

JESUS KNEW HIS MISSION

Luke 19: 28-38 Text vs. 38 *“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”*

Today is Palm Sunday, the day Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time. The day had great insight mixed with deep misunderstanding. The people of Israel welcomed Jesus. They had cut palm branches to lay on the road ahead of Him which had great symbolism. Palm branches symbolized victory. Success. Peace. Eternal life. And the palm was considered sacred. People shouted, *“Hosanna to the Son of David!”* and *“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”* (Luke 19:38)

However, those people didn't fully understand what His entry into Jerusalem was all about. He had come to die on a cross for their sins. Later, Palm branches would symbolize Jesus' victory over death. And today, palm branches are still a reminder of His sacrificial love and of the highest victory you can ever receive. Eternal life! From honor to crucifixion. From resurrection to eternal life His journey reflects the depth of God's love. Little did those people know His concerns for them would lead to His death. And Jesus had deliberately chosen to ride a humble donkey's colt for His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. He could just as easily have walked into Jerusalem that Sunday morning. But instead, he rode the colt of a donkey wanting people to know that He was Messiah fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy. (Zechariah 9:9) *“Rejoice greatly Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you. Righteous and victorious. Lowly, and riding on a donkey. On a colt, the foal of a donkey.”*

His mode of transportation was a symbol of humility. Meekness. And certainly, it contrasted with that of a conquering king. But the joyful crowd spread their coats before Him. They waved palm branches. They shouted *“Hosanna!”* showing their praise and adoration. Their joy was real. But their understanding was shallow. During that celebration *“as Jesus approached Jerusalem and saw the city, He wept over it.”* (Luke 19:41) His tears expressed how His heart was burdened by Jerusalem's coming destruction. He said, *“If only you had known on this day what would bring you peace – but now, it is hidden from your eyes.”*

In 33 years (70 A.D.) a Roman army led by the future Roman emperor Titus would lay waste to Jerusalem. That Jewish–Roman War (66–73 A.D.) lasted seven long years during which the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Second Jewish Temple. Known as Herod's Temple, the Temple had great significance in Jewish history and religion. That Second Temple was more than a physical structure. It represented hope for the Jews. It's where the Jewish people worshipped. It symbolized the spirit of a people devoted to their faith. But now, Jesus expected rejection. He saw betrayal. A crucifixion awaited Him! His tears were tears of Forgiveness. Truly, Jesus was the King—the Messiah — fulfilling ancient prophecies. And His entry into Jerusalem announced who He was. And of His purpose.

But soon, the crowd misjudged Him. They didn't fully grasp that His entry into Jerusalem marked the beginning of His sacrifice for their sins. The palm branches symbolized victory for Jesus over death. His ultimate victory. But the people wanted a political leader, now! One who would deliver them from the crushing rule of Rome. Not a suffering Savior. Their shouts of *“Hosanna”* soon turned to screams of *“Crucify Him!”*

But Jesus knew His Mission. We studied last week that His Mission was to Glorify God. He wasn't attempting to win anyone's favor, except God's. He was walking the path to Redemption. A cross awaited Him. Jesus knew His hour had come. The hour of His ultimate purpose. When He lifted His voice in prayer calling God His *“Father”* it revealed His deep connection and relationship with God. The focus of His prayer was *“Father, Glorify your name!”* And in those four words, Jesus summed up His whole Mission. The glorification of God! Praising and honoring God with acts of worship.

So, Palm Sunday isn't just a historical event. It's a reminder of hope. Jesus conquered death by offering eternal life to all who would believe in Him. But like that crowd, God's ways are often misunderstood. As you journey toward Easter today remember, tears were shed for your salvation. Jesus willingly walked the path of suffering for *you*. It's like the Appalachian folk song that's been mixed with an African American spiritual known as a “journey song” says, *Jesus walked this lonesome valley; He had to walk it by Himself. Oh, nobody else could walk it for Him; He had to walk it by Himself.* That word *“lonesome”* means depressed. Helpless. Defeated. Someone caught in something over which they have no control, but with which they must live and suffer the consequences of what they started. Palm branches symbolized victory. But not the way the crowd expected. Jesus came not to topple Rome. He came to defeat sin and the devil and overcome death. His Mission was to offer salvation to all humanity.

