

March 24, 2013
Palm Sunday

"Glory to Jesus Our 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.

It was Palm Sunday in Santa Barbara in the late seventies. A large crowd of people came together from different churches for an afternoon ecumenical service. The featured speaker began his sermon with the statement, "Jesus did not know what was going to happen to him when he went up to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday." He paused to let the effect of his statement sink into the crowd. That was a huge mistake. An elderly lady in the front row sitting right underneath the pulpit shouted out, "O yes he did!"

Jesus said if we try to silence the people the stones will cry out.

A few weeks ago a famous so called theologian came to Solvang to lecture at a church that is noted for inviting people to speak who question the truths of the Bible. This retired professor from DePaul University wrote an article last year with the title, "Why did Jesus go to Jerusalem?" He writes, "My answer is that Jesus went up to Jerusalem to make twin demonstrations against Roman control of the city of Jerusalem and Roman control over the temple of God."

Jesus knew exactly what why he was riding into Jerusalem. He did not go to demonstrate against the Romans. As he climbs up the Judean hills from the Jordan Valley he speaks to his beloved disciples with detailed specificity, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be

handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again." Jesus knew exactly what would happen to him.

Let's give glory to Jesus this morning by first noting the careful preparation he makes as he rides into Jerusalem. Then we will see the joyful adoration he receives from the large crowd of people.

The careful preparation

The ride into Jerusalem on a lowly donkey did not happen by chance. It was carefully planned by Jesus. "After Jesus had said this, he went ahead, going up to Jerusalem." Jesus went ahead. He led the way. Determination was written all over his face. See the determination on the face of the fireman who runs into a burning building to save a child. The book of Hebrews says for the joy set before him Jesus endured the cross and shame.

Our loving Savior now prepares for the ride into Jerusalem. He approaches Bethany the home of his good friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Jesus tells two of his 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. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you bringing it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.'"

Jesus wants the donkey to lead him through the crowds of people who will welcome him. Usually Jesus avoided the large crowds that wanted to make him a king. Now it is different. Now is the time, God's time, for Jesus to go to the cross. Thousands of people are crowding into Jerusalem for the Passover celebration. The large crowd welcoming Jesus will fan the flames of hatred for Jesus. By the end of the week his enemies will convince the Romans to nail him to the cross. How fitting that Jesus gives his life as the Lamb of God on very time the Passover is celebrated.

Jesus told them to go to the village and find a colt tied there. Matthew's account records Jesus telling them they would immediately find the donkey. How did Jesus know there would be a colt and its mother in the village nearby? How did he know the owner would give them permission to take the two donkeys? Here we see Jesus use his power as God to provide the young donkey he needed to ride into Jerusalem. Jesus knows all things just as God our heavenly Father knows all things. He saw the donkeys tied up. He knew the owner would let them borrow the donkeys when the disciples simply said, "The Lord has need of them." Jesus is in total control of the situation as he prepares to give his life for us.

I find great comfort in seeing how carefully Jesus plans his historic ride into Jerusalem. Everything necessary to save us from our sin was carefully planned by our God from all eternity. We try to do a good job of planning our lives. Last Thursday I planned for a full day of working on sermons for Holy Week. Then one of the cars sprung a leak in its cooling system. We plan to live our lives for the Lord. We have the best of intentions, but then we come face to face with our failures as Paul did when he wrote, "For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing." Jesus planned in great specificity to drink the cup of suffering for my sin and yours. He stuck to the planned and

executed every detail necessary to give us the forgiveness and peace with God we cannot find in ourselves.

They brought the donkey to Jesus. Notice this is not just an ordinary donkey. It was the foal, a young colt. It had never been ridden before. They brought it to Jesus, put their clothes on its back and then put Jesus on it. Under all normal circumstances this donkey that had never been ridden would have bucked him. The huge crowds with all their singing and shouting and waving of clothes and palm branches would have caused it to throw off its rider and bolt away. But this is not an ordinary situation. This is Jesus, God's Son, our Savior, the Creator of the Universe miraculously riding this donkey into Jerusalem. How strangely wonderful that Jesus uses his power as God to have the donkey ride him into Jerusalem and yet he holds on with hands to keep from falling. The hands that hold on to the donkey will soon be nailed to the cross for our sin.

All of this was carefully planned for our salvation and also carefully planned to fulfill an amazing prophecy in Zechariah 9 where it says, "Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt the foal of a donkey." That prophecy predicted Jesus would ride on the colt, the foal of a donkey. It predicted in amazing detail that Jesus would bring us righteous and salvation. My greatest need is not to win over 300 million dollars in the recent lottery. My greatest need is to be righteous before God and have salvation. Jesus carefully prepares to go into Jerusalem to bring this salvation to us.

The joyful adoration

Jesus anticipated large crowds of people welcoming him into Jerusalem. The crowds that followed Jesus have been building up as he led the way up to Jerusalem for the Passover. He comes near to the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives into the Kidron Valley. As Jesus crests the Mount of Olives and starts down, he sees the city of Jerusalem. He sees the magnificent temple built by King Herod. Here is where it will happen. Here he will be sacrificed for the sin of the world.

The crowds of people go in front of Jesus throwing down the cloaks they carried for traveling in front of Jesus. The gospel of John says they laid palm branches in front of Jesus, symbols of victory and triumph. It was their way of showing their respect and love for Jesus. It says, "The whole crowd began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen." There is a certain amount of anticipation and excitement as people share with each the miracles they have seen. Some are talking about family members and friends who were personally healed by Jesus.

This was a strange crowd of people. They did not want Jesus to go to the cross and die for their sins. They believed if Jesus could feed 5000 people with only five barley loaves and two small fish, then he snap his fingers and the Romans would be toast. They want Jesus to restore Israel to even greater glory than the days of Solomon, a great society where there will be a chicken in every pot, a car in every garage, and a color television in every home. Even Jesus' own disciples had false hopes and dreams that Jesus would restore the kingdom to Israel.

The people shout and sing to Jesus. No one had to tell them what to sing. The thousands of pilgrims coming from all over Israel were used to singing in their homes. They were ready to sing when they came to Jerusalem for worship. Everyone knew the words of Psalm 118 and so they sing, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord." They sing "Hosanna" which means save us. Psalm 118 begins with words that are also very familiar to us, "O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good and his mercy endures forever." Psalm 118 says, "The Lord's right hand has done mighty things! The Lord's right hand is lifted high; the Lord's right hand has done mighty things."

On this Palm Sunday I ask you to look at Jesus as he rides into Jerusalem. Look at the determination that is there on his face. He will not leave one stone unturned to save you, not one sin not paid for completely. Look at the head of Jesus. It will be crowned with a crown of thorns. Look at his hands. They are holding onto the little donkey to keep from falling, and yet these are the hands of God himself. These hands will be nailed to a cross for your sin and the sin of the world. He will keep the nail prints in his hands after he rises from the dead just to prove to you beyond any doubt that he has risen from the dead and that every sin is paid for completely.

How can we keep silent? If we keep silent as Jesus says, "The stones will cry out." There is too much happening here. Jesus knew exactly what was going to happen to him. He carried out his work of saving us with amazing detail and carefulness. He leaves nothing for our frail and faltering and feeble and fickle hands. He does it all for us. May the Holy Spirit give help us give full glory and honor to Jesus our Palm Sunday King. If someone ever says, "Jesus did not know what was going to happen to him when he went up to Jerusalem," you know what to say. "Oh, yes he did." Amen.