

Welcoming the King

Mark 14:32-42

March 28, 2021

There is a story about a little boy who was sick. It was Palm Sunday and the children waved palm branches to open the service. But this young man stayed home from church with his mother. His father returned from church holding a palm branch. The little boy was curious and asked, "Why do we wave palm branches on Palm Sunday, Dad, and why do we call it Palm Sunday?" "You see," his Dad explained, "when Jesus came into town, everyone waved palm branches to honor him, so we got palm branches in the worship service today."

The little boy replied, "Aw, Shucks! The one Sunday I miss is the Sunday that Jesus shows up."

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Today is the Palm Sunday or Palm / Passion Sunday as it is now called in some churches, including Fairfield Grace. It is certainly one of the greatest festivals of the Christian Year. All Christians in the world remember and celebrate the triumphant entrance of Jesus to Jerusalem. I recalled one year we welcomed a donkey to Fairfield Grace and celebrated the Palm Sunday with our children. Yes, I am glad we returned to the church and worship in person at the Sanctuary on this special Sunday.

However, for many years, I wondered just what this day really does signify in terms of the everyday life of a Christian. Is it simply a reminder that the crowd can shout "Hosanna" one day, and then a few days later,

those same people cry, "Crucify him"? Certainly, that is a part of the Holy Week story. But then it dawned on me that Palm/Passion Sunday's real purpose is to remind us of the necessity of making a choice ... making a decision about Jesus Christ, and Christ's claim on our lives.

When Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem on that day long ago, he made it abundantly clear that he was God's Messiah! From that moment until now, people have had to decide: Are we for him or against him? Will we accept him or reject him? That choice is still yours and mine, and depending on what we decide, it can be the most important turning point in our lives!

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It was Passover, one of the Jewish Festivals no Jews missed. All the Jews from all over the world gathered and celebrated what God has done miraculously to save them and deliver them from the bondage of slavery in Egypt. When the Pharaoh refused to let the Hebrew people go, God sent the last plague that was killing the first child. But God saved the first son of those Hebrew people. They were asked to put the blood of lamb on their door and their first children were saved. Death "passed over" them. Since then, they remember God's saving work annually with thanksgiving.

At the Passover, Jesus entered Jerusalem, riding a donkey. He did it according to the prophecy written in Zechariah (9:9) "9Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

He did it to let the world know who he is, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. People thought so and welcomed Jesus with waving palms and laying clothes before him, shouting, “Hosanna, Hosanna. Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord” Hosanna is originally from Hebrew, “Hosiana” meaning, “Save, rescue, help”

Now we have a question to ponder. Why did these people who welcomed Jesus as the King shout “Crucify him, crucify him”?

You know, Jews were under the Roman’s power at that time. For many years, they were colonized and oppressed by neighboring powerful countries, such as Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, and Persia. They were waiting for a messiah who could liberate them from this political and economic and cultural oppression. They found out Jesus was not a Messiah they waited for. They believed Jesus was the one who would bring a new world. But Jesus’ interest was the Kingdom of God when and where the love and peace of God reigns. He introduced the Kingdom of God full of justice, peace, freedom, and love in our lives.

Jesus is simply not the kind of Messiah they expected. And people grumbled, saying, “That is nonsense. What justice, what peace, and what love can you bring in this world? We need political freedom and liberation. Period.” They not only did not treat Jesus as a king but also rejected Jesus the King of kings. And further joined others to hang him on the cross.

How about you and me? Aren’t we not like people?

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Do I welcome Jesus as the Lord or King and acknowledge His authority in our life?

Back to the ranch...

When he was ready to enter Jerusalem, Jesus asked his two disciples, saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" 34 They said, "The Lord needs it." (Luke 19:30-34)

In the New Testament the word, "Savior" is used twenty-three times, but the word *kyrios*, meaning lord or king, is used 665 times. A king is lord. He is sovereign and as such is in charge of things and people.

Look at two disciples who treated Jesus as the Lord and King. Jesus asked them to fetch the donkey and they did it exactly as ordered. There was nothing greater than for them at that moment than to fetch the donkey for Christ. Obedience. I wish that we all might do every task, great or small, in this willing obedience. There is nothing greater than obedience to the Lord.

Look at one more person who recognized and accepted Jesus as the Lord who is in charge of everything. That person is the un-named person, the owner of the donkey. "The Lord needs it." The owner of the donkey without hesitation let the Lord use it. Period. No question. He let his donkey go willingly and maybe gladly, as well. What an attitude! He

must have believed that everything belongs to the Lord and everything he had is not his, but the Lord's." And lived according to this belief.

Look at Jesus, human Jesus. Before facing the death on the cross, he went to the Garden of Gethsemane and prayed. He was distressed and agitated and deeply grieved, even to death. So he cried out to God, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me." Fully understandable. He was a human like you. Who wants to be nailed on the cross and suffer all the pains and die slowly and helplessly on the cross? But hear how he finished his prayer. "yet, not what I want, but what you want. Yet, not what I will, but what your will." Surrendering himself to God and God's will is his acknowledging God's kingship, God's lordship over him and his life. And afterwards he took all the steps to the cross with calmness and boldness and fulfilled God's will for his life in this world.

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Let me close by praying the Covenant Prayer of John Wesley. This prayer reminds us of who we are and whose we are.

I am no longer my own but yours. Put me to what you will, Rank me with whom you will; Put me to doing, put me to suffering; Let me be employed for you or Laid aside for you, Exalted for you, or brought low for you; Let me be full, let me be empty, Let me have all things, Let me have nothing; I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal. And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, You are mine and I am yours. So be it. And the covenant now made on earth, Let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

This special Sunday calls us to make a choice to acknowledge God's Christ as our Lord and let our lives be made whole again by the power of God to the glory of God.

As we enter Holy Week, the days leading up to Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection, can you truly say in your heart, "Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!"?

Can I? In the name of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.