And today, Palm Sunday, is the beginning of Holy Week. The most sacred seven days in the Christian calendar. Holy Week, observed by Christians as a sacred time leading up to Easter. It includes remarkable events in the life of Jesus beginning with today. On that first Palm Sunday people welcomed Jesus by waving palm branches and shouting praises. Then He spent the night in Bethany with Lazarus who He raised from the dead and who lived with his sisters Mary and Martha. These siblings—Mary, Martha, and Lazarus—were not mere characters in this story. They were real people whose lives had met with God. Monday, Jesus cleared the Temple in Jerusalem overturning tables of corrupt money changers. Tuesday, He taught on the Mount of Olives and told parables as the religious leaders questioned His authority. Wednesday is called Silent Wednesday. It's a quiet day in which the world seems to hold its breath waiting for a secret to be disclosed. There's quiet anticipation. And in that stillness, you should find a moment to reflect and appreciate the beauty of silence.

The Gospel writers are silent on what Jesus did on that Wednesday. It's the one day in Holy Week that holds a sense of mystery and calls for quiet reflection. Then Thursday, known as Maundy or Holy Thursday came. It's when Jesus shared the Last Supper with His disciples in the Upper Room. It's called the Eucharist, which is a ritual that connects believers to Jesus' sacrifice, love, and eternal life. He washed the disciples' feet to demonstrate humility and love. And Good Friday! The day of Jesus' crucifixion. That's when He bore the weight of humanity's sins on the cross. Darkness covered the land. Jesus cried out, *"It is finished!"* The veil in the Temple was torn. Torn by God Himself to show His acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice. That ended the Old Covenant which represents the ancient contract between God and Abraham, the father of Israel, and began the New Covenant in Jesus. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus became the final mediator between God and humanity. The New Covenant. The promise that God makes with humanity. It centers around forgiveness of sin. It restores a relationship with those who believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. Believers now had direct access to God through Jesus. The torn veil symbolized being reconciled to God. Having His forgiveness. And receiving eternal life. Holy Saturday. The day between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. A time of complete quiet, meditation and waiting. The day Jesus's body lay in the borrowed tomb. Then, Easter Sunday. That glorious day of resurrection. The stone was rolled away from the tomb and Jesus came out. Alive! He had conquered death! Now, He would offer eternal life to all who would believe in Him. It was the day His mission was finished!

Holy Week. A journey of triumph entering Jerusalem, to sacrifice on a cross, which led to the ultimate victory by Christ's resurrection. Palm Sunday reminds you of His sacrificial love. It points to the victory He achieved through the cross. Revelation says, *⁹ After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."*

Palm Sunday is a day of celebration. Solemn reflection. A reminder of Jesus's Mission and the hope He brings. Palm Sunday invites you to pay attention once more to His compassion. His tears. His sacrifice. Palm Sunday wants you to have hope. And at the close of our service this morning as you leave this Sanctuary, this safe place, you will be handed a palm cross. Wave your "palm" high with a heart full of gratitude and respect. Let that cross serve as a visible reminder of your faith journey and the hope you have in Jesus. Let it remind you Jesus is the King who came in God's name. That His love endures forever. It's a reminder of Jesus's triumphant entry into Jerusalem which led to your salvation. Place your cross where you will be able to see it all through this Holy Week to help you keep your eyes on Jesus. Be thankful every day for the salvation He provided you by His death on the cross. Seek His forgiveness. Recognize His sovereign mercy as you prepare for Easter. Remember, whether displayed in churches, homes, worn around your neck, or carried high during processions, crosses connect believers to the profound events of Holy Week. The cross holds the message of salvation.

This week is called "HOLY" because it clearly shows our Lord's great love for all people. A love willing to suffer *"death on the Cross"* to save you from your sins. A love which knows no end. A love that conquered death itself through His Resurrection. And a God who loves you! Palm Sunday invites you to welcome Jesus into your heart. To God be the Glory. AMEN