

040404AM Palm Sunday

The 1st Palm Sunday

Mark 11.1-11

This morning we celebrate Palm Sunday. What is Palm Sunday? We all know that – it is one of the most recognized and celebrated Biblical events. After Christmas and Easter (Resurrection Sunday) it is the number three best known Biblical event.

So why do we celebrate this event? What was happening when the palm branches were waved, the voices shouted Hosanna, and Jesus entered Jerusalem like a King? To find out, open with me to the Gospel by Matthew, chapter 21.

Jesus lived about 33 years on earth, as most Bible scholars agree. That works out to 12,053 days on earth. Of those years of days we have four books of the Bible, giving to us an eye witness account of what went on. God directed those Four Witnesses to write down Christ's earthly ministry. The written record reporting what they and others witnessed and experienced -- we call the Four Gospels. What they wrote down is what God wanted us to know and learn from.

Between all four of them they record 89 chapters detailing over 250 different events in Christ's life. Those who have spent their lives closely examining those events discovered that out of the 30 plus years of the earthly life of Jesus, and His 3 plus years of ministry, out of over 12,053 days of life on Earth – only 52 **different** day's events are recorded. So today we celebrate one very special day in the Life of Jesus.

This week has been called Passion Week throughout the ages of Christ's church. Passion Week is what Bible scholars have called the week recorded in the Life of Christ from Palm Sunday through Resurrection Sunday.

APPLICATION: Could I encourage you to do something this Passion Week? Read the record of Christ's Passion. It is recorded in each of the Gospels. This record of Christ's final week covers just 20 chapters. If you take my challenge that means you only need to read 3 chapters each day of this week. If you do so – you will actually walk day by day

with Jesus through the greatest week in the history of the Universe. The week that Jesus liberated us from the power and penalty of sin!

If you want to walk through the Passion of Jesus this week why not mark these four spots to start your journey. Matthew 21.22, Mark 11.1, Luke 19.28, and John 12.12.

Please turn there, to the Palm Sunday Triumphal Entry of Jesus the Lamb that was to be slain at God's precise moment in time. Mark 11:1-10, and please stand with me as we read these verses.

Palm Sunday is important. All Four Gospels record this day. And there are only two other events before the Cross that are in all four. So the Palm Sunday's triumphant entry into Jerusalem was something that God wants us to think about and remember. Why?

Because each event recorded in all four of the Gospels displays a precious element of Christ's character. With unanimous voices the Gospel writers declare --

- that **Christ came for the Lost** at the start of His ministry (Matthew 4.12-17; Mark 1.14-15; Luke 4.14-15; John 4.43-45);
- that **Christ came with Compassion** in the record of the feeding of the Five Thousand (Matthew 14.14-21; Mark 6.30-44; Luke 9.10-17; John 6.1-15); and
- That **Christ offers Hope**. And that is the message of Palm Sunday! Let's learn why!

HOPE BECAUSE HE IS THE PROMISED LAMB OF GOD

First, Palm Sunday speaks of Hope because He is the Promised Lamb of God.

Nothing speaks louder than the timing of Palm Sunday. Faithful Jews streamed into Jerusalem from the corners of the Earth. Over 250,000 lambs were brought or purchased to be slain. The whole city was united in one eager purpose – to fulfill what God had commanded Moses almost 15 centuries before.

The arrival of Jesus on the 10th of Nissan in AD30 was one of the greatest moments in all of history. Jesus hit Jerusalem with pinpoint accuracy. Jesus came on the very day and hour God had appointed for His presentation to the Nation and the World as God's Passover Lamb. It was an exact fulfillment of a precise prophecy. And with divine

accuracy and incredible timing, Jesus came on Palm Sunday the week before Resurrection Morning. If you will note the amazing accuracy of God's Perfect Plan for the arrival of Jesus, there are three personal applications we can make for our own lives. What are they? Let me list them now, and discuss them at the end of the message:

Well it is Sunday, 10th of Nissan in AD30, Jesus Christ is leaving a small village 2 miles outside Jerusalem called Bethany.

His departure is precisely what had been predicted 1,500 years before by Moses (our Passover Lamb who had to enter on the 10th of Nissan). The way He would come was exactly stated 500 years before by Zechariah (our King riding on a colt). Both stated how He would come: as a Lamb and as a King! You see God's Plan is PERFECT!

Daniel 9.24-27 details God's Perfect Plan for the day of Christ's official¹ coming the promised Prince. Turn there with me.

"Seventy weeks (i.e., 'seventy heptads' or 'seven-year periods') are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city,... from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. **And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself.**

It is clear that the prophetic period terminated at very close to the time when Christ officially offered Himself for reception as King of Israel. Instead of being crowned, however, He was crucified, "cut off, but not for Himself."

John tells us (John 12:1-3) that Jesus came to his favorite home (Mary, Martha and Lazarus) six days before Passover; this would have been Friday night. So Christ had walked from Jericho with Bartimaeus to Bethany on Friday morning. So on Friday night to Saturday night (the Sabbath) He rests with them and Mary anoints His feet with precious ointment.

