



PALM SUNDAY

PALM SUNDAY

Introduction

Aloha everyone! I'm Mark if we haven't met and I want to welcome you to our service. This weekend we celebrate Palm Sunday – Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. This also kicks off Holy Week in the Christian calendar – the most significant week of Jesus' ministry. This Sunday Jesus rides into Jerusalem, on Thursday He celebrates the Last Supper, by Friday He is crucified, and next Sunday He rises again. This week is so significant that of the 89 chapters in the gospels, 29 are devoted to this last week of Jesus' life. Matthew, Mark, and Luke devote a third of their gospels to this final week and John nearly half. We have a number of amazing worship experiences this week beginning with our Palm Sunday praise concert where we will throw open the gates for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords to enter in.

Setting the Stage

Jesus' entire life has been heading toward this moment. This final week is what it was always about. Before His birth the angel told Joseph that Mary would give birth to a Son whom they were to name Jesus because He would save His people from their sins (The name 'Jesus' means Yahweh saves). As soon as Jesus enters Jerusalem He thinks about His impending death and says, *"What shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour,"* (John 12:27). For Jesus this is what it was always about. His entire life has been about this moment and He is intentional with every detail of how it plays out.

Let's begin with the week. Jesus timed His arrival in Jerusalem the week before Passover.

"Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead," (John 12:1).

Bethany was a town right outside of Jerusalem. It was also the hometown of Lazarus whom Jesus had just raised from the dead.

⁹ *"Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of Him but also to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, ¹¹ for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in Him,"* (John 12:9-11).

¹² *"The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem,"* (John 12:12).



PALM SUNDAY

Archeologists believe that there were approximately 50,000 people living in Jerusalem at that time but during Passover another 150,000 pilgrims would be there to celebrate. So tens of thousands of Israelites are pouring into Jerusalem from all over the region to celebrate Passover. Passover was Israel's independence day. It would be like our Fourth of July. In Exodus, when their ancestors were enslaved in Egypt, God delivered them through signs and wonders, He freed them from oppression and set them apart as His chosen people. On the night before they were set free God told His people to cover their doorposts with the blood of a lamb so that His angel of death would pass over their homes. So every home that had the blood of the lamb was spared. And God delivered His people.

So Passover was a very charged time. Especially at this time, because once again God's people were under foreign rule and oppression. The Romans had conquered the Jewish people.

Imagine if America was under foreign occupation. And hundreds of thousands of us were gathered at the Nation's capital (Washington DC) to celebrate the Fourth of July – our Independence Day. And everywhere you look there are armed foreign invaders. And we're all gathered there remembering what this day represents and how we won our freedom. It would be a very charged time. And the Romans of that time were on edge and peace and stability were teetering on a knife's edge. The Israelites were crying out to Yahweh once again for a savior – a deliverer. And word on the street was that there was a prophet in town. He has the power to heal, He has the power to multiply bread and feed thousands, and very recently He even raised a man from the dead. Could He be the one? Could this be the Messiah?

¹² *"The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. ¹³ They took palm branches and went out to meet Him, shouting,*

"Hosanna!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Blessed is the king of Israel!" (John 12:12-13).

Often we think of Hosanna as a declaration of praise similar to Hallelujah. But whereas Hallelujah means, "Praise the Lord", Hosanna has a different meaning. The Hebrew words Yasha (deliver, save) and Anna (beg, beseech) come together to mean, "Please deliver us" or "Save us we pray!" The people were acknowledging their need for a savior and they were acknowledging Jesus as king.

Now, if you've ever been to a parade you can probably imagine the scene here right? You picture throngs of people on either side of the street. People are cheering and shouting. And what is the person on the float or motorcade doing? Blowing kisses. Waving. Smiling. Maybe you imagine Jesus waving from the donkey, smiling and greeting people as He passed by.



PALM SUNDAY

⁴¹ "As He approached Jerusalem and saw the city, He wept over it ⁴² 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," (Luke 19:41-42).

I don't get it. The people are praising, they're crying out for salvation, they're acknowledging You as King. Jesus, isn't this why You came? But Jesus responds by weeping. He says, "If only you had known on this day what would bring you peace but now it is hidden from your eyes. Church, today we're going to look at three groups of people who were there at the first Palm Sunday and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the kind of heart He wants us to receive.

Those in the CROWD.

These were people who were crying out for salvation and were acknowledging Jesus as king. They were waving palm branches and lifting up shouts of praise. Tonight we are going to praise the King of kings and Lord of lords. We are going to sing Hosanna! On the outside it might look very similar to the passage we just read. And could you imagine Jesus in the midst of all of that weeping saying, "Man, you don't get it."

You see the crowds were looking for another Moses or David – a conquering hero or prophet who would save them from the enemies out there. We often think that fixing all of those problems will bring us peace. And Jesus says, if you only knew what would bring you true peace. But it's hidden from your eyes – you're not seeing it. Jesus didn't come to conquer the enemies out there. He came to conquer our greatest enemy in here – sin.

Peace doesn't come from fixing the problems out there but by fixing the problems in here. God can remove all of the problems out there, but if there isn't peace in here it will only be a matter of time before your inner reality become your outer one. You see Israel was caught in a vicious cycle. They would rebel against God, be overtaken by their enemies, and then cry out to the Lord for help, "Hosanna! Deliver us! Save Now! Hosanna!" Listen to the cycle,

¹⁸ "Whenever the Lord raised up a judge for them, He was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the Lord relented because of their groaning under those who oppressed and afflicted them. ¹⁹ But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their ancestors, following other gods and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways," (Judges 2:18-19).

