

Palm Sunday

Luke 19:28-31

28 And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem.
29 And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples,
30 Saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither.
31 And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him.

The message of Palm Sunday is a message that everybody needs to hear.

- Most of us understand Palm Sunday to be the Sunday before Easter.
- It is the day that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and the people laid palm leaves and cloaks down on the streets to honor Him.
- For most of us that is the extent of our understanding of Palm Sunday.

But there is so much more about this story that is important for us to understand.

Our text stated that before going to Jerusalem, Jesus was staying in Bethany at the home of His close friends Lazarus, Mary and Martha.

The Gospel of John records Jesus having dinner with his friends. This was to be Jesus' last moments of peace and comfort on earth.

- While He was there, Jesus sent two of His disciples into the village to retrieve a colt/donkey that had never been ridden before.
- Jesus was going to ride this donkey into Jerusalem.

I want to draw your attention to a few details about this event.

- First of all, the fact that Jesus is going to Jerusalem is significant.
- On many other occasions, we find Jesus leaving Jerusalem because of the dangers He faced there...that is why most of Jesus' ministry was in the area of Galilee.

It was dangerous for Jesus every time He went to Jerusalem. It was always a difficult decision for Jesus to go.

But on this occasion it was especially difficult;

- Jesus knew what He was about to face in Jerusalem.
- He knew He was about to be tortured.
- He knew He was about to be crucified.

To add to the difficulty, Jesus was about to enter Jerusalem in a way he had never done before.

- Jesus was about to enter Jerusalem riding a colt.
- He wasn't going to walk in.
- He wasn't going to sneak in.

But on this trip to Jerusalem, Jesus was going to make a very public declaration of who He was.

- In times of war, a king would always ride a stallion or horse.
- In times of peace, a king would ride a colt or donkey.

For Jesus to ride into Jerusalem on a donkey was to declare that He was the King.

I also want you to remember that Jesus rode in on a donkey, not a horse....this was peaceful declaration of who He was.

This was a time like no other in the History of Israel.

How would the people of Israel react to this?

The Gospel of John gives us some great insight into this story that the other Gospels do not record;

John 12:1-2

12 Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

2 There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

John 12:9-13

9 Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: **and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.**

10 But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death;

11 Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

12 **On the next day** much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

13 Took **branches of palm trees**, and went forth to meet him, and cried, **Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.**

Just a short time before Palm Sunday, Jesus had performed His greatest miracle...the raising of His friend Lazarus from the dead.

We don't know exactly how much time passed between these two events, but we do know that when the people found out that Jesus was at Lazarus' house...they came not only to see Jesus, but to see Lazarus....they wanted to check out this miracle for themselves.

The Bible says that the very next day was Palm Sunday.

The latest buzz in the city of Jerusalem was the talk of Lazarus being raised from the dead.

When Jesus came riding into town on Palm Sunday....

- There was an electricity in the air.
- There was excitement.
- Jesus was the topic of conversation.

To add to all of that, it was Passover time.

- There were people gathering in Jerusalem from far and wide for the Passover celebration.
- The Passover is the greatest and most celebrated event on the Jewish Calendar.

Imagine going into Chicago the weekend of the "Taste of Chicago" ...the crowds are overwhelming the streets. The city is teeming with life.

That is what it was like in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday....there are people everywhere....and most of them are talking about Jesus.

Think of the people who were in Jerusalem on this day.

- Jesus' disciples were there.
- Among the crowds would be those Jesus had healed.
- There would be many of His followers there.
- Those who had witnessed His miracles and heard His teachings would be there.

But there would be others as well;

- The Sadducee's, the Pharisee's.
- The keepers of the law.
- Those who were jealous of Jesus.
- Those who felt threatened by Jesus.

Then there were the Romans;

- The occupying government....they would be there.
- Watching and waiting for any sign of rebellion against Rome.
- They would be there in force, ready to crush any uprising.

All of these people had heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem that day.

- They were waiting on both sides of the road.

- Many of them laid their cloaks down on the streets as a sign of reverence to this King.
- They had cut down Palm branches in anticipation of His arrival.

Then finally Jesus arrives riding on a colt...surely this is their King!

- People are pushing and shoving each other to get a glimpse of Him.
- The people are waving their Palm branches and shouting. "Hosanna, Blessed is the King of Israel that comes in the Name of the Lord."

This is the setting that Jesus rides into on Palm Sunday.

Now imagine with me how Jesus must have felt that day.

Jesus understood that there were just a few more days until His Crucifixion.

Jesus knew that the thousands of people who were shouting, "Hosanna to the King", would be shouting, "Away with Him, Crucify Him" in just a few days time!

Jesus knew that the people did not really understand what this moment meant.

- They were caught up in the moment.
- They had heard about all of the wonderful things that Jesus could do.
- They thought that Jesus was coming to rescue them from their oppressors.

They expected Jesus to become the physical king of Israel and restore her back to her glory days....as it had been under King David.

- Yes, there were a few in the crowd who really knew Jesus.
- There were a few of His true followers there.
- But even they did not understand what was really happening.
- They also thought that Jesus would rescue them from Rome.

You see, when Jesus came into Jerusalem riding on a colt, the people understood it to mean that Jesus was claiming to be a conquering King, a war lord, who would come in and crush Rome.

That is why they were waving Palm Branches and shouting Hosanna.

The Greek word for Hosanna means to save.

The waving of Palm Branches was a practice that had begun 200 years previous.

A bloodthirsty Syrian king named Antiochus Epiphanes had beaten the Jews into submission. On one occasion he slaughtered a pig in the Holy of Holies and made the priests drink its blood. After several years of this, a man named Judas Maccabee had enough. Maccabee, whose name meant 'hammer', and his brothers launched a guerrilla war against Epiphanes.

