

**April 1, 2007
Palm Sunday**

"You Can't Be Quiet about Your Palm Sunday King"

LUKE 19:28-40

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!" {³⁸ Psalm ^{118:26}} "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"³⁹ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"⁴⁰ "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." I am holding in my hand a glass. I can make it "sing" with a high-pitched ringing sound by simply rubbing my finger around the rim in the right way and sound will be produced. I cannot do the same with this rock. I can rub my finger around it again and again and it will not sing. When the religious leaders criticized Jesus followers for singing too loudly, Jesus told them if his followers keep quiet, the stones will cry out their praises to the Lord.

There are times when you simply cannot keep silent about Jesus. You have to sing out and shout and cry out. If you take a can of soda and shake it vigorously and open the tab the soda explodes. So it is with the Christian who by the Holy Spirit begins to see what an awesome Savior we have. You cannot hold it inside of you. It has to come out as we are told in Romans 10, "With the heart we believe and with the mouth confession is made."

Have you ever seen a news clip from the Mid East showing someone riding on a little donkey? It is almost humorous how these people ride these donkeys with their feet almost touching the ground. That's our King, King Jesus. He is King of kings and Lord of lords riding into Jerusalem on a lowly donkey to give up his life on a cross for our sin. We are not ashamed of him. We want the whole world to hear us singing his praises and shouting out his name. If we keep silent then the stones are going to have to cry out. This morning we want to talk to you about why **"You Can't Be Quiet about Your Palm Sunday King."**

You have good reasons to give him praise

You can't be quiet about Jesus as he comes into Jerusalem because you have good reasons to give him your best praises. Notice first how eager Jesus was to go to Jerusalem. "After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem." Jesus went ahead of the disciples. He led the way. He did not drag his feet. Already in the Old Testament the Messiah had spoken these words about his firm resolve. "Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will

not be put to shame.” (Isaiah 50:7) Flint is hard. It can be chipped into a knife that is far sharper than the best knives you have in your drawer. Jesus was so determined to go to Jerusalem and die for people like us that it says in Hebrews, “For the joy set before him he endured the cross and the shame.”

Look at a picture of Jesus as the Good Shepherd who rescues the sheep. Portrayed on his face is both determination and joy. That’s what we see on the face of Jesus as he rides into Jerusalem. We realize how much he personally loves us. Away with those nasty critics of the Bible who say Jesus didn’t know what was going to happen to him when he went up to Jerusalem. Jesus knew everything. Still he rode into the city.

Look at Jesus riding on that little donkey, holding on to the neck to keep from falling off. Don’t laugh. The hands of Jesus holding on are the hands of God that created the world, including beasts of burden such as donkeys and horses, camels, and cattle. Jesus demonstrates his full knowledge and full power as God by what he says to the disciples. “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.” How did Jesus know the animal was in the village? How did he know the man would let the disciples borrow the donkey without putting up a fuss? Jesus knew because Jesus is Lord and God.

It also says, “They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt, and put Jesus on it.” No one had ever ridden that animal before. Has anyone here ever been involved in breaking in horses? You know how tricky that can be especially if the animal spooks or has a stubborn nature. Jesus used his power as God to control this donkey. He did not want to make things easier for himself but he did want to provide us with a powerful reminder of his willingness to serve us. In fact Jesus was willing to humble himself even to the point of death as we heard in our second reading from Philippians 2. “Who being in the very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of servant, being made in human likeness...he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on the cross.” Here is Jesus in total control of the situation, in total control of the universe, in total control of what is going to happen to him as he goes up to the cross and in total control of saving us. Not one thing will be left undone perfectly.

The people gathered in large numbers in Jerusalem for the Passover celebration could not contain themselves in their joy when they saw Jesus. “As he went along, people spread their coats on the road.” See him riding along the Mount of Olives. People took their cloaks that they brought with them as they traveled to keep warm at night. They spread them before Jesus. They laid down palm branches in front of Jesus. It was their way of showing their love for Jesus. It was their way of welcoming him as their king.

