

Hosanna! Welcome Your King!

John 12:9-19
February 12, 2024

Please open your Bibles today to John 12. Today we begin a journey to Resurrection Sunday. Say Easter. Although it's still eight weeks off, there's a lot that happens during Jesus' final week that we want to take some time to think about, pray over, meditate on, and obey. Jesus' last week is called Holy Week and some churches hold Holy Week Services to walk with Jesus through His final few days on earth. In the absence of that, we're starting now and we'll be walking with Jesus' Disciple, John, who records these events in great detail.

Holy Week starts with Palm Sunday so we will begin our journey there. It reminds me when I was telling the Palm Sunday story to preschoolers in 2016 and I asked them what Jesus was riding. One child said a camel, before I could correct him, another girl said, "I rode a cannibal at the fair!" No camels or cannibals today, God willing. If you are able, please stand as we read from John 12:9 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 putting their faith in him.

12 The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast 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!" 14 Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written, 15 "Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." 16 At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only **after** Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him.

17 Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. 18 Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"

How many times we've heard the Palm Sunday story. I hope we've also understood a bit of its context. Just before John 12 comes John 11. I'm really smart. But in John 11, Jesus raised His good friend Lazarus from the dead just 2 miles east of Jerusalem. This was just before the Passover Feast as people are gathering from all over Israel to celebrate it. Jerusalem's population went from about 50,000 up to several hundred thousand for Passover and this incredible miracle generated a good bit of press. All the major networks were covering it and it was all over Facebook. The whole place was abuzz with the rumor of this raising. People not only wanted to see Jesus, they

wanted to see a man that was once dead and was now alive again! You just don't see that every day.

Vs 10. "So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well," They had made plans some time ago to kill Jesus, but now evidence of His power and Divinity is unmistakably walking around and bearing witness to being raised from the dead. They had to not only get rid of Jesus, but also His best witness. Very sad. Instead of investigating, discovering, and worshipping the One who has power to do this, they're so consumed with their own positions and reputations, that they are blinded when God Himself appears in front of them.

And that perhaps is our first lesson from Holy Week. We all want Jesus' healings and miracles. Few reject His compassion and love, but many will not accept His teachings and claims. Why? Because if He is Lord, than we aren't. We have to get up off of the thrones of our lives to make room for the One who truly belongs there. We have to defer to the One greater, wiser, and infinitely more powerful than us. Which means we have to obey Him. As long as we're telling Jesus what to do, who and when to heal, where and how to move, what to teach, we're all good. But when we have to submit and obey Him, we fight against Him with all we have.

That's the pushback we feel within us when Jesus proclaims something about our lifestyle that we don't like. Maybe it's our consumer driven tendencies to spend and buy our way to happiness. Maybe it's our obsession with pleasure and leisure, to do what makes us happy. Maybe it's our sexuality and how we want to enjoy it without any boundaries, either living with someone outside of marriage, or in one night stands, or in the affairs of pornography, or in same sex relationships. See how uncomfortable Jesus becomes? As long as He's answering our prayers and healing our families and comforting our losses, He's good. But as soon as He moves into our checkbooks or our bedrooms or our boardrooms, we got problems. We face the same decision the Jewish leaders faced. Ignore that part of Him, reject Him totally, kill Him or humble ourselves, repent and usher Him onto the thrones of our hearts.

So in verse 12 we find that this great crowd on hand for Passover is preparing a welcoming party for the miracle worker. These are not the leaders, this is crowd-based, grass roots. They design an impromptu parade with one unit: Jesus. They broke off palm branches from nearby trees and went out to meet Him. Olive trees were probably much more common. Why palms? Palms were symbols of royalty. They were also a type of national Jewish symbol like a flag, if you will, and they were on several Jewish coins over the years.

Palms were also part of Jewish worship. Say worship. When Solomon built the Temple nearly 1000 years earlier, he had palm trees carved into the gold that covered the Temple's interior walls. We can imagine these were recreated by Ezra when he rebuilt

the temple and palm branches were also used by the Maccabees when they rededicated the temple after Antiochus Epiphanes had desecrated it. Afterwards, the Jews carried palms at Hanukah in the winter and at the feast of booths in fall. When Jesus arrived that day, the interior walls of the Second Temple just up the hill from where He was riding were likely covered with palm branches and Ezekiel also describes palms being carved in the future Temple. This was worship. These people were welcoming Jesus and they worshipping Him with palm branches.

Down in Verse 14 we find Jesus' ride. John doesn't tell us because he knows the other three gospel writers already described how Jesus arranged for His own ride. They all tell how Jesus told two of His Disciples where to go and what to get for His mount. And they did. It's not a presidential limo with bullet proof glass or a military hummer bedecked with sub machine guns. It's a donkey. Say donkey. Actually, John says a **young** donkey and quotes the Old Testament prophet Zechariah who says it's a donkey's colt or foal. So unless Jesus is very short, His legs may actually be dragging the ground. Imagine Trump or Biden ridin' a donkey. Why did Jesus purposefully **choose** a young donkey?

1. Horses were likely a little hard to come by as the Romans owned most of them at the time. Number 2, it was common for conquering kings to ride a horse when they returned to celebrate a victory. And Jesus will do so. Revelation 19 promises He will return riding a white stallion! But that's His second coming. For His arrival in Jerusalem near the end of His first coming He's riding a donkey because He hasn't yet won the victory. Give Him a week.

