

## *The Grand Marshall*

Luke 19:28-44 & Psalm 118

March 17, 2024

How many of you like parades? I thought everyone loved a parade, but there was a guy who knew his relationship was over when his girlfriend made him watch a Chinese parade. There were just too many red flags. In May of 1975, I got to see President Gerald Ford in the Apple Blossom parade in Winchester. He was the Grand Marshall that year and thousands of people lined up to see him. I know where I was standing near Handley High School when his presidential limo whizzed by as he waved out the top of it. His daughter Susan was the queen that year and this year his great granddaughter is to be crowned with that same honor. Today we'll see Jesus as a Grand Marshall of another parade. Please open your Bibles to Luke 19. Pew Bibles. We're going to get a jump on Holy Week today as we prepare to remember and celebrate the holiest moments in human history. Because of the unequalled importance of Jesus' sacrifice at Calvary's cross on Good Friday, we're going to spend some time next week considering it in depth. As well as preparing for our time around the Lord's Table. So much happened in Jesus' last week and we've looked at it before, but it's important that we not forget. In addition, the green of St. Patrick's Day coincides nicely with that of Palm Sunday.

If you are able, please stand as we read Luke 19:28. After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 29 As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 30 "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.'" 32 Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. 33 As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" 34 They replied, "The Lord needs it." 35 They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. 36 As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. 37 When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: 38 "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (Keep open)

Say Palm Sunday. We find Jesus here in a very uncharacteristic situation. For the past three years or so, He has been avoiding the limelight, dodging attention, and shunning publicity. Now He not only accepts it, He even arranged it. What is going on? It's helpful to remember the backstory to Palm Sunday. During the past few years Jesus has been teaching and healing both up north in Galilee, His home area, as well as in and around Jerusalem when He's been there for Passover and other feasts. At various times His disciples have encouraged Him to seize power and take over as king. Each

time He has resisted with words something like, “My time has not yet come.” On a number of occasions He told those He healed **not** to tell anyone for He knew that if they did, and some of them did, it would make His ministry and teaching more difficult. And it did. John tells us that not long before this Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead and as word of **that** incredible miracle spread, Jesus withdrew to the village of Ephraim to stay out of sight and away from the Jewish leaders who were now very actively trying to kill Him.

As Jesus came to Jerusalem for what He knew would be His last time, He passed through Jericho on His way where He healed blind Bartimaeus. Earlier in this very chapter He also called Zacchaeus down out of his sycamore tree and had lunch with him. And the very night before Palm Sunday, John tells us that Mary anointed Jesus’ feet with perfume and wiped them with her hair. Things are moving rapidly toward the culmination of His ministry and it seems everyone can sense some sort of climax building.

The bigger picture is that Jerusalem is beginning to swell with many people, perhaps as many as two million, who were coming not only from Judea and Galilee, but from all over the world. To be in Jerusalem for Passover was a command for all Jews and many endeavored to obey it if at all possible.

Then, on what we now know as Palm Sunday, Jesus made His grand entry. Keep in mind that none of the Jews were in church on Sunday. They had been to Temple and their synagogues the day before for Sabbath, on Saturday, but this day, Sunday, was like our Monday and was a workday. For many of the pilgrims who were already in Jerusalem, it was a day to get ready for Passover.

And Jesus knows that His time has finally come. You see, Daniel prophesied some 550 years earlier that the Chosen One, the Messiah, would be revealed 483 years after the command was issued to rebuild the temple. And, according to Chuck Missler, that particular Sunday morning was the very day of the exact timing. Although the Jewish leaders should have known and been counting down the days, they did not. Perhaps like many theologians today, they didn’t believe that God reveals specifics even though He has time and again. Too often we doubt God’s ability to keep His promises. We should not! Palm Sunday is a great reminder that He does!

At any rate, after shunning the spotlight for the last 3 years, Jesus now grabs the handle of the spotlight and spins it around to shine directly on Himself. He instructs two secretaries of transportation to go secure the limousine for His grand entrance. It’s a one donkeypower convertible with four on the floor, or in the dirt. His ride will be powered by renewable energy, you just have to be careful not to step in the exhaust. It’s a new one that no one has ever ridden before. It’s never been out of the showroom. He even tells them how to dicker with the dealer.

We need to say something about that. If they ask why you're taking it, just tell them the Lord needs it, He says. They did indeed ask that, which I would have too if someone hotwired my car without asking. They responded as they had been told. How well the donkey owner knew Jesus we have no idea although if it was anywhere near Bethany, which it sounds like it was, the story of how Jesus raised Lazarus would have been well known. And so when they said, "The Lord needs it," they did not hesitate. Are we as willing to offer our resources to Jesus? If He needs our car, our home, our property, our money? It's a bit ironic that the Lord of Creation would need anything of ours, in fact He doesn't, but in this world, He chooses to invite us to participate in what He is doing. Like the donkey owner, we can either willingly participate, and receive a blessing as a result, or refuse and miss out.

A donkey was no small investment in those days, especially a young one with a full life of service in front of it, but when its owner heard who needed it, he didn't pause. He didn't even make them sign a waiver or a rental agreement. And they did have lawyers in those days, too. What do you have that the Lord could use? Not the old worn out mama donkey, but the fresh new colt? How can you provide your resources that Jesus might be exalted and worshiped? Mark tells us they promised the owner to return the colt shortly and imagine the honor to own the car the Messiah had ridden in for His final parade!

