

Palm Sunday, April 10, 2022

Readings: John 12: 12-19, Zechariah 9: 9-12, Philippians 2: 5-11, Matthew 27: 11-54

The Cross and Passion of Our Lord Are the Hour of His Glory

“Behold, your King is coming to you . . . humble and mounted on a donkey” (Zech. 9:9–12; Mt. 21:1–9). Our Lord rides in this humble fashion because He is entering Jerusalem to humble Himself even to the point of death on a cross (Phil. 2:5–11). His kingly crown will not be made of gold but of thorns, the sign of sin’s curse. For His royal reign is displayed in bearing this curse for His people, saving us from our enemies by sacrificing His own life. The sinless One takes the place of the sinner so that the sinner can be freed and bear the name *“Barabbas,” “son of the Father”* (Matthew 26 and 27). It is at the name of this exalted Savior, Jesus, that we bow in humble faith. With the centurion who declared, *“Truly this was the Son of God!”* (Mt. 27:54), we are also given to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:11).

Sermon Transcript

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

So this is Palm Sunday or the Sunday of Passion. We try and pack a lot in this Sunday as we get ready for the main event. This is the culmination of history. This is the reason why we gather. This is why we are in church. This is why Christ has followers for over 2000 years who come after Him who repeat these same stories, remember these same events, and give glory to God because Christ came for this very purpose. We would never celebrate Christmas. We would not have any of those celebrations or anything else unless the events of this week took place. He humbled Himself and became like us. He became a man like us so that He might free all mankind. He had a body. He had a soul. He had a mind just like us. And He came so that He might restore us in our bodies, our minds, and our souls as well. And it's not just, although most importantly forgiving us our sins, but giving us the hope of the resurrection of the body.

We will be restored. This is part of why we do not fear death, because we know that we will live, and do live for all eternity in Christ. But in order to get there, Jesus had to offer Himself up as a sacrifice for many, and that's what He was doing. Now for this event of Palm Sunday, He comes riding in on this donkey and as we saw in Zechariah, the whole point of Him riding on a donkey was to fulfill that prophecy, that the King would come riding and mounted on a donkey. Again, not too glamorous. A donkey is a little bit awkward to ride. It's not a very impressive steed. When you hear a donkey braying, it's almost impossible not to laugh or smirk a little bit, when you hear that, "Eh-ah." It's hard to take it serious.

And yet this is the mount upon which Jesus rides into Jerusalem. And again, this symbolism that Christ who is the King of the Jews, remember that's what they were singing when He was coming in. "Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel." It's interesting. They're quoting from Psalm 118, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." But the Psalm 118 does not have that last phrase, "the King of Israel." So they were blessing Him who comes in the name of the Lord, but they equated that, they brought that in with their own ideas, that this is the King of Israel. Now, what kind of king were they expecting and what kind of king are we expecting? And when we think about a king, most often in human terms, we think of glory and might and majesty and power. We think of a king who conquers, who defeats his enemies, who wipes them out and who is victorious in all that he says and does.

And that is the type of king that Jesus is, just He was conquering a different enemy than the people thought. They were many of them looking forward to an independent kingdom of Israel, where Rome was kicked out and they were restored along with King David, that the kingdom of Israel. "A son of David, the king of Israel, he's coming to take over and we're going to be finally free." Well, it was true. They were going to be finally free, but not in the way that they had expected. He comes humble so that He might conquer, not a foreign enemy on this earth, but a foreign enemy that is from the beginning of creation. Not from the beginning of time, because Satan is a created individual, a created angel. He is not equal with God.

There're not two opposing forces, good and evil of equal might and power and God just happens to overcome. No. Satan is less. And yet he is a force to be reckoned with and sin in our own lives, our own souls and spirits participate with Satan in our defeat. And that is the enemy that He has come to conquer. But He does that by not just being a king, but also by being a high priest. But not just by being a high priest, but also by being the sacrifice that the high priest offers. See this day, the day that He comes riding into Jerusalem, this was the day that the lambs were selected that were going to be slaughtered for the Passover feast. This was the day in the temple that the priests were going and examining all the lambs to make sure they were without blemish so that everybody in Israel could offer the sacrifice and have the Passover meal. And He comes in and Jesus is the lamb that is selected by the people without blemish. He is chosen to be the sacrifice.

To understand this week, you also need to go back and understand the Passover, and we're not going to get into that exactly right now but the whole idea is Jesus is fulfilling that which the Old Testament could never fulfill. The sacrifices that were done year after year after year could only cover the sin. They could never get rid of them, but Christ, because He is the King of Israel, He is the One who comes in the Name of the Lord, His sacrifice wipes out our sin. And we see that even if they didn't fully recognize what they were doing, the words that they use communicate this. "Hosanna." What does that mean? We've transliterated it from the Hebrew and just Hosanna, okay. Well, what does Hosanna mean? Hosanna means, "Please save us."

That's really what they're saying. "Save us." Now did they know what they were asking Jesus to save them from? Maybe, maybe not. Doubtful that they fully understood it because even the disciples who had been with Him for three years didn't fully understand what was going on. Now they understood that crowds would gather where Jesus showed up. I mean, that was clear. They understood the praise that was given to Jesus because that was done very often. That was normal. Wherever Jesus went, a huge crowd followed. They understood that people were looking for signs and wonders and they were going to be amazed at what Jesus taught. That they all understood. What they did not understand was that this was how He was going to accomplish what He'd been talking about for three years. They did not understand that He was going to His death. They did not understand that that death was the means by which He conquered sin. It was only after the resurrection, the proof of the success of the sacrifice that they fully understood what was going on.

And so we today gather singing His praises, "Hosanna, God save us." But we know what we're asking. "God save us from our sins. God save us from the evils of this world. God save us from the tortures and torments that face us in hell. God save us to be your own children, to be the king of our lives. Save us so that we might follow You and serve You with joy and thanksgiving all the days of our life." May that grace and mercy and love and salvation be and abide with you always now and forever more unto life everlasting. Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord, even the King of Israel. Amen.