

Palm Sunday

“God’s gracious plans for us to remember and understand”

John 12:14-16

April 13, 2025

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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 this Palm Sunday is from our Gospel reading, John 12:14-16

**“14 Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written:
15 “Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming,
Sitting on a donkey’s colt.”**

16 His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him.

So far the text...

There was a poem written in 1785 called “To a Mouse” by the Scottish poet Robert Burns. In the poem, a farmer carries on a conversation with a mouse because he had accidentally plowed up the mouse’s home and he felt sorry for it. Winter was coming and the mouse didn’t have a warm cozy place to when the cold came. He offers to help the mouse out with some food.

A famous line from the poem was “The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry”. On this Palm Sunday, there was a lot of planning and plotting going on that would reach it’s culmination later in the week at the cross of Calvary – not of mice and men, but of God and men. God was planning – but man was plotting – plotting the destruction of Jesus.

So, we heard last Sunday, when Jesus told the chief priests and Pharisees the parable of the wicked vineyard tenants, that they realized He was speaking to them...that they were wanting to kill the Son of God and seize the inheritance on their own terms...that is, their own supposed self-righteousness. Rather than repent from Jesus warning, they doubled down with their plotting. How did our reading end last week?

“19 And the chief priests and the scribes that very hour sought to lay hands on Him, but they feared the people—for they knew He had spoken this parable against them.” (Luke 20:19)

The disciples’ understanding of God’s planning for the world’s salvation was not in tune with what they expected from the Messiah. For Jesus spoke to them about His coming death and resurrection many times. We remember Peter’s response.

“22 Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!”

For Peter and the disciples, Jesus’ death seemed like God’s planning was going awry. This cannot happen! Peter even drew the sword and cut off the ear of a servant when Jesus was arrested. What was Jesus’ response?

23 But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.” (Matthew 16:22-23)

Man’s thinking is self-centered and evil. Man’s planning and plotting since the fall in the Garden of Eden has given him a life where things awry, Murphy’s Law prevails, floods enter the homes of valley residents when its least expected. But what has gone awry for all of us is that we have lost our heavenly home because of sin.

Sin has plowed it up. Life is filled with sadness like the death of Lazarus mentioned in our text. Plans are made for a father to walk down the aisle with his daughter at her wedding, but he dies before that can happen. How many of our plans have gone awry that we wanted to happen?

Jesus was a man with a bounty on His head...30 pieces of silver to tell of His whereabouts. The hunt for Jesus by the Pharisees had intensified since Jesus had performed the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead.

Jesus calls on each of us to follow Him and trust in Him when life goes awry, when the unexpected happens, when things are out of our control. For God is in control.

What is the cost of following Jesus? We remember Jesus’ words in Luke 9:

“Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”

Jesus spent His time going from town to town telling people of the salvation He brings. Followers of Jesus are also pilgrims in this world, for a believer’s true permanent home is heaven.

61 And another also said, “Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.”

62 But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Following Jesus, God’s plan for you will never go awry!

We see God’s amazing planning as we look back at the death of Lazarus and remember and understand what Jesus did.

At first glance, it would seem that Jesus had failed. Lazarus was ill and Jesus did not purposely come right away to help him. By the time that Jesus arrived, Lazarus had been dead for 4 days. There was no doubt of this. And we hear Martha’s sadness when she says,

“Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.”

Why did Jesus allow Lazarus to die? Jesus told His disciples.

“And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe.”

Not only His disciples believed, but Mary Martha and many people who saw the resurrection of Lazarus. Because Lazarus had died, Jesus could speak these words of promise that are such a comfort to all people.

“5 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.”

God's plan of sending His Son to the cross to die and then rise again gives hope to all mankind whose lives have gone awry because of sin. Death is not the end for all who believe in Jesus. But there is a resurrection to eternal life that awaits!

People went out to see the living proof that Lazarus was alive. He was a living witness of Jesus' power and the chief priests and Pharisees realized that they were losing their power and influence. So, in the previous chapter, chapter 11, we hear their scheming plans.

47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. 48 If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."

What was the solution? Kill Jesus.

49 And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish."

53 Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.

Jesus couldn't walk openly anymore, and some speculated on whether He would come to the Passover festival or not. Was God's planning going awry?

Let's take a moment and understand God's planning. Of course, our text tells us that Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem was planned by God and prophesied in the Old Testament. Zechariah 9:9 gives precise detail of this Palm Sunday.

**"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation,
Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey."**

Humbly Jesus the King comes. He comes with salvation for His people. We rejoice greatly that God's planning and solution for man's salvation was accomplished once and for all on the shameful cross of Calvary. He who is just and righteous dies for the unjust, you and me and gives us His righteousness through faith.

Why did Jesus allow Lazarus to die? Could it not have been that this Palm Sunday entrance into Jerusalem would be filled with many more people wanting to see this great miracle of Lazarus' resurrection? Could it not be that this miracle caused the chief priests and Pharisees to become absolutely determined to kill Jesus and His witness, Lazarus at all costs?

“9 Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. 10 But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also,”

Empty hands – all their plotting was in vain, because God used their evil for His ultimate good – the salvation of the world!

And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!

If Christ had not risen then your faith is empty. And God's plans had gone awry.

18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

But next Sunday we will hear this good news that causes us to rejoice greatly:

20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

So, follow Jesus! Wave your palms of praise and faith! Press on...to your eternal home. All glory be to Jesus! Amen

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