

Don't miss the hint to Jesus' power here. Think of the scene of Palm Sunday. When a great multitude of people, without being prodded by anyone to do so, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Jesus in large crowds, and began to cry out, "*Hosanna! Blessed is HEs who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!*" We learn something from what John wrote for us here. We learn that Jesus had all along been restraining the people from creating this scene until this very day, Palm Sunday, the start of the last week of Jesus' life and

ministry.

Perhaps the most fascinating thing about the crowds in the last week of Jesus' life is this: that as the gospel of John escalates beyond this point, the same people who were unrestrained in praising Jesus on Sunday, by Friday were unrestrained in cursing Him.

Within days, they called not for the coronation of Jesus, but rather they called for the crucifixion of Jesus.

Jesus' triumphal entry did not happen too soon or too late.

Jesus' crucifixion did not happen too soon or too late.

Each happened at exactly the right moment, in the fullness of time according to the plan and control of Jesus Christ.

According to the restraining power of Jesus, the true King, and according to the will of His Father in heaven, our rescuing happened at just the right moment, in just the right way.

## **Conclusion**

***Take the hint from Palm Sunday - Imagine the coming of Jesus.***

What Palm Sunday and Lazarus Hint at, is the second coming of Jesus Christ from heaven to gather us and bring us all with him into the heavenly Jerusalem.

Just as Jesus fulfilled all prophecy incoming the first time, right down to the detail of riding on the donkey's colt and the palm branches on the road, you can be sure that Jesus will fulfill all prophecy about his coming the second time, right down to the detail about the white war horse.

Revelation 7:9-12, *"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."*

Revelation 19:11-16, *"Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike*

*down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.”*

*Revelation 22:7, “And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”*

*Revelation 22:12, “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.*

*Revelation 22:20, “He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!*

***Take the hint from Palm Sunday - Imagine the coming of Jesus, and be encouraged.***