On Sunday morning (John 12:9-10) a crowd comes to see Him and Lazarus He raised last week from the dead. And then later that same crowd leads Him into Jerusalem (John 12:12) in what we call the Triumphal "Palm Sunday" entry.

¹ Adapted from Henry Morris, Creation Trilogy, Master Books.

If this is the schedule Jesus followed, that would make the entry into Jerusalem by Christ to be the same day the Passover lamb was to enter their homes and stay with them until it was killed for each family's Passover feast. Thus intriguingly, Jesus entered into the home and heart of His people "Jerusalem" as their Passover lamb to be slain on their behalf. His crucifixion on Friday would result in a perfect fulfillment of being the Passover lamb because that was when they also were killing their lambs. He may have been crucified as the blood of thousands of lambs was pouring down the temple sacrificial areas and streaming down into the Kidron valley!

APPLICATION: Palm Sunday is the greatest time of invitation for us as Christians. When Jesus entered Jerusalem it was the very day that God had been asking His people to pick a lamb for their sacrifice. For nearly 1500 years it was this day that God said, "Go pick out a lamb to be your substitute. Pick out a lamb to die in your place. Pick out a lamb to shed its blood so that your sins will not face my wrath. I invite you to choose your lamb!"

So on that very day when the lambs were chosen, The Lamb of God rides into town and presents Himself. Amazingly only a few chose Him to be their lamb, the rest ignored or rejected Him. The pressing question of Palm Sunday is -- Have you chosen Jesus as your Lamb? If not, right where you sit and listen, you can bow your heart before the Lamb of God who is offering Himself to you today. Tell God that you know that you need a sacrifice that will pay for all your sins, and tell Him that you know that Jesus is the Lamb of God and you want Him to take away your sins. And today will be the greatest day of your life. On Palm Sunday you can receive Jesus as your Lamb of God to take away your sins.

- God's Perfect Plan means – Your birth was not an accident (You have Divine ORIGIN)
- God's Perfect Plan means - Your life is not meaningless (You have Divine PURPOSE)
- God's Perfect Plan means - Your death will not come unexpectedly (You have Divine DESTINY)

Palm Sunday speaks of Hope because He is the Promised Lamb of God.

**HOPE BECAUSE HE IS
IN CONTROL (Mark 11.2-6)**

Secondly, Palm Sunday speaks of Hope because He is in Control. There were as many as two and a half million people and all there lambs and a huge number of donkeys. Yet in all of that sea of humanity Jesus quietly and confidently demonstrates that He knows and controls all things.

The way He would come was exactly stated 500 years before by Zechariah (our King riding on a colt). Both stated how He would come: as a Lamb and as a King!

Look at Genesis 49:10-11:

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him [shall be] the obedience of the people. 11 Binding his donkey to the vine, And his donkey's colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments in wine, And his clothes in the blood of grapes. (NKJV)

Now at Zechariah 9:9:

"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. (NKJV) (The promised king was the "anointed," or *messiah*, who would enter Jerusalem on a donkey.)

Now look at the details. Jesus sends them ahead, tells them what will happen. Especially note v. 3.

Two simple lessons come from this verse. First, Jesus has needs. Amazing! Jesus did not create a donkey; he sent disciples to find one. Today, Jesus needs workers too. The Son of God needs you! Second, while Jesus does not hold legal title to all the world's property, he is owner of all by virtue of his work in creation and redemption. When Jesus needs something, the appropriate response is to surrender the title and let the Lord use it. Today, we call that stewardship or giving.

If the Lord needs something today, give generously with love and gratitude. Apart from Jesus, you wouldn't have your life, so don't hold back anything. Do you recognize his prior claim on all you own? Are you in touch with what Jesus needs from you? ²

APPLICATION: JESUS KNOWS EVERYTHING ABOUT OUR LIVES. When He sends his two disciples into a village he tells them what they

² Barton, B. B. 1994. *Mark*. Life application Bible commentary . Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, Ill.

will find there; He prepares them for the questions; He gives them the response; He tells the results! Then, everything happens exactly as he foretells. What should that tell us? There is nothing hidden from the Lord's eyes; there are no secrets with him. Alone or in a crowd, by day or night, in closed rooms or outdoors, Jesus sees all our ways. He saw Nathaniel under the fig-tree, and he has not changed. Go where you want, and retreat from the world to anyplace you choose, but you are never out of sight of Christ. Never do anything you don't want Christ to see; say nothing you don't want Christ to hear; always walk and talk and think and act conscious of Christ's presence; act like you walked beside Him with the disciples in Galilee. That is how we prepare for heaven. Remember in heaven, "We will be with the Lord forever" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Palm Sunday speaks of Hope because He is in Control.

HOPE BECAUSE HE OFFERS SALVATION (Mark 11.7-11)

Thirdly, Palm Sunday speaks of Hope because He offers salvation. The crowd breaks into a chant; they get into a Messianic fever. They seem to want Him to save them and with one voice chant back and forth -- Save us! Save Us!

