

Pastor:

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. That was the cry that went out on this glorious day some 2000 years ago when Jesus was entering Jerusalem. Now, Jesus was entering Jerusalem after having done the most miraculous of miracles he had ever done. Now I know there's quite a few of the miracles, and so it's hard to rack and stack them, and you would think walking on the water, calming a storm, those are pretty big ones. Even raising a young man from the dead who had just died. But Lazarus, Lazarus was a different story. He was already buried. He was in his tomb. He was beginning to smell. He was dead. Clearly, dead beyond any thought that he might have possibly been alive. He was dead.

The tomb was shut, and Jesus calls forth, Lazarus come out and he does. This is showing of course, that Christ has power over life and death. And so when he's entering in Jerusalem, everybody's excited with anticipation because this is the one who is promised to save us. Of course, the question is save us from what? That was the real struggle, and that was the real question. Because not everybody had the same idea of what he was going to save us from. A lot of people thought he was going to save Israel from those nasty Romans. Finally kicked them out and established this wonderful state of Israel where God is going to rule over them and they're going to have peace with King David and his descendants forever. That's what a lot of people thought. Or maybe they thought that God was going to finally save them from these Sadducees and Pharisees who looked like they were holy and righteous, but held everybody else down and made everybody else feel bad like we are superior to you. So maybe they thought they were going to save them from false leaders and religious people who failed to understand the word of God. Or maybe they thought they would save them from their sins. In other words, teach them to live holy and righteous lives. Now they could do it. There was really a lot of confusion about what he was supposed to do.

Him riding in on a donkey was the same way that King David rode into Jerusalem when he claimed his throne. So there was a lot of expectation on what he was going to be doing. But he had said very clearly multiple times throughout his ministry that his whole purpose was to come into Jerusalem and die and then rise from the dead. And what does it say? Nobody understood that. Nobody could figure that out. Okay. It's one thing that Jesus rose and he was able to raise other people from the dead, but if he himself died, who was going to raise him? What was going to happen? So the disciples who had been with him for three years had heard him preaching and teaching, had seen the miracles, had even heard the voice from heaven, they still didn't have a clue what was going on.

Now, you and I might think, well, duh. It seems pretty self-evident. What's going to happen? He's going to die and he is going to rise from the dead and everything's going to be wonderful. Well, we have the advantage of being able to look back and read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, who describe exactly what happens. They did not. You can understand when Jesus says, "I'm going to die. They're going to kill me, and then I'm going to rise from the dead three days later." You can understand them going, "Okay. He must be speaking in parables or something. His death must mean something. I don't know what, but it can't be really that he dies. It just doesn't make any sense." However, they understood later when they were filled with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit opened their minds so that they could see how God had talked about this and prophesied about this all the way through the Old Testament, which we have one example here in Deuteronomy. And it's not very clear. It's clouded, it's mysterious. But once we see it and connect it it makes perfect sense. So God is saying that he's going to have compassion on his people when everything else has failed them. When they have worshiped the other gods and nothing has happened and they have lost all hope, and they finally are looking to God, God says, "I will have compassion on them."

And what does he say? He says, "Look, you made all these sacrifices to all these other gods, and what have they done for you? Nothing. You're still suffering. But I am the God of compassion and I kill and I make alive. I wound and I heal, and there is none that can deliver out of my hand." Now, we like that. None can deliver us out of his hand. We are in his hand. But what about that first part? I kill and I make alive. I wound and I heal. Well, God has authority over life and death. After all, Scripture describes him as the potter, and we are the clay. So if the potter wants to smoosh the clay back into nothing, he can do that. That's his right. So yes, indeed, God has the authority to kill, to judge, but he also has the authority to make life.