Look at Jesus as he crests the Mount of Olives. He comes down the steep path leading into the Kidron Valley. The people see him and raise their voices in loud praise. “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.” No worship leader had to orchestrate these people and give them a starting note. They simply burst into one of their favorite songs. It was almost like a national anthem to them, a song for which they were famous all over the world, a song they sang on the roads leading to Jerusalem and in the temple when they came to Passover. It was Psalm 118 and it spoke of the Messiah who was to come as the stone the builders rejected that became the capstone.

Joyfully they sang the words we still sing today, "This is the day the Lord has made let us rejoice and be glad in it" and "Hosanna, blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord."

As I worked these words this past week I noticed something I had never seen clearly before. It says they praised the Lord with loud voices, "for all the miracles they had seen." Some had seen Jesus heal the blind man even as they were coming to Jerusalem. Some were there when Jesus raised Lazarus after he had been dead for four days. They praised Jesus for his miracles but sadly they also had this false hope inside that he would use his power to perform even greater miracles. They knew Jesus could snap his fingers and the Roman soldiers would be toast. Israel could rise again to power and glory.

What most of these people did not see, including Jesus' own disciples, were the greater miracles Jesus did for the whole world as he allowed himself to be arrested, condemned, beaten, and then crucified. This morning we stand in awe of this mighty miracle that could only be carried out by Jesus the Lamb of God who sacrificed himself for us. I cannot with my finite mind comprehend how Jesus was able to gather the sins of the world and take them upon himself. I don't understand it but I believe it is true. Clearly this miracle is defined for us in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." That's the miracle that moves us to pull out all the stops and cry out loudly with the people of Jerusalem, "That's our King! That's my King! That's Jesus my Savior."

Did you hear the story of the dog that saved a woman's life this past week? She was choking on an apple, but could not administer the Heimlich method to herself. She fell to kitchen floor and began pounding on her chest. Then her dog, a two year old golden retriever, began jumping on her chest, and the piece of apple came free. We love to hear stories of people being rescued. There is no story like the story of Jesus who rescued us when we were choking with sin, with no hope of escaping the judgment or ever freeing ourselves. So we sing "Hosanna" which means, "Lord save us." This week we are privileged to gather for worship on Good Friday as we contemplate the wonder of Jesus' death and his triumphant words for us, "It is finished." Once again we will hear him die with a triumphant glorious loud voice, "Father into your hands I commit my spirit." If we try to keep silent about Jesus, the stones will cry out and start singing.

Jesus has good reason to hear your praises

The Pharisees told Jesus to restrain his followers and not let them get so carried away emotionally. "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." Then Jesus spoke these words about the stones crying out. "I tell you," he replied, "If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." Jesus needed to hear these people sing his praises. He set aside his power as God. He was fully human and tempted as we are. He needed the encouragement and the strength this singing offered, just as He needed to pray to his heavenly Father for strength and needed angels to come and minister to him in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Death is our enemy and death has a sting to it. Have you ever been stung by a bee? Did you enjoy it? According to 1 Corinthians 15 the sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law. Although we know what will happen to us after we die, we still fear the process of dying. Imagine what it must have been like for Jesus to face the reality of death, face

the sin of the world placed on him, face intense physical suffering and then be forsaken by his own heavenly Father. Jesus needed to hear these people sing. He needed to see them lay down their clothes in front of him. He needed to have them wave the palm branches as symbols of victory, his victory on the cross

Jesus also needs your praises and my praises today. He does not need to be strengthened personally, for now he has been exalted to the highest place. He reigns in full glory. His suffering is over. He needs you and me for another important task or assignment. He needs us to sing out and praise him so other Christians can be strengthened as we are told in Colossians, "Sing to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. He also needs our songs of praise to draw the attention of those who don't believe to the blessings Jesus. John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and said, "Look the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." The Lord wants to use your lips and your mouth and your tongue to sing your praises to the Lamb so the whole world will hear. If you don't sing out, Jesus will not use stones to sing out for you, but he may use the voices of others, other living stones in his kingdom and we will have missed the opportunity of a lifetime. You can't keep quiet about your Palm Sunday king. Amen.