

## Palm Sunday

“The Blessed King of Israel has come in the name of the Lord”

(John 12:13)

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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for Palm Sunday is from our Gospel reading, John 12:13.

**“12 The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out:**

**“Hosanna! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ The King of Israel!”**

So far the text...

The other Gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke also include this most important account of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem. All three mention that the people put their clothes on the road to make a makeshift red carpet entrance for Jesus. It was their way of honoring Jesus. John doesn't mention the people throwing down the clothes on the road but he does mention the palms that the people were waving, as does Matthew and Mark, but not Luke.

From Matthew we hear that there was a group of people following Jesus and there was a group that went before Him to meet Him. What was happening? It was a great convergence of people. Those who witnessed the raising of Lazarus from the dead followed Jesus and this word reached the people who were already in Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. They heard about this sign that Jesus did and went out to greet Him also.

It was too much for the Pharisees to bear seeing all this attention to Jesus. They cried out to Jesus to rebuke His disciples we read in Luke.

**“40 But He answered and said to them, “I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.” (Luke 19:40)**

And then from our Gospel in John we see the exasperation of the Pharisees when as they said among themselves, **““You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!”**

The world “has gone mad” over Him is basically what they were saying. Madness. A Man on a donkey being proclaimed King of Israel. How can this Man be the Blessed One?

Oh, the Pharisees wanted to do away with Jesus and Lazarus for that matter too. Leave no loose ends – as the saying goes – no witnesses. We hear in John’s Gospel right before our reading:

**“10 But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, 11 because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.”**

Now that’s madness...to kill innocent lives!

There is this thing going on right now called “March Madness”. Oh no, not another sports analogy, right? But you know March Madness is much more than sports. It’s about the connection that people feel towards their alma mater that often spans generation. Grandpa went to this college and so did the parents and now also the grandkids. There’s a lot wrapped up in March Madness from the support of your team, usually from your home state like Baylor and the Texas A&M, to the madness of bracketology, where pools of money are gathered and given to the person who correctly picks the winner of the tournament. Who is going to be in the final four and then the championship?

The madness surrounding Jesus’ joyful entrance into Jerusalem would turn into the mad cries “Crucify Him”. For Jesus wasn’t delivering what the people wanted – an earthly King to reign and release them from the rule of Rome.

But this wasn’t Jesus plan at all. Jesus didn’t want to make the final four of earthly expectations. He wanted to make the final three...on Calvary...dying between convicted sinners. That’s what Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem was all about.

We saw Jesus pick up the pace last week as He led His disciples to Jerusalem. Jesus’ focus scared them. And now the hour had come. So our reading from John 12 continues...

**“27 “Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify Your name.”**

Jesus was in a mighty battle. His soul was deeply troubled for He knew what awaited Him – the anguish of paying for the sins of the whole world.

But Jesus submitted His will to His Father’s will. We see the sweat turning to blood in the Garden of Gethsemane. Save Me from this hour, Father? No! This was the very purpose of Jesus’ coming. It was the madness of God becoming incarnate and dying on the cross. There was no other way! And by Jesus’ death, the Father would be glorified!

And the voice of the Father, heard at Jesus’ baptism, and at His Transfiguration, was heard once again at the most crucial moment before His crucifixion. They were on the same page, one in their purpose and mission – to save the world!

You know, when one's team doesn't make the sweet sixteen or the elite eight, the first reaction is to find out who's at fault. Who gets the blame? Usually the coach is the scapegoat, or the refs, or injuries, or ...the list goes on.

Adam and Eve were quick to move the blame away from themselves too. It was the woman You gave me. It was the snake who deceived me... And we too try to deflect the blame of our failures to submit to God and follow His Word. We give thanks to God that this hour did come...for us! For Jesus took all the world's blame. Jesus said,

**“31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” 33 This He said, signifying by what death He would die.”**

Judgment was meted out on Jesus for our sins. He was judged guilty that the world be judged innocent. And by this judgment, the ruler of this world, the devil, would have no more firepower. He would have nothing to charge against the world because Jesus paid for all the peoples sins, yours and mine. He had to be lifted up...on a cross. And by His lifting up, all peoples are forgiven and the world is justified, drawn to Him!

Yes, this Palm Sunday is for all people, for all of us to raise our voices in praise. Jesus said,

**“24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.”**

Jesus' death produces the much grain. His death gives life to the world. And at this very hour, Gentiles came seeking to speak with Jesus. The hour to reach out to the Gentiles was nigh now at the death of Jesus. His hour of death became our hour of salvation, for us who are Gentiles.

Through baptism, we are united with the death and the resurrection of Jesus so that God produces in you much grain! Listen to 1 Corinthians 1:5-9.

**“5 that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, 6 even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, 7 so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Enriched grain, blameless grain, coming short in no gift and eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. You were called into this fellowship and God is faithful to confirm you blameless until our Lord Jesus returns.

For in Jesus there is not just one victor as there is in tournaments. Jesus won the victory by and cast out the devil and removed the sting of death. He was the first to rise. But thanks be to God that we who cry out

**‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’** indeed has come to us through the means of grace with His salvation. Hosanna! And He will come again to gather all His people together on the last day. For the King who humbly came to Jerusalem has subjected all things to Himself. And this He promises to us in Philippians 3.

**20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.**

Yes, Jesus is **“The King of Israel!”** He is the King of His church, the spiritual Israel including Jews and Gentiles. And when we meet Him in heaven we too will wave our palms of honor and gratitude for all He has done to rescue us! So we know from Revelation 7.

**“9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (Revelation 7:9-10)**

Amen

**“And this peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**