Now, rather than looking at this in just the general terms, that God has the authority and power to do it, let's look at it with the lens of Christ. I kill and I make a life. Who is he talking about then other than Christ? Jesus. Jesus says very clearly that nobody can take his life from him, but he gives it up willingly for the sake of his father. He dies. God kills his son and three days later makes him alive again. He was wounded for our transgressions and by his wounds we are healed. I wound and I heal. This is about Christ and what he has done for us. He died so that he might rise from the dead so that when we die, we can be confident that we also will rise from the dead. And when we are wounded, we are reminded that he was wounded for our sakes, and he has promised to heal us as he heals his son. As he is resurrected and come to new life, that is our hope and our promise. It's the whole point of him being here on earth.

We preach Christ and Him crucified. Why? Because he came as Paul says in Philippians. He says that Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God was God himself, did not count equality with God, something to be grasped but became nothing. That's a little harsh because when he says he became nothing, what's he describing? He's describing becoming human. Becoming nothing. Becoming human. Compared to the Almighty, all-powerful God who created heaven and earth. What are we? Nothing. Compared to the glory of God one individual human is nothing. All of humanity is nothing. And yet he did become like us because even though in power and majesty and might and holiness, we are nothing we are everything to God because he created us and he loved us. So he became like us. Nothing. No power. No authority. Born as a baby like us, had to learn to talk. The word of God had to learn how to talk. That's just weird. And yet he did. Why? Because he loves us. So that he might become obedient, even obedient to death and death on the cross. That was the point. So that he might exalt us, so that God might exalt him and then thereby exalt us so that on the last day, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Christ is Lord.

Now, that sounds a lot like the judgment day, and it is. When Christ comes again, every knee will bow and every tongue confess, and that will be the judgment day. And yet we as Christians look forward to that day. That day does not cause fear in our hearts. Why? Because of what Christ said in the gospel lesson. After the voice from heaven spoken says, "I have glorified your name and I will glorify it again," Jesus says, "Now is the judgment of this world." See, the judgment of sin, the judgment of our rebellion against God has already taken place on the cross. The judgment of God took place on the cross in the person of Jesus Christ. All of the wrath that he has against sin of our sin, he focused on one point on one person. Jesus Christ. And so when he comes a second time and we face the judgment seat, we are not afraid because we know the judgment has already taken place and they have found Jesus guilty. But for his sake has found us innocent because we are baptized into his death and raised a new life in his resurrection, we do not need to fear the judgment of God. He has done it for us.

And all of this was triggered by that moment when the Greeks came to see Jesus. Because when the Greeks came to see Jesus, it was that moment where it's clear Jesus has come to save, not just Israel and not just from the Romans, but he has come to save all of humanity, the Greeks and the Romans and the Israelites and all of us not from the evil human oppressors that are over us, but from those things that we cannot do anything about. Sin. Our own sin. He has conquered death. Our death he has conquered. He has authority over death and Satan, himself. The ruler of this world. What does he say? Now the judgment of the world, now, will the ruler of this world be cast out? Satan death and sin are wiped free from us on the

cross those many years ago .that is what he was coming to save us from. That is what he has promised to give to us. That is what God has glorified. He has glorified Jesus in his death, and he glorifies it again in his resurrection so that we might know the love and the glory of God and the comfort of our salvation.

And so we rejoice at his coming. As we celebrate this holy week as we remember what he did for us, the judgment that he took upon himself for us, we rejoice and we give thanks. And we remember that as Jesus said, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit." That of course is Christ going into the grave and bringing forth a new crop, which is us. We are the fruit. We are the fruit of his death and resurrection as are all those out there who call upon the name of the Lord as are all who are waiting to hear his name so that they might believe and know. So we are the fruit and our calling as fruit is to go find more fruit, go to seek the lost, share the love of God, share the confidence and the joy of our salvation because he became nothing for us so that we might become everything to him. We are his sons and daughters. We have been claimed, we have been named, we have been grasped and held onto. And nothing, nothing can snatch us from his hand. May his grace and his mercy and his peace be with us now and forevermore unto life everlasting. Amen.