

041022 "Palm Sunday" Luke 19:28-40

A little boy was sick on Palm Sunday and 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 you have that palm branch, Dad?"

"You see, when Jesus came into town, everyone waved palm branches to honor Him, so we got palm branches today."

The little boy replied, "The only Sunday I miss is the Sunday that Jesus shows up!"

Dear beloved, "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). Whenever we worship, I earnestly pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you and I will worship the Lord in spirit and in truth. Hope we don't miss out on Jesus shows up!

Easter is only a week away. Beginning on Ash Wednesday, the Lenten journey of the 40 days is coming to an end soon. Palm Sunday is the beginning of the Holy Week. Palm Sunday is to celebrate the day when Jesus entered Jerusalem by riding a young donkey while the disciples and the crowd cheered for him saying 'Hosanna!' and laying down their clothes and palm branches.

According to the Gospel of John, Jesus entered Jerusalem the day after he raised Lazarus from death. The town of Bethany, where Mary, Martha and

Lazarus lived, was about two miles southeast of Jerusalem, only about an hour away on foot. When many people had gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, they heard about the amazing story of how Lazarus was raised from the dead. All the people who had gathered had very high expectations and interest in Jesus who raised Lazarus from the dead.

According to a Jewish historian Josephus who lived during that time, the number of people who had gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover was more than 2 million as Jews made pilgrimages to the Temple for the annual celebration of Israel's liberation from slavery in Egypt.

During those days, Israel was under the rule of the Roman Empire. Roman governors stayed in town and the Roman soldiers were in charge of policing the city. Because a huge number of people had gathered in Jerusalem that day, the Roman soldiers were on guard in the event that a riot would occur while the religious leaders were nervous that they might lose their authority to Jesus whom they were trying to kill.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, people waved palm branches and spread them on the road. Palm tree was a sign of victory and peace, and the word 'Hosanna' was a direct translation of the Hebrew word, 'Save us.' In the Old Testament, praying for salvation is written in Psalm 118, verse 25 as "Lord, save us! Lord, grant us success!" This tells us that the people who had gathered that day regarded Jesus as the Messiah, a Savior. However, it is

important to note that the image of Messiah that the people were thinking of was clearly different from the image of Messiah that God wanted us to see.

In the Old Testament Israel, there were three important posts: the prophet, the priest, and the king. These positions were all anointed positions. To be anointed meant that God set them up for the positions, which ultimately meant that they were not positions that anyone could take up. It was a position that could only be fulfilled by someone who God chose. The prophet's role was to receive God's message and deliver it to the people. The priest's role was to offer sacrifices to God on behalf of the people. The king's role was to judge and rule the people according to God's will.

However, during the time that Jesus came to earth, there were no prophets who could deliver God's message so the word of God was cut off from the people. This period is called the Dark Ages because there was no prophet for 400 years after the prophet Malachi. To make it even worse, the priests were corrupted and schemed with the Roman Empire. Just like the darkest hour before dawn, the days when Jesus came to earth was a period of complete darkness.

All the Israelites were tired of waiting for the Messiah for a long time. They waited for a Messiah who would be their perfect prophet, priest, and king. They believed that the Messiah would come and restore the kingdom of God so that they may live in a world of peace and happiness.

But the problem was that it was not easy for the Israelites to admit that Jesus was the king they were waiting for because he had no qualities that proved him to be the king in their eyes. He was not of royal birth, but rather the son of a poor carpenter. He was born in a manger in the town of Bethlehem. There was nothing to adore him for. He came not as a king but as a servant, so no one was able to recognize him as the Messiah. The Gospel of John said that he "came into the world, but the world did not know him," and he "came to his own land, but his people did not welcome him."

The Jewish religious leaders did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah, but the crowds who believed in Jesus as the Messiah and welcomed his entry to Jerusalem saw Jesus only as someone who could meet their political and physical needs. This was the reason why the people turned their backs on Jesus and shouted to crucify him on the cross when their hopes were destroyed.

We must reflect on whether our faith is not the same way as the crowd gathered in Jerusalem. If we believe in Jesus Christ for our own personal glory, we must be careful because there are always opportunities when we could turn our backs on Jesus. Jesus Christ is our Savior, but we must also acknowledge that He is also the master of our lives. We need to change from looking for our own will to seeking the Lord's will. More of Jesus, less of me.

In John 19:41, we can see that in contrast to the crowd of cheering people, when Jesus entered Jerusalem that day, HE WEPT. "As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it." Why did he cry?

Jesus wept because many in Israel have not recognized him as Messiah and Lord and have not accepted his peaceful visitation. Their refusal of the things that make for peace will have tragic consequences for the nation.

Luke 19:41 says, "As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, 42 saying, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. 43 Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. 44 They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God."" In fact, Jerusalem was completely destroyed by the Roman general Titus in 70 AD.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came as the King of Peace, but people did not recognize Him. They were trying to change the grace of God into the glory of the world. Please remember that Jesus shed tears while the people around him were rejoicing and shouting "Hosanna."

Let's take a look at Romans before we finish. The Apostle Paul makes this confession in Romans 7:24-25. "Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue

me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!
So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I
am a slave to the law of sin."

Let us take a moment to think of what Paul is saying here. Paul confesses before the Lord of his sinful self as a "subject to death." The important part, however, is that he also confesses before the Lord with gratitude by saying "Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord." The atmosphere is quite different. The tone of the words has completely changed. How can this conflicting confession be possible?

This passage does not mean that Paul is thanking the Lord for his sinful nature and the power of sin, but rather he is thanking the Lord for allowing him to see his weakness. He is saying, 'Thank you for allowing me to realize how weak and powerless I am in front of sin.' Paul does not stop here. Not only is he giving thanks to the Lord for realizing his weak and sinful self, but he is also giving thanks to the Lord for the power of the Cross of Jesus Christ that can forgive all sins so that we may experience God's grace every day.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, we are called to live as children of God in this busy world. Do we long for the grace of the Cross that can touch our hardened hearts and build us up again? Are we being thankful? Our Lord has taken up the cross and climbed the hills of Golgotha so that he set free us from the power of sin and death. He showed us mercy and

covered our shame. Believe that the morning of glory and resurrection awaits after suffering and waiting, and I eagerly pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you are accompanied by Jesus who made all these things possible. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you and your family, and your business, and your studies, and with the lives of your children. Amen.