

Palm Sunday

March 25, 2018

Our Savior's Way
Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Justin Kumfer

I've always loved the imagery of Palm Sunday. Everyone has a palm branch and if we were to wave these palms around it would make a scene that I think would reflect the true glory that was given to Christ as he entered Jerusalem so long ago. But humble though our palms are they reflect our desire to welcome a king, triumphant, into our midst. We're making those same cries that the Jerusalemites did on that day, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel!"

Hosanna! We use this word to describe praise. That the people were praising Jesus as he entered the city. They were celebrating their King who was coming in the name of God. The one they had been waiting for. That's how we picture it at least. And I'm sure that this is what the image was. A great multitude welcoming their king. And yet, there is an element that is often missing from our view of this scene. What is missing is the desperation present in the people, because you see, Hosanna is used for praise but the meaning is "save us now!"

These people were desperate. They wanted freedom. They were crying out for salvation. Probably from the Roman rule that had inhabited their city but I'm willing to bet it was more than that. The people were crying out for total salvation both externally and internally. I suppose it is possible that they didn't see the need they

had to be rescued from their sinful self. I mean they aren't so different from us right?

In our daily life how often do we see the actions we perform as sins against God? When have we reflected on our usage of God's name as breaking the second commandment? When has our lustful look at another person convicted us that we need to be saved from that sin? When has our desire to respond in anger ever brought to our minds Christ's words about making peace? We are just like the Israelites. We sin and justify our actions. We sin and say it was only a mistake. We sin over and over again proving that it is not a mistake, but it's who we are. We are sinful. We are sinners. "Hosanna! Save us, please."

Do you hear it? Can you imagine in your mind the scene that is happening the week before Christ would save? Multitudes of people gathering and following him around praising Him with Hosanna's but at the same time crying out in desperation for that same salvation? Whether it was physical or internal or spiritual, these people recognized their need. And what's more, Christ recognized exactly what they would need. And as we think about our need and read in the verses from John 12 today, we see three primary roles that Christ fulfilled for our sake.

The first and most apparent one is that of king. But Christ as king wouldn't be fully realized until a later time. Even though the people were declaring Him king they might have been disappointed when, not even a week later, He was killed. So much for Jesus, the king of Israel.

Unlike the Israelites that day, we know better. We know there is a time coming when Christ will be the king that everyone expected Him to be. Jesus Christ will return triumphant over sin, death, and the power of the devil. When He comes again He will throw down His enemies and cast all sadness, darkness, and sin from His

presence. Jesus' ride into Jerusalem was just the taste of this coming. Zechariah 9 spoke of this saying, "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey... He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit. Return to your fortress, you prisoners of hope; even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you." Jesus is the conquering king forever, and Palm Sunday, with everything that leads up to this day, was the taste of what His reign will be.

The second job that Christ fulfills in our reading for today is that of prophet. The prophet role isn't just telling the people about what will happen in the future. Historically, the prophet's role was to tell the people God's Words and commands. Throughout His ministry, Jesus did this. As a way of confirming that what He said was in fact God's word He would also perform miracles. In the Gospel when Jesus speaks to Nicodemus, a Jewish leader, Nicodemus confirms of Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

Even the way in which Jesus speaks reveals his prophetic nature. As Jesus is teaching the disciples and the people who followed Him, He speaks God's truth and yet the people didn't understand. Even the disciples were hard pressed to understand until Jesus was glorified. The Israelites too had difficulty understanding God's word to them through the prophets, especially concerning the Messiah, until Jesus appeared.

And finally, the role that would classify as the most important role for Jesus was that of priest. In the history of the Jewish people, priests were the ones who performed the sacrifices for their sins.

They would sacrifice lambs, doves, or whatever the appropriate animal would be for the offense. The priests themselves would need to offer sacrifices on their own behalf because they too sinned and needed forgiveness. These sacrifices would serve to provide forgiveness through the blood of the animal.

With Jesus there was no animal. With Jesus there was no sin. Not only did Jesus perform the sacrifice for us but He Himself was the sacrifice. The true and final sacrifice. No other animal would be required for sin because the perfect Lamb of God had come to pay for the sin debt of all people.

In the words Jesus used in our reading from John today, He spoke of His role in all this and its nearing completion. Jesus said, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” The Son of Man, was Jesus Christ. God who took on human flesh so that He might cleanse the debt for our sin. This was Christ’s work on the cross, completed at the resurrection and continuing today.

Your sins are forgiven because the Son of Man, the perfect Lamb of God, Jesus Christ Himself died for your sins. And what’s more, He was raised to life again. Just as you will be raised to life through faith in Him when He comes again.

On this Palm Sunday, brothers and sisters in Christ, rejoice. Shout your hosannas to the Lord, not as the typical cry of “Lord save us now” but of praise and thanks that Jesus Christ has done exactly that. He has saved those He loves, so that we have nothing left but to shout His praise!

In Jesus’ name. Amen!