

Sermon Palm Sunday March 28, 2021 John 12:12-19

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

Since this week we celebrate Palm Sunday, we are using the traditional text for Palm Sunday from the gospel of John rather than part of the passion account as printed on the back cover of the bulletin. Let's get right into the reading.

The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. John 12:17-18

Today we have Palm Sunday. In this reading from John, we get some of the details surrounding this pivotal event in the life of Jesus. Why did such a crowd that had gathered in Jerusalem for the Passover leave town again and welcome Jesus with such fanfare? By this time Jesus was a household name. Absolutely everyone had heard the news about Jesus – his teachings, his tufts with the religious elite, his miracles, and in just the past week he had brought Lazarus back to life after four days in the tomb. That last one was the kicker. There were other wonder workers in the land. Some could perform acts of healing. Others, exorcisms. Still others could stretch a sack of beans to feed many people. It was Jesus' resurrection power that tipped the scales in his favor. NO ONE had such power. People could not have even hoped for such a miracle as this. Not only did it defy the laws of nature like the other signs and wonders, but it also even reached into the afterlife and reclaimed departed souls. Now that is really something.

When Jesus raised Lazarus, he was giving a foreshadow of what was to come. A week after Jesus brought Lazarus back from the tomb, Jesus himself broke the chains of death on Easter morning when he, too, rose from the tomb where he was laid. He demonstrated that he holds the power of life in his hands and can wield it on behalf of both himself and others.

That "others" includes us. I don't know if the crowd that welcomed Jesus into the holy city with palms was hoping Jesus would one day raise them like he did Lazarus, or if they were just recognizing his super-human ability and thought he was the kind of man they would like to put in charge of their nation. Either way, we are given a clear understanding as to what Jesus will do for us. He promises that all who look to him to be saved he will raise up on the last day! Jerusalem ran out to welcome the life-giving Jesus. How normal it would be for us, too, one would think, that we would also stop what we are doing and take the time to joyfully greet him when he comes to us in the

Lords Supper and in his Word on Sundays and every day of the week. This throng that gave us what we now know as Palm Sunday sets us an example to copy. Let them inspire you when you say you don't have enough time for worship or prayer, are too tired to perform the work of worship or go to the Lord's word for strength or perform the prayer duties of the priests of the Most High!

So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" John 12:13

This song the crowd was singing is from the book of Psalms in what we know as Psalm 118, the 26th verse. That Psalm is the Psalm we read in the Palm Sunday liturgy in church every year, and we spoke it responsively this morning.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

We bless you from the house of the Lord.

Psalm 118:26

This was part of one of the most well-known songs people would sing for Passover each year. It had the same standing as our *Joy to the World* at Christmas or *I Know That My Redeemer Lives* at Easter. The crowd took this song and applied it directly to Jesus. Except for one thing. They changed the song just a little bit. Actually, they REALLY changed it. They added a new last part which takes the meaning to a completely new level. Psalm 118:26 goes,

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Psalm 118:26

Now compare that to what they sang on Palm Sunday.

(Original)

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Psalm 118:26

(Palm Sunday version)

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel! John 12:13

See the difference? That last part about the King of Israel was added to the song from Psalm 118:26. The crowd on Palm Sunday was welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem as their king! This is another great example for us to copy. Jesus is indeed the one who has the power of life after death. Many times we relegate Jesus to the position of an errand boy or rich uncle who is there to get us out of tight spots, tragedy, and, finally, death. This is not the position Jesus occupies. His position is King, Lord, Master, and Ruler. He will do

wonderful things for us out of his grace and mercy, but he is and will always occupy the top seat to which, as today's second reading teaches, "every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, ..." Philippians 2:10-11 May it be so among us, also!

So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him." John 12:19

It may certainly have seemed that way at the time! Maybe they were privy to the request made by some of the Greek converts to Judaism.

Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." John 12:20-21

There were no doubt Jewish people in the throng that welcomed Jesus. Here we learn some Greeks were also seeking Jesus. Who knows how many other groups sought after the Lord and were ready to make him king? We do hear that at Pentecost, about two months later, there were people from all over the world gathered in Jerusalem for that feast. At that time, through the working of the Holy Spirit, all those people could hear Peter's call to repentance in their native tongue and thousands from all over the world were baptized that very day!

Would that the commentary by the Pharisees that the whole world has gone after Jesus also apply to us. So many years later, so far across the seas, here we find ourselves saying and singing the same words used on the very first Palm Sunday. They are good words. Holy words. They are words to live by. God inspire and empower us all to take every chance to go out and meet Jesus in his house, in his sacrament, in his word, and in prayer. We also ask that he make the needed changes in us that Jesus would not be just ONE of our helpers or even masters, but would reign supreme as the ever and eternal KING of our lives. And when the last day comes and the sheep are separated from the goats, may we also be found to be among those in all the world who have gone out to follow Jesus, giving him our thanks and praise and serving and obeying him as our gracious and merciful Lord. Amen.

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