So the people would cry out to God in distress, God would send a deliverer, that deliverer would bring peace from their enemies, and as soon as there was peace the people would go right back to their wicked ways. And from generation to generation nothing ever changed. Why? Because this [heart] never changed.



PALM SUNDAY

And once again Israel is in a rut. They're crying out to God. But they have no intention of following through. Jesus sees their hearts. The same crowds who were cheering on Sunday would be jeering on Friday. The same crowds who cried, "Hosanna" would be crying "Crucify Him". They people were crying "Save us!" But they didn't recognize what real salvation looked like.

1. Is your faith conditional?

Do you withhold praise when things don't go your way or God doesn't act on your schedule?

2. Are you more concerned with what God is fixing out there (Your spouse, your kids, your finances) or what God is fixing in here?

The Apostle Paul shares about a time when he cried out to God to deliver him from a trial he was going through.

⁸ *"Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.*

⁹ *But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong," (2 Corinthians 12:8-10).*

God sent Jesus to save us. Not from the problems out there but from our greatest problem of sin in here. He came to transform. Not necessarily transform our circumstances but to transform us in the midst of our circumstances so we can overcome our circumstances. He promises to be the comforter. You won't know Him as comforter unless there are moments when you're uncomfortable. He promises peace that surpasses understanding. You don't need that kind of peace when everything makes sense. Jesus promises to be all this and more.

So when we cry "Hosanna" we are declaring our need for a savior. First and foremost from our sins. We need Jesus to give us a new heart and change us from the inside out. Pray that He saves you from the temptation of the evil one. Pray that He delivers You from evil.

We can ask this in faith knowing this is why He came. He came to deliver His people from their sins. This is true peace. So there were those in the crowd who had false expectations of Him.

Those in CONTROL.

¹⁵ *"On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, ¹⁶ and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. ¹⁷ And as He taught them, He said, "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"*



PALM SUNDAY

*¹⁸ The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill Him, for they feared Him, because the whole crowd was amazed at His teaching,"
(Mark 11:15-18).*

As soon as Jesus enters Jerusalem as King, His first order of business is to cleanse the temple. If He had been leading a revolt like the people imagined, He probably would have stormed the Roman garrison. But Jesus did not come to establish a physical kingdom but a Spiritual one. As He would tell Pilate in the days to come,

³⁶ "Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent My arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now My kingdom is from another place," (John 18:36).

Jesus came to establish a spiritual Kingdom. His Kingdom would not be established in countries but in the human heart. It would not spread through conquest and acquisition but through service and love. Jesus did not come riding into the city on a warhorse but on a donkey.

The Bible tells us that those in control (The religious leaders) had rearranged the temple in anticipation of Passover. They knew that thousands of people would be coming from all of the surrounding region and would need to change money in order to buy sacrifices. So they set up money changers right in the temple courts. Now if you're not familiar with the layout of the temple, God designated the outer courts for foreigners and non-Jewish people to worship Him. And there would have been many non-Jewish worshipers there for Passover, but when they went to their designated area of the temple they found it turned into a money-changing area. No doubt the religious leaders were profiting from the exchange rates. Jesus also goes after the benches of those selling doves. If a poor person in Israel could not afford to buy a lamb to sacrifice, God made a provision. They could sacrifice a dove. So not only are the non-Jewish worshipers being ostracized but the poor are being taken advantage of.

So King Jesus walks into His Fathers house and He sees people who would be deemed "other" being excluded from worship and He sees the poor and the hurting being taken advantage of and He goes off. He says, "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations. But you have made it 'a den of robbers'".

But Jesus was not killed because He was a friend of the poor. The Romans killed Jesus because He claimed to be King. And the Jews killed Him because He claimed to be God. When it comes to Jesus, we only have two options. We will either crown Him or kill Him. He's either a lunatic or Lord. Jesus doesn't give us the option to like Him. If Jesus only came to heal sick people and help the poor they wouldn't have killed Him. But He claimed to be more than that. He claimed to be God. We will either serve Him as Lord or reject Him as a liar. Jesus gives us no in-between.



PALM SUNDAY

Those with CHILD-LIKE FAITH.

¹⁴ *"The blind and the lame came to Him at the temple, and He healed them. ¹⁵ But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things He did and the children shouting in the temple courts, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant.*

¹⁶ *"Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked Him.*

"Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read,

"From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise?"

(Matthew 21:14-16).

Jesus wept over those in the crowds – they couldn't see what would bring them peace. Jesus was angered over those in control – He came to overturn corruption, greed and sin from our world. But for those with child-like faith Jesus welcomes, He heals, He receives praise.

Last week we finished our series called Heaven Revealed where we talked about eternity with Jesus. I want to close by sharing this verse from John's vision in Revelation 7,

⁹ *"After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice:*

"Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb," (Revelation 7:9-10).

Conclusion

Jesus has come as King. His Kingdom is not of this world. It is not exclusive to any particular country, any particular class, or people. Jesus' Kingdom encompasses every nation, every tribe, every people and language. It is a Kingdom for the poor, the outcast, and the weary. Those who acknowledge their need for Jesus to save them from their sins and those who acknowledge Him as Lord of their lives will stand on that final day. The final Palm Sunday for all of eternity. And we will wave our branches and cry out in a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the lamb!"