The word *Hosanna* comes from *Psalm 118:25-26* and is composed of two Hebrew words: *hosha* and *na*. *Hosha* means "save," and *na* adds a sense of urgency.

Transliterated, the word in Mark 11.9 really means "Please save" or "Help, please!"

In Matthew 21:9 we hear the crowd shouting, "Please save us, O son of David!"

In John 12:13 while they were shouting they were swinging palm branches.

Look at what Mark says in beginning of verse 9:

"Those who went ahead and those who followed [repeatedly] shouted."

This was probably a form of speech the Jews were accustomed to. We would call it an antiphonal chant. The crowd in front of Jesus began

and those behind responded. Some scholars suggest that it went like this:

First group: "Hosanna!"

Second group: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"

First group: "Hosanna in the highest!"

One of the lines repeated regularly, and mentioned in all four Gospels is from Psalm 118:26—"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (11:9b).

The word *Hosanna* means "Please save!" but *save* can mean many different things. What should we mean when we say it? What are some specific misconceptions people today have about Jesus? Jesus was just a good man (Liberals), Jesus was just a prophet (Muslims), Jesus was a revolutionary (communists), Jesus was just another angel (Mormons), Jesus was just another religion (Eastern Religions).

The people wanted Jesus on their own terms, and they would not bow to a King who was not of their liking, even though He were the Son of God. They wanted Jesus to destroy Rome but not their cherished sins or their hypocritical, superficial religion. But He would not deliver them on their terms, and they would not be delivered on His. He was not a Messiah who came to offer a panacea of external peace in the world but to offer the infinitely greater blessing of internal peace with God.

Many people today are open to a Jesus who they think will give them wealth, health, success, happiness, and the other worldly things they want. Like the multitude at the triumphal entry, they will loudly acclaim Jesus as long as they believe He will satisfy their selfish desires. But like the same multitude a few days later, they will reject and denounce Him when He does not deliver as expected. When His Word confronts them with their sin and their need of a Savior, they curse Him and turn away.³

As the multitudes followed along with Him to celebrate the Passover, little did they know they were accompanying the Passover Lamb Himself.

Jesus is unlike any other king who ever lived. How unlike he is to the Caesars, the Alexanders, and the Napoleons of this world. What a contrast to the triumphal entry of other earthly kings leading their

³MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

armies, riding proudly through the gates, with faces of cruelty, weapons held high, dragging captives in irons. Look this morning at Jesus the King of Kings – as He slowly, purposefully came riding the colt of a donkey into Jerusalem.

Sunday speaks of Hope because He offers salvation.

HOPE CAN END, AND SO HE WEEPS (Luke 19.40-44)

Finally, Palm Sunday speaks of Hope that can end because He weeps. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. He offered Himself as the Lamb of God. But they wanted a King of Political salvation, not a Savior from personal lostness. Yet He pauses and weeps. This climactic moment marks the end of the Palm Sunday message.

And with the whole city before his eyes (Luke 19:41), the Savior began to weep. Jesus wept! Why would Jesus weep when so many people recognized him as Messiah? What kind of messiah did some of the people in the crowd think Jesus was? Is it possible that some people shouted "Hosanna" and waved palms but totally missed who Jesus was?

We must never forget this. It was not with quiet tears that he wept, as he had done at the grave of Lazarus, whom he was going to resurrect, but with loud and deep sorrow. There in the middle of the road, with the great city in dramatic panorama, the stunned multitude ceased their hosannas and heard the Lord of the Universe wail over Jerusalem! This was a new kind of king! Jesus' wailing prompted a grave warning, and verses 42–44 preserve his words:

"If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

By prophetic vision, the Lord saw the proud, unrepentant Holy City reduced to a pile of rubble wet with the blood of his people. Forty years later this all came true under Titus' Roman legions. The Jews' resistance was so fierce that Titus finally ordered his besieging legions to encircle the walls of Jerusalem with a barricade and starve them out. The resulting famine made Jerusalem a

graveyard, and finally when the Jews lacked the strength to bury their dead they cast them over the walls into the surrounding ravines. So great was the destruction that toward the end, as Josephus records: "When Titus, going his rounds, beheld these valleys choked with dead, ... he groaned and raising his hands to heaven, called God to witness that this was not his doing. Such was the situation of the city."

Fix this in your thoughts. This is how Jesus Christ and God the Father and the blessed Holy Spirit sorrow over hearts that miss their "day" and "what would bring ... peace"—namely, repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

As your life stands right now, what does Jesus Christ see in your future? Judgment? Your towers pulled down? Desolation?

The tears of Christ measure the infinite value of your soul. Christ wept and lamented over Jerusalem, as he always weeps over the souls of the unrepentant⁴.

Palm Sunday speaks of Hope that can end because He weeps.

If He is your King, worship him with all that you have!

⁴ Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: Mark—Jesus, Servant and Savior*, (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books) 1997.