

Palm Sunday- Passion Sunday

April 14, 2019

**Our Savior's Way
Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Labuhn**

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

If you haven't noticed by now, today is a special day in the church. Not only is today called Palm Sunday, but it's also called Passion Sunday because today is the beginning of our journey through Holy Week and while it's a busy time in the church, it's also the most important week in the church year. There's a lot of places to stop and remember our Lord throughout the week. And it all begins with palm branches that were once used to welcome Jesus at the beginning of His week of Passion.

Today, we get to wave palm branches in the church and watch the kids parade through the aisles reminding us of the time when Jesus was welcomed into the city of Jerusalem. It was a special time of the year because it reminds us of a time when people once made their way to celebrate the Passover, causing this city of David to grow from about 30,000 people to as large as 300,000 people. For many years they had done so, celebrating the Passover, remembering their need for the Messiah who was to come, who could save them. And Jesus, who had raised Lazarus from the dead, was making His way into Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. This was a miraculous sign to all that He was the Son of God. He was the one of whom the prophets foretold because He was doing miraculous signs.

As He made His way into Jerusalem, people began to wave Palm branches and laying them before Him. It was like He was the long-lost Son of David who was finally returning to Jerusalem. Palm branches were a symbol of nationalistic hope and used in national celebrations. It was Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, yet it certainly wasn't any threat to the Romans. They already knew of the annual Jewish Passover celebration. Still, when they saw Jesus riding on a lowly donkey, who people were calling their King, they must've thought that He was anything but a threat. Their triumphal entries included conquering generals and national heroes who rode on mighty horses to display the power and might of the Roman Empire. But Jesus was riding on a lowly donkey that at the time, even His own disciples couldn't understand why He did this.

That didn't matter to the Pharisees. They had rejected Jesus as the long-lost Son of David. They were looking to discredit Him because they saw Him as a threat to their way of life. Just like when we call out to save me and then feel threatened when He brings about a change. We can become comfortable in our lives of sin, not wanting things to change His way but rather the way we want that leads to death.

Many people who had come into the city from places like Galilee to celebrate the Passover. They knew of the miracles that Jesus had performed, what people were saying about Him, and they probably thought that He would bring the change that they wanted in their lives. That He would bring about a Kingdom that they envisioned, but far from God. Some of the same voices who shouted "Hosanna" would shout "Crucify Him" later in the week.

Still, Pharisees knew with a reception like this, there wasn't much they could do to stop Jesus at that moment. It was like Jesus was receiving a ticker tape parade in their nation's capital during the most important festival of the year. They would have to wait as there wasn't much they could do. They said to each other, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!" And while they may have been exaggerating, God was seeing that their words would come true, because shortly after that,

the Gospel of John records that there were some Greeks there who asked Philip to see Jesus.

It's always been the job of Jesus' disciples to help bring people to Him. It doesn't matter what nation people come from. Jesus Himself ministered throughout Galilee to the Gentiles – people who weren't necessarily part of the Jewish nation or faith at the time. And while He was rejected by His own, the Kingdom of God is much larger than any nation, language, or tribe. And so Philip, with the help of Andrew, shared the request from the Greeks to see Jesus. Jesus knows that the world is waiting, whose Savior He is, and who was seeking Him. He says to them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life. This is the Good News for us as well because it's His death on the cross for our sins that gives us hope and new life. Through His life, death, and resurrection, He gives hope to a dying world. He frees us from the sins that bind us and keep us stuck in our sins. He gives hope to the once lost, enabling us even though we might fail from time to time, to receive His righteousness as forgiven sinners, because of His faithful journey through His Passion.

Here's a video that's been prepared for you this morning.

As much as it might be easier to skip out on our Holy Week worship services and simply show up next Sunday, at the very least, you've already started down the path of His Passion, by waving palms and singing your Hosannas. And over the course of this week, I hope that you might remember the journey that Jesus took responding to those Hosannas for your salvation.

How He humbled Himself and rode on a donkey to fulfill the Old Testament prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. How He boldly overturned the tables of the money changers in the temple on Monday, who were cheating people and making a mockery of God's house. How He taught in parables and predicted the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem on Tuesday.

Join us as we have a number of upcoming worship services. On Thursday at 7:30 pm, we'll remember how He celebrated the Passover and gave it new meaning. Communing together, as we'll do this morning, we'll receive His body and blood, in with and under the bread and the wine. Then, later on that evening, remember how He agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane, praying to God the Father about what was to come.

On Good Friday, you can join us as we'll walk through the Stations of the Cross, recounting His journey as told from different perspectives of those involved in His Passion. And finally, but most of all, join us at 7:30 pm on Good Friday when we'll arrive at our Tenebrae Service. This moving Service of Darkness recounts the final hours as our Lord gives His life for us on the cross before His body is laid in the Tomb.

Why do all of this when our daily lives seem so busy already? Quite simply, out of our deep gratitude and devotion to your Jesus who gives us eternal life and because we know from His Passion, that the only way to Easter morning is through the Cross. For He is the way, the truth, and the life both now and always. In Jesus' name. Amen.