

040223 Sermon "Palm Sunday" John 12: 12-16

Today is Palm Sunday. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, he rode on a donkey, and many people took palm branches and went out to meet him. The palm tree is also called Tamar in Hebrew, and it is known to us as "the date palm." Much of Israel is desert: barren, hot and dry territory, but this tree withstands the barren land and lives up to 150 years. The tree also produces so many dates, so the palm tree symbolizes being prolific, while also symbolizing "victory" because of its vitality in the barren wilderness.

People expected that when Jesus entered Jerusalem, a new world would come. Like a palm tree, they might have dreamed of a rich life and a triumphant life away from Roman bondage. So, they shouted "Hosanna" which means "save us". Salvation from what? Salvation from poverty, salvation from Roman control. So, the cheers of the people forced the religious leaders and Roman soldiers to become anxious. In this situation, the plot to kill Jesus unfolds.

If you look at John 12:12 today, it starts with the words "the next day ..." So, what happened the day before, just before Jesus entered Jerusalem? Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and went to Jerusalem the next day. Bethany, where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived, was just two miles southeast of Jerusalem. Many people from all over the country flocked to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover festival, and they also heard the amazing news of Lazarus' resurrection in nearby Bethany. Then you can easily guess that people would have raised their expectations and interests in Jesus and the popularity of Jesus would have been significant among them.

People were cheering in excitement. In this atmosphere, people shouted "Hosanna", waved palm branches, and some of them even took off their robes and laid them on the road. At the time, many people would have said that their most valuable property was outerwear. Nevertheless, their coats were lavishly laid out on the road. But what to think about here is that the original crowd was easy to be swept away by the atmosphere. The crowd who gathered to the Lord shouting Hosanna left the Lord in a few days agreeing to crucify Jesus! The reason was that Jesus' entry was different from their expectations. As the palm tree symbolizes, they wanted abundance and a victory out of bondage!

"Hosanna". "Help us!" "Save us!" They regarded Jesus as the Savior, the Messiah. But what is interesting is that the role of the Messiah was different from the role of the Messiah God wanted. The glory people wanted and the glory God wanted were so different.

People wanted to accept Jesus in anticipation of the king of power that would allow them to meet their physical and worldly desires. They were looking forward to the king coming to the center of the changed world, the center of Israel, Jerusalem. Did Jesus not know their desires? God surely knew it, but the Lord's concern was only with the way of the cross. Isaiah 55: 8, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. 9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

As we celebrate Palm Sunday today, we need to find out why Jesus came. Because, as the crowds gathered in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago did, it is easy to misunderstand that he became king so that we can become rich on earth and gain whatever kind of victory we want. That is not the way the Bible tells us.

How did Jesus' disciples react to entering Jerusalem? John records that the disciples did not realize this at first. The disciples didn't know what this incident meant at the time. But they came to realize after Jesus suffered, died on the cross, and rose again to glory. After the resurrection of the Lord, the disciples realized that the prophecy of Zechariah was fulfilled by the Lord's entry on the donkey.

The disciples once said, "I will die for the Lord," but when the Lord was taken away, they fled. Nevertheless, after his resurrection, our Lord went to the disciples again. Then he didn't ask why they ran away from him. They left the Lord, but the Lord did not leave, and they once abandoned the Lord, but the Lord did not forsake them. They were guilty of sins, but our Lord did bear the cross to forgive them and to forgive whoever believe in him.

"God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." To give all humankind, to you and to me, the wonderful grace of salvation and eternal life, Jesus entered Jerusalem and took the cross, the way of suffering.

We experience God's silence in our lives a lot. When you think about the last three years of the pandemic, there had been a long period of quarantine, the stores were closed, students took classes online, and there were many inconveniences and fears in life. Not only this, but there are still various problems in our lives. In the midst of this, we may be frustrated with why God is not listening to us and why God is not helping us quickly. There was a time when Jesus' disciples were struggling in a storm on a boat on the Sea of Galilee, and Jesus was not in the boat. Like the disciples of Jesus during the storm, we are

unsure of whether or not Jesus will eventually appear, and if he does, you may be wondering why he left you alone.

Just before Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, there was a miracle that Jesus raised Lazarus who was dead. But before the miracle, "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died." It's been four days. It means, "Jesus, you are four days late! Why! Why are you late?" But to them, Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Do you believe this?" This is also important for us. When Jesus is thought to be four days late in your life, I hope you confess that "Lord, you are the life and the resurrection!" Then, I believe that Jesus will calm the raging storm and say, "Fear not, it is I. Do not be afraid."

Jesus raised Lazarus. This was the assurance that Jesus would overcome death and be resurrected. Please don't forget. God is never late. Also, God is never in a hurry. God reveals his will to us in his time.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, Jesus entered Jerusalem, and like the cheers of people shouting "Hosanna", Jesus went the way of the cross to save us from the power of sin and death and to give us the right to become God's children. I hope and pray that this blessed news will give you comfort and hope. 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.