

EXAMINATION

Scripture: Mark 11:1-11

INTRO: It if was not for pastor Boehlig, I would be continuing the subject of forgiveness this morning. He asked me if my text had to do with Palm Sunday, and I realized I had forgotten that this is Palm Sunday.

So, I want to ask you how many of you know what a message called 'Fourbeereetung' is? It is preached in the conservative churches the Sunday before communion. It is a message that is to cause the people to prepare themselves for communion. In a sense, that may be a good idea. I have always shied away from that because it might give the idea that you can live in wrongdoing until just before communion. But, this message this morning is a 'Fourbeereetung' message.

In the life of Christ, what we know as Palm Sunday was the day after the Sabbath. It was also the day the Lambs will be starting to come from this same area He was staying on the Sabbath, and those Passover lambs will be going to the temple in Jerusalem. He will be following the same path the lambs will be following the same path the lambs follow. They will enter Jerusalem by the Sheep gate, the same as Jesus will do. They will be going to be examined, just as Jesus will be examined. They will then die, just as Jesus died.

And my thought is that of Jesus' examination. We will look at how this was pictured in the OT and how it actually happened in the NT. Then we will look at how we are to examine ourselves before communion. You see, examination is the common ground between Palm Sunday and the next four days and the examination we are to do in our own lives before we take communion.

I. EXAMINATION OF JESUS

A. The OT Background

When Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, we have the beginning of something very important. It is His examination, as to His purity. So, let us begin with a bit of history. These days of the examination of the lambs are from the 10th of Nisan to the 14th. I

want to take you to that passage. Go with me to Exodus 12 (read 1-14). Now, I want you to notice here first something very important. This event established a new year for Israel. The secular year began six months earlier. This is the seventh month. And now, in the middle of the year, God gives them another new year. It is their sacred new year. This is their religious new year. Here is how it worked. Every seventh month began a new year. The seventh month of the creation year began the first month of the religious year. The seventh month of the religious year began the first month of the secular year and so on.

Now in the month Nisan, the seventh of the civil and the first of the sacred, was the Passover. We will be commemorating that on this coming Friday. But in this first month of the religious year, on the 10th day, every household was to take a lamb for himself. I have told you many things about these lambs. I want to pick out one of those this morning. For this we go to verse 5 which says, "Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or the goats."

I want us to notice a number of things here. Number one, and the most important, it was to be without blemish. Why? It pictured Jesus, the Lamb of God! John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus Christ. He was sent by God to prepare the way for Jesus. Very early in the ministry of Christ, John's ministry was done and Herod imprisoned him and shortly after he had him killed. But before he was imprisoned, as He was baptizing he said some very important things (read John 1:19-36).

So, Jesus was the substance of that which was foreshadowed in Exodus 12. He was without blemish and so this lamb of the Passover was to be without blemish. Second, it was to be a male. We have modern versions that want to make God non gender specific. And worse yet, in the Shack He is pictured as a woman. Furthermore, it was to be a male of the first year. I am not sure what all this pictures but surely it pictures Jesus giving up His life in the prime of life. You see, it was an examined lamb that was used at Passover.

Now let us read Exodus 12:6 (read), "Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight." And so, for four days this lamb was in the home of the family. I understand it became the family pet. It had been born in the lambing season just over a year earlier, and now, in four days it will die. It was a perfect lamb. It had been examined and it had no blemishes. It was one of the best of the flock.

And then, at twilight, or literally, 'between the evenings', this lamb was slain and its blood carefully saved. Then this blood was applied to the door posts of the home of the family, and it became the Passover lamb. That night, as the death angel passed throughout the entire land of Egypt, any home that did not have the blood on the doorposts experienced the death of the firstborn in that family. That night a cry arose from every home in Egypt.

B. The NT Account

Shabbat, the Jewish Sabbath is over. Jesus has spent a relaxing day at His favorite friends house; Mary, Martha and Lazarus. We had the account of the triumphal entry read for us from Mark's Gospel. Let us now read it from Matthew (21:1-11).

Now these four days of examination which begin on this day have so much material recorded in the four Gospels that we can only take a brief overview. He was welcomed into the city like a king. Zechariah had said, "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.'" Here was an unbroken donkey, and Jesus climbed on and rode it. Twice He cleansed the temple. He drove out the money changers. The chief priests and religious people tested Him and He answered them. Not a blemish could they find. The blind and the lame came, and He healed them. The children came to the temple where He was and said, "Hosanna to the Son of David." The religious people were irked at Him. He cursed a fig tree and it withered. Daily He taught in the temple, and the

religious people tried to destroy Him, but they could find nothing solid against Him. He was not blemished, though He was deeply hated.

Then they questioned Him. "By what authority do You do these things?" So He questioned them about the baptism of John, and their mouths were shut. They were trapped. He was without blemish. He spoke to them in parables and showed them how the nation of Israel would be taken from them, but they could not catch Him in His words, no matter how they tried.