So let's get back to the parade. For that is what it was. Say parade. To keep His clothes clean, I guess, they threw their cloaks on the donkey's back. No saddle was needed, but they did need seat covers-this was first century WeatherTech. And they also spread their cloaks on the road. Why? As a show of respect and honor. So the car wouldn't get its tires dusty. So the mud, if there was any, wouldn't splash up on the Grand Marshall. Some of the other gospel writers tell us they were waving palm branches and laying them on the ground. This was a first century equivalent to a ticker tape parade. Although we might think it was hastily arranged and impromptu, a spur of the moment celebration for the greatest person they knew, Zechariah's prophecy in chapter 9 assures us it had been in the works for at least 500 years. Still the Jewish leaders missed it.

This passage tells us the people were joyfully praising God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: For the previously blind Bartimaeus down over the hill in Jericho, the former cripple let down through the roof, and Lazarus who had been dead in His tomb for four days. And for the many other miracles we are told were too numerous to record. Not only are they getting a chance to openly praise Jesus, but for the first time He's receiving and accepting it!

Sometimes people who have never read the Bible say that Jesus never claimed to be God. While He did so in other places, this is another instance where He not only

accepted their worship but arranged it. This would have been blasphemy if He were not God, so you chose!

Vs 38 "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" Talk about a campaign rally! But instead of playing Lee Greenwood's Proud to be an American, they were playing David's Anthem to the Messiah. Composed about 1000 years before this day, God inspired David to pen the words for their praises in Psalm 118. I don't know the tune, but these are the lyrics. Vs 19 "Open for me the gates of righteousness; I will enter and give thanks to the Lord. 20 This is the gate of the Lord through which the righteous may enter. (Jesus was righteous and He was entering through the Eastern Gate of the city toward the Temple.) Vs 21 I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation. (Jesus was becoming our salvation). Vs 22 The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; (Jesus quoted this about Himself later that same week) Vs 23 the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. 24 This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. (And they were) Vs 25 O Lord, save us; (The word Hosanna literally means Lord save us! It comes from this same Hebrew word in Psalm 118) 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. 27 The Lord is God, and he has made his light shine upon us. With boughs in hand, (Palm boughs to be exact) join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar." They probably sang the whole song for they would have known it by heart and it's all about the Messiah!

But not everyone is happy. Not everyone loves **this** parade. Vs 39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" "Close this parade down. You don't have a permit. They shouldn't be doing this. You're putting us all in danger." There's always a few killjoys around.

Jesus responds in vs 40 "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." In contrast to His typical mode of operation, Jesus will **not** prohibit the crowd from heaping their praises upon Him. His time had come! And, He says, if **they** don't shout out, the granite and the slate will! Friends, God will be glorified with you or without you. I suggest you go ahead and be a part of what He is doing. If all the limestone in this valley cries out the sound will be deafening! But there's even more rocks around Jerusalem. Jesus will not restrain His followers. It's an exciting time. It's a great parade!

But wait, are those tears in Jesus' eyes? Vs 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. 43 The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. 44 They will dash you to the ground, you and the

children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

Say wept. Jesus wept about a week earlier before He raised Lazarus and here He is weeping again. This time for the horrible destruction He can see coming about 40 years in the future in 70AD at the hands of the Romans when they will surround and besiege Jerusalem, invade it, and burn it to the ground. They did indeed slaughter upwards of 1.2 million people in Jerusalem and ran out of wood for their crosses. We've been talking about it in morning Bible Study. The Romans dismantled their cherished temple, stone by stone to melt the gold off of each piece till not one was left on top another, just as Jesus prophesied.

Why? Because they did not recognize the time of God's coming! They didn't want to recognize Him. They refused to acknowledge Him. The promised Messiah arrived right in front of them and demonstrated it by many miracles and insightful teaching. "No thanks. We got the spiritual stuff covered. If you want to drive the Romans out, have at it, we'll follow you. But if you want to call us to repentance and forgiveness, well, we don't need that. We can work our own way to God." And Jesus wept for these people He loved so much. For the city of peace He had visited many times. For the Kingdom of God they were rejecting. He came unto His own and His own received Him not.

His words echo out to us today from the Mt of Olives, across the Kidron Valley, and down through the centuries, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring **you** peace." Do you know today? Do you even care today? The ways of God, His commandments, His presence bring peace. Most importantly, His Son, Jesus, the Messiah is the Prince of Peace. He died to establish peace between you and God and to make it possible for every human being to enjoy His peace and His presence forever. Oh please don't reject Him like the Jewish leaders did that day. Please don't hide your eyes and your ears. Instead of trying shut down His parade, grab a palm branch and join in! Pick up a hymnal and join the chorus!!

One part of the song from Psalm 118 we read but didn't comment on. Vs 27 says, "join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar." Say altar. The altar is where the sacrifice was offered up to God to atone for the sins of the people. This great throng was ushering the perfect Lamb of God right up to those horns of the altar. And He was willingly going with them. God inspired David to write about it all 1000 years earlier and now it was unfolding in plain sight.

This parade was going somewhere. It was leading straight to the cross by the end of the week. It would go past the Temple to cleanse it, it would pause at the Upper Room for the Last Supper, it would circle around Gethsemane and it would have a triumphant celebration one week later at the Empty Tomb. But on Friday it would stop at the judge's

stand where the Judge of all the earth would accept the sacrifice of the Grand Marshall as payment for the sins of all who ever lived. But we have to receive this forgiveness. We have to accept the Grand Marshall of this Palm Sunday Parade. We must accept the Lord Jesus Christ as the Grand Marshall of our life. Our Savior, and our Lord. We must wave our own palm branches of praise and ask Him to Hosanna us. To save us. If you never have, do that this morning! And if you have, praise and glorify the Grand Marshall so the rocks don't have to cry out.