

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
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**Palm Sunday, March 24, 2013**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 160, 161:3, 162, 27, 50.

Lessons: Psalm 118:22-29, Acts 13:22-34, John 11:1-57.

Sermon Text: John 12:1-19.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

I know that some of you are ‘weather watchers’. You keep an eye on the sky and try to listen to the weather forecasts. So you can understand if I compare the events in our sermon text today, the first Palm Sunday, to a beautiful clear day with maybe some little puffy clouds floating in the sky. Way off on the horizon there is a bit of a cloud bank building, which foretells that some kind of a storm is coming, perhaps even a severe storm. But you may not even be looking in that direction or you may not recognize the storm coming through the haze in the west.

The events of this day begin the busiest, most important week of Jesus’ life. It is the last week of his life as a human on earth.

It is a beautiful day for Jesus, even though we don’t know what kind of weather it actually was. People are cheering for him, welcoming him into Jerusalem as the Passover festival is approaching. But it seems that no one except Jesus – and maybe the people who want Jesus dead – sees the clouds on the horizon.

Today we look again as

**JESUS COMES TO JERUSALEM ON “PALM SUNDAY”**

- 1. Jesus is welcomed as a king, as the Son of David,**
- 2. Although he arrives humbly, riding on a donkey.**
- 3. For us, much of the joy is superficial, for we know what is coming.**

I think that most of you know the basic history of Palm Sunday. Jesus came to Jerusalem riding on a donkey. People cut palm branches and laid them in his path. Many also laid their cloaks on the road, giving him quite a ‘red carpet welcome’. They cheered him with words such as you heard in our sermon text.

In our gospel lesson you heard the history of the death of Lazarus and how Jesus raised him from the dead. John is the only evangelist who records Lazarus’ resurrection. You heard that *“many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, [Lazarus’ sister] and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him.”* (John 11:45) But you also heard that *“Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. ‘What are we accomplishing?’ they asked. ‘Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.’”* (John 11:47-48)

And I especially want to emphasize: *“So from that day on they plotted to take his life.”* (John 11:53)

John also tells us *“Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him.”* Notice how people – no doubt many who believed in him as the Savior from sin as well as just a miracle worker – told others about him. In this way the gospel was spread, so that many might become aware of the momentous history about to unfold this week. And so the crowd grew. Many came to greet him.

Have you noticed how Jesus' raising of Lazarus from the dead figures prominently in this history? The resurrection of Lazarus by Jesus and the fact that many believed on Jesus as a result is a perfect example of the fulfillment of John's words in John 20:30-31: *"Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."* Jesus' miracles weren't just to show off his power, but to lead people to believe in the most important thing Jesus did for mankind.

In our text we read *"The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, 'Hosanna!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Blessed is the King of Israel!'"*

Listen to all the words recorded in Scripture with which they welcomed him: *"Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest!"* (Matthew 21:9) *"Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest!"* Mark 11:9-10) *"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"* (Luke 19:38.) So you hear that they had nothing but the highest praise for Jesus. Together with that praise, these people also had high hopes for Jesus. A number of times previously the Jews – except their spiritual leaders – had considered making Jesus an earthly king and had tried to do it. Many people thought that since he could perform miracles such as healing people and feeding thousands, he would make a great king. He had a great following of people from many walks of life, and if they made this man king, wasn't it then possible that they could reclaim their nation and have a king who was to rule on the throne of his father David?

Hosanna literally means "Save, I pray!" The people were welcoming Jesus as one whom they hoped would save them. How fitting! They were hoping to be saved from the oppression of the Romans. But Jesus came to save them from sin, from eternal death, from the power of Satan. He came in the name of the Lord. He came as a king, but not quite the kind of king they were expecting.

He was recognized by many as a "Son of David". The angel had told his mother before he was born: *"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David."* (Luke 1:32)

Beyond his family, many spoke of him as the Son of David, and this was very often in the context of pleading for help in healing diseases, as in Matthew 20:31: *"Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"*

Many Jews recognized from the Old Testament scriptures that the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed of God would be recognized as the Son of David, as in Matthew 22:42: *"What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" "The son of David," they replied.* Remember, Christ is the New Testament Greek word for the Old Testament Hebrew word Messiah.

On this day the people had nothing but words of praise for Jesus. The crowds had heard about Jesus, and that he was on his way to Jerusalem. Did they greet him because of his miracles? His healing? His giving them food? Or was it his message and the Word of God that he preached to them? There were no doubt people with him today for all of these reasons.

He really came quite humbly. He wasn't riding in a chariot, or on a white horse. *"Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written, 'Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt.'" Here is the Old Testament passage which foretells this very event: "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."* (Zechariah 9:9) Typically a king would be coming in a much more spectacular way, such as riding on a white horse, or in an elaborate chariot, just as today a president or king comes in a limousine instead of a rusty, beat-up old car. But this is the humble way God sent his son into the world, and it leads the way for his leaving this world. He was born in a stable in a little town called Bethlehem. He comes in a most humble way, riding a donkey to the city where he will be crucified like the worst of criminals, sinless though he is.

Scripture tells us: *"At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him."* They knew the Scriptures, and they knew what Jesus had told them for the past three years, during his public

ministry. But they didn't understand or remember. This simple statement reminds us that it is all the more important that we listen carefully and, as the prayer says, "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" the Word of God which we hear and read.

So on this day, Jesus was welcomed enthusiastically into Jerusalem. The people were here to celebrate the Passover. As much as the leaders of the Jews wanted to get rid of Jesus, they didn't want to do it on the Passover. Two days before the Passover, as we read in Matthew 26:3-5: "***Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him. 'But not during the Feast,' they said, 'or there may be a riot among the people.'***" But God had other plans. Jesus was to be the ultimate Passover sacrifice, and it was right in the middle of those celebrations that he was crucified.

In all this happy, joyful welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem on this first day of the week, there is one big storm cloud hanging over it all that John writes about: "***So the Pharisees said to one another, 'See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!'***"

Because of sins like jealousy and envy and fear for their position, the leaders of the Jews knew that they had to get rid of Jesus. That is the storm cloud hanging out on the horizon. You know what is going to happen. You know that on Thursday and Friday of this week we will commemorate Jesus' betrayal and death.

When we worship in Holy Week, we are reminded of his horrible death. But you will also be reminded that in his death he gave us the forgiveness of sins.

Yes, we can celebrate today, as Jesus is welcomed as a king riding in to Jerusalem. But you know the rest of the story, and don't have to wait until after his resurrection to be reminded that he died for you. You know what kind of king he really is. May that knowledge work and strengthen faith in your hearts so that, like those who knew of Lazarus' resurrection you continue "***to spread the word.***" Amen.