As the days drew along, their hatred of Him deepened so that their crazed minds became willing to do almost anything. Then the Pharisees tried to trap Him. The Sadducees tried to trap Him. Nobody could trap Him. Oh, how they hated Him then. He was without blemish. Then the Pharisees tried again and so it went. At one point Jesus denounced the scribes and Pharisees with truths about them that revealed very wicked hearts. Oh, how they hated Him. It is very hard to take this from somebody who does not get angry or use bad methods of getting back.

I watched the opposition parties debating Stephen Harper, our Prime Minister. They tried to get under his skin, but he remained calm and collected. Nothing stirs opposition up more than a man who does not give in to their evil tactics.

And then Jesus wept over Jerusalem. He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed *is* He who comes in the name of the LORD!'" You see, this is Palm Sunday. Sir Robert Anderson says that on this very day, the 69th of Daniel's 70 weeks ran out. They were to have a kingdom and rule the world, but they rejected the Messiah. What a crucial time!

In these days Jesus prophesied the future to them. He gave us some of the most incredible prophecies in the Word of God. He was the spotless, undefiled Lamb of

God. And then some Greeks came to search Him out. And through it all, the hatred of the religious people deepened. And now plans to kill Him began to get under way. Satan has already entered the heart of Judas. Deception is happening by now in a big way. But He is without blemish.

Then came the last supper and Jesus exposed Judas. And Judas went out after supper and it was dark. Very dark. Physically and spiritually. His feet had been washed by the Master of the universe, and they would now carry him to a place where He would betray that master. Here was not a man without blemish. But Jesus foretold His disciples how He must leave and that He would send the Holy Spirit. He informed them of what would come. He was without blemish.

He prayed His farewell prayer and then took some of His disciples to Gethsemane. Here he suffered incredible agony only to be greeted by a kiss from one of His own disciples, a betrayal kiss. They could find nothing wrong with Him and had to use betrayal to get Him. They tied Him up. They led Him as if they were in charge. When He spoke, they all fell backward, but they will do what they will do. No signs of being without blemish are visible to them.

They take Him to Annas. Oh the religious people are steeped in politics. Annas once was the High Priest. He was quite powerless now and he sent him on to His son-in-law, Caiaphas. Caiaphas would have killed Him, guilty of any charges of blemish or not, but he did not have the authority to kill Him. So he sent Him to Herod. Herod couldn't get Jesus to perform any miracles and sent Him back to Pilate in disgust. Pilate said, "There is no blemish in this man." And the Jews said, "Well then cook something up." Phil's version.

Oh yes, one of His valiant disciples tried to protect Him and cut off an ear! But later, after all the other disciples had forsaken Jesus, even this disciple forsook Him. It is examination time. He is innocent as the ungodly Pilate admitted. But finally even Peter forsakes His Master.

The soldiers mocked Him. They maligned Him. They mistreated Him. Pilate, trying to get this vile situation off of His hands offered them a choice between an evil criminal or Jesus, and they chose the criminal. Yet they could not point to one blemish. To find a blemish, they had to find liars. He was, truly the Lamb of God.

And so, finally Pilate scourged Jesus, clothed Him in purple, put a crown of thorns on His head and brought Him out to the people. Then he said, "Behold the man." And they said, "Crucify Him. Crucify Him." And Pilate said, "You take Him and crucify Him. I find no fault in Him at all." You see, He was the Lamb without blemish.

II. EXAMINATION OF OURSELVES

Palm Sunday, as I see it, was the beginning of the examination of Jesus as to whether He was truly the Lamb of God as John had said. The facts are, that though man concluded He was not, God said He was. Because of man's erroneous judgment, He was crucified, and became the vicarious Lamb of God. He fulfilled the OT picture to the letter.

Next Friday is the day we call Good Friday and we will commemorate His death. On that day, we will have communion as well. There is one thing communion and these four days from when the Lamb was taken into the home until it was slain have in common. It is this, examination. There is also one major difference. It is this; the lamb was examined by others. The examination at communion we are to do ourselves.

I invite you to turn with me to 1 Corinthians 11 (read 23-29). Now we note in verse 28 these words, "...but let a man examine himself..." The word for examine is 'dokimazo'. It is the word that is used for trying gold in the fire. The gold is put under heat until it melts. And when it melts, the dross rises to the top. It is scooped off and then the fire may be heated up a little more until all the dross is out. And they have a test to know all the dross is out. When the goldsmith can look into the gold and see His own reflection, he knows the dross is all out.

God's task is to conform us into the image of Christ. Here is the test for us. When the image of Christ can be seen in us, then we have been purified. Here is the question: when we examine ourselves, can we see the image of Christ in ourselves? So you say, "How can I know?"

Here is the test: Is there sin in my life? You see, there are some passages that give lists of sins. For example, look at chapter 6 (read 9-10). Now, as Christians at communion, we should not look at a list like this. If anyone is anywhere near such sins, they should not be at communion.

