

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Palm Sunday, March 25, 2018

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)
Hymns: 160, 179, 161, 162, 644.
Lessons: Psalm 118, Philippians 2:5-11, John 12:12-19.
Sermon Text: Luke 19:28-44.
Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

In our sermons during this Lenten season we have been reviewing Jesus' life and sufferings and trials in the eighteen or so hours since he left the upper room with his disciples. Today we go back five days in Jesus' life on earth to the day he was welcomed into Jerusalem.

Please give your attention as we remember

JESUS' ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

- 1. The people praised Jesus on this day.**
- 2. They – and we – don't know what is coming tomorrow!**

Jesus, the true Lord God come down to earth, came into Jerusalem humbly. Six days later he would be dead, crucified by the Romans at the demand of the Jews, especially the demands of their leaders, who stirred up the people to demand his crucifixion and the release of Barabbas, a murderer, into their midst.

Today we have the unusual picture of Jesus borrowing animals to ride into Jerusalem. He didn't ride in with an army, or on a white horse or riding a spectacular chariot. He came humbly. This is a direct fulfillment of the words of Zechariah: ***“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 (NIV)

John tells us simply that ***“the great crowd that had come for the Feast [of the Passover] heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem.”*** The other evangelists give more details. Jesus and his disciples ***“approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives.”*** He said to his disciples ***“Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.’ This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: ‘Say to the Daughter of Zion, “See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”’”*** ***“The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them.”*** This was a colt on which no one had ever ridden, thus the need to bring its mother. Although ***“some people standing there asked, ‘What are you doing, untying that colt?’ [Jesus’ disciples] answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go.”*** Jesus had simply told them ***“If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ tell him, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’”*** So Jesus' needs are fulfilled by the people from whom he borrowed the animals.

Then Jesus' disciples threw their cloaks over the animal because no one had brought any kind of saddle, and Jesus rode the colt into Jerusalem, coming down from the hill called the Mount of Olives.

“A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.” Here you see the reason this day is called “Palm Sunday”. The people cut palm branches from the trees and spread them in Jesus' path, along with their cloaks. This was a sort of a ‘red carpet’ treatment in welcoming Jesus into the city on this day.

There would have been many people in Jerusalem for the seven-day feast of the Passover, and many among them who had heard Jesus preach and perhaps even seen some of his miracles. These people now greeted him enthusiastically. There would no doubt also be others who heard about these things, and perhaps even some who were just caught up in the enthusiasm and excitement of the crowd.

Some didn't know what was happening and who he was. *"When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, 'Who is this?' The crowds answered, 'This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.'"*

So the people greeted Jesus with great praise. *"When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: 'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!'"* *"A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Hosanna in the highest!'"* They shouted *"'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!'"* *"'Hosanna!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Blessed is the King of Israel!'"*

Listen again to the praise they heap on Jesus! *"'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!'"* *"'Hosanna to the Son of David!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Hosanna in the highest!'"* *"'Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!'"* *"'Hosanna!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Blessed is the King of Israel!'"*

They praised him as the king of Israel. They praised him as the king who comes in the name of the Lord. They praised him as the Son of David, and praised him because they believed he was going to bring the kingdom of David back to prominence. They heaped blessings on him, and asked God to continue to bless him. What a contrast to the words they were shouting at him five days later! Then the people and their religious leaders were shouting "crucify him!" But that is the way of Satan and of the world. They really want nothing to do with Jesus but to get rid of him.

On this day, however, many of the Jews were praising Jesus, even if they didn't really understand his true mission. Luke, interestingly enough, wrote that these people praised God for all the miracles they had seen. That is really the wrong reason to praise and honor Jesus. He should be praised for bringing eternal salvation to mankind, not just for some physical miracles he performed while he was on earth.

And they repeatedly used the word "Hosanna". This word comes from Psalm 118, often used at joyous times such as the Passover and other festivals, and would roughly be translated as "O Lord, save us!" All these words of praise ask God to help the Son of David; may he succeed; may God help him!

In our Old Testament lesson today you heard these words, prophesying what happened on this first Palm Sunday: *"O LORD, save us; O LORD, grant us success. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you. The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine upon us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will give you thanks; you are my God, and I will exalt you. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever."* Psalm 118:25-29 (NIV)

But not everyone was happy to see Jesus greeted in this way. *"The Pharisees said to one another, 'See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!'"* This was the man they were trying to get rid of, and now the city, and it seemed, the whole world, was following Jesus. But they did more than just talk among themselves. We read that the Pharisees objected to Jesus himself and what he was saying.

"Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Teacher, rebuke your disciples!'" They even told Jesus to tell the crowd to stop saying this nonsense. But Jesus has a really sharp rebuke for them instead of for the crowd. *"I tell you,' he replied, 'if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.'"* What a strange comment! But Jesus then makes reference to the fact that Jerusalem will be destroyed, so that not one stone would be left upon another because of God's judgment. *"As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, '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.” This is, of course, a reference to the coming destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. by the Romans. He is publicly lamenting and mourning over the sin which the people of Jerusalem were about to commit and the punishment which the city was bringing upon itself. This terrible judgment brings Jesus to tears.

Although this is a day when the people seem to be rejoicing, Jesus warns them that terrible times will be coming. He tries to tell them that now was the day of salvation, now was the day to repent, but they didn't recognize it.

Their opportunities to turn to him, to listen to him, to hear his message were drawing to a close. Soon it would be too late.

Even today people don't recognize God's time of salvation. People always think that they have more time. We never know when this life will end, perhaps very suddenly, dramatically, and, tragically. We must always be ready for God's coming. Very few people have advance notice of their impending death, and even then, death doesn't necessarily come when it is expected. We must always be alert, be prepared, be ready for our Savior's second coming to judge the living and the dead. We only have this lifetime to turn to God, and no one knows when this lifetime will end.

John tells us: *“At first his disciples did not understand all* [that was happening and all that Jesus said on this day.] *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.”* On this day many people who had heard about him, including the people who had been with him when he raised Lazarus from the dead went out to greet Jesus as he came into Jerusalem. They had spread the word about him, and one reason they greeted Jesus in this way is because of that miracle.

We, too, today, have gathered to meet Jesus in his Word. Who knows how many more opportunities we shall have to do this?

Isaiah's words are as true today as when they were first written: *“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.”* Isaiah 55:6 (NIV)

With the hymn writer we ask

“Who knows when death may overtake me!
Time passes on, my end draws near.
How swiftly can my breath forsake me!
How soon can life's last hour appear!
My God, for Jesus' sake I pray
Thy peace may bless my dying day.”

(The Lutheran Hymnal 598:1)

May God grant us today, when we celebrate Jesus' joyous entry into Jerusalem, the joy of looking forward to the moment when we shall enter the heavenly Jerusalem! Amen.