Nine years later, Maccabee and his band of renegades miraculously overcame the Assyrian army and drove Epiphanes out of Jerusalem. The people spontaneously celebrated by waving palm branches. From that time forward the palm branch became a symbol of deliverance from oppression.

On Palm Sunday some 200 years later, the people were waving Palm Branches and shouting Hosanna in anticipation of Jesus becoming their deliverer from the Roman oppression.

The people missed the message.

- Jesus was not riding a horse as a King of War would, but was riding a colt...the symbol of peace.
- Jesus had come to Jerusalem, not with a political message, but with a spiritual message.
- Jesus had come to Jerusalem as a King of Peace and Love and Compassion.
- Jesus had come to Jerusalem with a message of forgiveness.

When I continue reading our text, it states;

Luke 19:41-44

41 And when he was come near, **he beheld the city, and wept over it,**
42 Saying, **If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.**

43 For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,
44 And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

When Jesus ascends the hill to Jerusalem, and when he gets close enough to hear the people's cry and see the Palm Branches waving in the air, his heart sinks in his chest and **Jesus begins to cry!**

Why did He cry?

This is the one and only time in Scripture we find Jesus crying over a multitude of people.

The only other account where Jesus cried was when His best friend Lazarus died.

- It is not that Jesus wasn't emotional....Jesus had compassion on the multitudes.
- That is what moved Him to perform miracles.
- But Jesus cried over the multitudes only one time.

It was on Palm Sunday that Jesus cried for all of humanity!
It was on Palm Sunday that Jesus cried for all of His children!
It was on Palm Sunday that Jesus cried for you and for me!

The reason Jesus cried was because the people had totally missed the message.

He saw the masses of people lining the streets crying out to Him to rescue them, to save them.

- He saw their faces.
- He looked into their eyes.
- And He saw the emptiness that was there.

They did not understand why He had come.

They had missed the message of peace, love and forgiveness.

And all he could do was weep and cry over them and say;

- If you only understood why I came?
- If you could only know what this day is all about?
- If the people had understood the message of Christ, what could have been possible?

Jesus was crying because the people had missed an opportunity to change their future.

They had missed an opportunity to change their world.

The New Living Translation says it this way;

Luke 19:42-44

42 "How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes.

43 Before long your enemies will build ramparts against your walls and encircle you and close in on you from every side.

44 They will crush you into the ground, and your children with you. Your enemies will not leave a single stone in place, **because you did not accept your opportunity for salvation.**"

Palm Sunday could have been a new beginning for Israel.

- Israel had an opportunity to show Rome something new and meaningful.
- Israel missed a glorious opportunity to be a light in a dark world.
- Israel missed an opportunity for Salvation because she was too concerned about her present condition.

Too caught up in the realm of the physical to be concerned about the spiritual. They were too caught up in their temporal life to be concerned about their eternal life.

That is why Jesus wept.

He had spent His entire life trying to get this message across to them, but they missed the message.

That is why Jesus wept.

When Jesus looked at the city of Jerusalem, all He could see was the beautiful Temple in ruins, and the enemies of God crushing the people on every side.

That is why Jesus wept.

The message of Palm Sunday has not changed in 2000 years.

**Jesus is still weeping today.
He is weeping for your family.
He is crying over Valparaiso.**

But His weeping is about over.

There is a day very near where the Bible says that Jesus is coming back not on a colt, but on a white horse.

In other words, He is coming back not as a peaceful King, but as a conquering King.

He is coming to defeat the armies of this world once and for all.

Did you know that you and I can be a part of that army?

You can be a part of that army if you receive His message today!

- On that day it will be too late to receive anything from God.
- On that day it will be too late to wave Palm Branches and cry out Hosanna.
- On that day it will be too late to save your family.

The people of Israel were so caught up in their problems that they tried to make Jesus into somebody He wasn't.

- They tried to make Jesus into the Jesus they wanted.
- They tried to make Jesus into the Jesus that was useful to them.

When they found out that Jesus would not be the Jesus they wanted, they rejected Him.

- Their cry changed from "Hosanna, save us" to "He is guilty, crucify Him."
- And the very same people that were laying their coats down in reverence for Jesus, murdered Him just five days later.

This world is making Jesus into the Jesus they want.
They are making Jesus into the Jesus that is useful to them.

But the Bible says that Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever.

- We are either for Him or against Him.
- We either accept His message or reject it.
- There is no gray area with God.

I have to ask myself, am I anything like the Jewish people on Palm Sunday?

Am I too caught up in the cares of this life to consider the things that are of eternal importance?

Is Jesus weeping over me tonight?

What does Jesus see when He looks into your face?

Is Jesus weeping over you?

We can't make Jesus into who we want Him to be.

If Jesus doesn't fit into your plans...you need to change your plans.
If Jesus doesn't fit your life...you need to change your life or better yet allow Jesus to change your life!

Don't get too caught up in your life on this earth that you miss out on what Jesus has been planning for your eternity!

- You need His Grace today.
- You need His Mercy today.
- You need His Love today.
- You need His forgiveness.
- You need His Spirit.

You can be the light in your dark world.
You can be an example to those around you.

- I wonder what would have happened on that Sunday two thousand years ago had the people understood?
- I wonder what would have happened that Sunday had the people accepted Jesus as their Spiritual King?

But what I really wonder about the most is what could happen in Valparaiso Indiana if we really understood how much Jesus wants us to impact our world?

Let's come to this altar tonight and let's really get plugged into the purpose of Christ in our lives!

- Jesus wants to change you and then change your world through you!
- That is what it is all about!