But I want you to go to Romans with me (read 1:28-31). Look at that list. Covetousness is mentioned in a list of very horrible sins. You know what that word is? It is pleonexia. Big deal right? It means, just a little more. I wonder how many here are like that. To find happiness you need just a little more.

Proud. Look at that. Pride is a very horrible sin. You see, our subject is to examine ourselves. Or what about boasting? What about envy? When you hear of someone else doing well, nice things are happening to them; does that arouse unpleasant feelings in you? That is envy. I ask, are you and I without blemish? Then look at that word 'whisperers'. Let me give you the original word, 'psissturisteess'. You see, this is to pass off bad information about somebody behind their backs. How about adding hypocrisy here? Pass off bad things about people behind their backs and then shake hands and act all friendly when you meet them.

Notice now the very next word, 'backbiters.' Vine says this word is closely related to psisturisteess. The difference is that the whisperer says bad things or things damaging to the character of another without the one slandered hearing it. The backbiter does it in front of the other person in a hidden sort of way, clandestinely.

Then let us go on in verse 31, 'undiscerning, untrustworthy. When you make an agreement with someone are you trustworthy? When your boss is not looking, are you trustworthy? When you are alone with

the internet, are you trustworthy? Oh, God. Are we as Christians to be found in these horrible lists of sins? Unforgiving. Unmerciful.

We have not spoken of anger. Oh, what a sin. Or bitterness. Friday is communion. Today is 'fourbeereetung', preparation. When Passover came, that is what we have Friday, the day before was a day of preparation. Today is preparation.

Now let me tell you something very important. Every area like this in our lives, gives the devil a beachhead into our lives. He has an area of vested interest. From here he has access to wreak havoc in our souls, and he will and does. We cannot defeat the devil while we tolerate these things in our lives.

Turn with me to John 14. We are just before the crucifixion (read vs. 30). The devil was coming. He had entered Judas. But in all the testing in those 4 days, he had nothing in Christ. There was no beachhead. There was no place to enter and defile other areas. He had nothing! He had not one thing!!!

I want to take you to one last passage. Let us read first Galatians 5:16-21 (read). What lists. What manifestations of man's heart. But we are done with sordid lists for this message. Let me read something else for you (read 22-25). You see, here is a dokimazo person. Love, agape love. When you get rid of sin you can learn to love, I mean real love, not sentimental slush. Joy. Peace. Longsuffering. Let me tell you something that will be worth pondering. When you learn to love, you defeat the devil. When you learn to live a life of joy, or peace, you defeat the devil. If you become patient, you will defeat the devil again and again. When we sin, he defeats us. When we learn to deal with sin by repentance and confession and learn to live in love and peace and joy and patients, we defeat him. All these lists of virtues are tools that defeat the enemy.

CONCL: A while ago I spoke with a person, and he shared with me how the Lord had spoken to him through an illustration I have used a number of times. I want to share it with you this morning. I hope this story is not too well

worn for you but it says what I wanted to warn us about in this message.

J. Oswald Sanders gives in his little book, This I Remember, this little story, "On occasion I was invited to speak at the Whitsuntide Convention at Cliff College near Sheffield in England, of which Samuel Chadwich had been the Principal and which attracted thousands of people. While dining I found myself sitting alongside an elderly man who told me he came from Huddersfield. I was immediately interested because I had sometimes used an illustration which involved that town, but I had never been quite sure of its authenticity. So I told him the story, and asked if it were true.

"Yes, it is true all right", he replied. "When I was a boy I used to run messages for the old Quaker you mention and he used to give me an orange and a penny. It is true all right."

And this is the story.

As a young man, Sir John Ramsden established his textile mill in the small town of Huddersfield. As his business prospered, he bought increasing areas of land to enlarge his mill and accommodate his growing band of employees. Eventually he was able to purchase the whole town with the exception of one house adjoining the mill which was owned and occupied by an old Quaker.

At last, in order that he might be able to boast that Huddersfield was all his, Sir John determined to pay the Quaker a personal visit, and make an offer so generous that he could not refuse it.

"I suppose you know who I am," said Sir John, when the door opened.

"Oh yes," responded the Quaker in his quaint English, "I know who thee art."

"And I suppose you can guess why I am here?"

"Oh yes, I can guess why thee art here."

"You know I have often tried to buy your property but you would not sell it. Well, I will make a very generous offer. If you will sell your property to me, I will cover the land

with gold sovereigns.' He did not dream that such an offer could meet with refusal.

For a few moments the Quaker was silent, then with a quizzical smile he said, 'If the wilt put them edgeways we might talk business.'

Angry and crestfallen, Sir John turned on his heel and left the house. When he had reached the gate, the old Quaker called after him,

'Sir John, remember that Huddersfield belongs to thee *and to me.*'

In order to reach his home, the Quaker could walk all over all the rest of Sir John's Huddersfield. If there is some area of our lives on which Satan has some claim, he can tramp through all the rest of our lives to reach that part in which he has a vested interest. And he can say, "Christ, remember that that soul belongs to you *and to me!*'