3. The prophets promised the Messiah would be riding a donkey. We've already mentioned that Zechariah specified a donkey 500 years before Jesus came. But way back in Genesis, Jacob prophesied over his son Judah and declared the future Messiah would (Gen 49:11) "tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch." That's nearly 1700 years before Jesus came." Some of Israel's former leaders rode donkeys including some of the judges as did King David himself, at least once. So in choosing a donkey, Jesus was sending a clear message that He fulfilled these ancient prophecies and was the promised Messiah.

4. It also sent a message about what His Kingdom was like. Instead of a man of war, Jesus was the Prince of Peace. Humility and submission are portrayed by a donkey as opposed to a horse. Which is perhaps why the Romans didn't shut this party down. He made no effort to rouse all the people into a riot or a frenzy.

But the people are shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the King of Israel! Say Hosanna. Hosanna is a Hebrew expression meaning save us! Deliver us! They were probably referring to being saved from their Roman oppressors who were certainly overseeing this whole event with much

concern. The Romans taxed them, controlled them, and abused them every chance they got. So any glimmer of escape from that tyranny was cause for celebration. Their blessing of the King of Israel indicates the political nature of their thoughts and intentions toward Jesus.

Little did they realize the incredible depths of saving King Jesus would indeed provide for them and for us all. It's one thing to be saved from a miserable life. It's quite another to be saved from a horrible eternity. From sin and from sinning. From sin and its consequences. They were shouting for all of us that day. For Adam and for all humanity since. Please Jesus, Messiah, save us! A prayer that He would indeed answer before that week was out.

This word actually came from Psalm 118:25-26 which says, 25 O Lord, save us; O Lord, grant us success. 26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord we bless you." They were singing a snippet of a hit song commonly sung for Passover. Like us singing, "Celebration time, come on!" Without the rest of the song. They were celebrating and praising Him and welcoming Him as their king. What they failed to notice was the rest of the song. Just before this phrase, you have vs 22 that says, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; 23 the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes." And they also missed what came after in vs 27, "With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar." They did have palm boughs in hand, but they didn't realize they were ushering the sacrificial Lamb up to His altar of sacrifice. Just like His birth and every other aspect of His life, God scripted the events of Palm Sunday to match every prophecy. It even happened on the exact day that Daniel said it would in Daniel 9 with his prophecy of the 70 weeks. We've looked at that before and can discuss it again in Bible Study this week if you like. But it happened on the exact day as prophesied.

And it was all more than the Jewish leaders could take. They were likely up the hill on the Temple Mount watching this procession make its way down the Mount of Olives across the Kidron Valley and then into Jerusalem proper like the Pentagon watching a spy balloon. We can see them up there gritting their teeth, scowling with rage, cementing their resolve to destroy this false Messiah that somehow healed people and even raised the dead. What crazy fanatics to shout and whoop and holler. They should be more reserved, more prim and proper, like us. The celebration angered them.

Do not those same thoughts come to our minds when someone gets a little carried away in worship? Yes, we do need to do everything decently and in order as Paul says, but that doesn't mean we can't get a little excited about the King of kings and Lord of lords! In fact, something's wrong if we don't. This is our Savior, our Lord, our King, the eternal God! I think He deserves a little shout now and then, don't' you?

The Jewish leaders were also worried about the trouble this could cause with the Romans. Although they also resented their occupiers, they had an uncomfortable arrangement with them. The Jewish leaders would keep their people under control and the Romans would take care of the Jewish leaders. Jesus could upset that whole applecart. And goodness, we can't have that. Down in vs 19, they said to each other, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!" If only it did and would. Sadly, some of this same crowd likely disowned Him just five days later and shouted, "Crucify Him?" We can be pretty fickle. But the Jewish leaders began to finalize plans to finalize Jesus. They had no clue.

But even His own Disciples didn't fully understand what was going on, John embarrassingly admits. Only later, vs 16 at says, after Jesus was glorified, did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him. We sometimes say we wish we could have been there, but I dare say we'd be just as blind as they were. We have the benefit today of sitting a little further back from the screen where we can see more of the picture. We can see the prophecies in the past along with His death and resurrection in the next 8 days. If you sit too close to the movie screen you can't see it all.

So what does this have to do with us almost 2000 years later? Say everything. First of all, if Jesus is our King, let's wave some palms! Our own palms of worship and celebration. Maybe these palms. We may not have any physical palm branches today, but we can wave the worship of our hearts. Hosanna is the perfect word for **us** to shout! Both in praise and in prayer! Because He **has saved** us! And one day all the saved will wave palms in heaven! Rev 7:9-10 says, "... there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of 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, (sounds like Hosanna) who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." You might as well get your worship on now and start waving those palm branches today!

Which leads to the most important takeaway. Is Jesus **your** king? Is He king in your heart and of your life? The Pharisees knew there was room for only one king and they chose Caesar. Who will you choose? Jesus did answer their Hosanna prayers, and ours, because He did and He does save! And He is the only one who does! Salvation belongs to Him and to Him alone! Make Him your Savior and your King. If you've never recognized Him as the promised Messiah fulfilling every Scripture and coming to save **you**, do that now and ask Him to as we pray!