

Sermon April 13, 2025 Palm Sunday

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

Today marks Palm Sunday, a day of deep significance in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. This occasion recalls the Triumphant Entry, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem as a king, fulfilling God's ancient promises. The Gospels offer a vivid account: crowds lined the road, shouting with joy, waving palm branches, and spreading their cloaks before Him. This was no ordinary event. It unveils Jesus as our King, who comes with love, help, and salvation. Exploring this moment strengthens our faith and reveals its meaning for today.

The Gospels describe Jesus approaching Jerusalem, not walking as He often did, but riding a donkey. This was not a towering war horse or a gilded chariot, but a humble donkey—a simple creature. The people responded with excitement, crying, “Hosanna! Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!” Their voices filled the air, signaling something remarkable. In those days, a king on a donkey represented peace, not war. By this act, Jesus announced, “I am your King, and I bring peace—peace between you and God.” Sin separates humanity from the Creator, a divide too wide for anyone to cross alone. Jesus, in His mercy, came to bridge that gap, restoring the relationship sin had broken. Palm Sunday centers on this truth: He is the King who makes all things right.

A striking detail emerges: the donkey did not belong to Jesus. He directed His disciples, “Go into the village ahead, and you will find a donkey tied there with its colt. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone asks, say, ‘The Lord needs them.’” The owner agreed without hesitation. Why did this unfold so smoothly? Jesus commands all things, even the smallest parts of life. The donkey, its owner, and the timing fell perfectly into place under His authority. This displays His sovereignty, His ability to guide every detail. For believers today, this brings comfort. The Jesus who arranged that humble ride watches

over each person now, directing their paths with purpose, even though the way he does it sometimes seems strange or even impossible.

The palm branches waved by the crowd carried meaning. These were signs of victory and honor, similar to flags at a celebration. People also laid cloaks on the ground, creating a path for Jesus. They shouted “Hosanna!”—meaning “Save us!”—and hailed Him as the long-awaited King. Yet, many misunderstood His purpose. They expected Jesus to defeat the Roman rulers, freeing them from oppression right away. They pictured an earthly kingdom with instant solutions. Jesus, however, pursued a greater mission. He aimed not only to save Jerusalem from temporary foes but to rescue all people from sin—past, present, and future. His kingdom stretches beyond this world, embracing every individual who trusts Him. This reveals His love’s vast scope: He saves not just for a day, but for eternity.

In June of 2017 the Pittsburgh Penguins defeated the Nashville Predators and won the Stanley Cup. Pittsburgh burst into celebration. Streets swelled with people, cheers echoed, and banners flew high. News captured families gathered, children laughing, and a parade stretching through the city. Images showed fans lining the route, their joy unmistakable. That triumph united the community. Yet, its glory has dimmed. After the Summer of the Cup, it left Pittsburgh for the next season, and attention moved elsewhere.

Jesus’ triumph stands in contrast. His ride into Jerusalem launched a victory that never fades. It led to the cross, where He took on humanity’s sins, and to the resurrection, where He overcame death. This victory endures, offering joy every day. Jesus reigns as a King whose salvation remains forever fresh.

This victory is rooted in God’s grace. The crowd’s praises and branches did not crown Jesus as King. He held that title already, chosen by God to redeem the world. No one earns His love through effort or merit. He gives it freely, driven by mercy. Like a shepherd seeking a lost lamb, Jesus finds people when they wander. Believers respond by trusting Him, relying on His work alone. This defines our faith: salvation flows from Christ, not human strength.

Palm Sunday showcases this grace—Jesus riding forth to save, not because people deserved it, but because He loves them.

The donkey itself offers another insight. It was a modest animal—small, plain, perhaps stubborn. This mirrors humanity at times. People may feel insignificant, flawed, or reluctant to follow God. Yet Jesus chose that donkey on purpose. He needed no grand steed to fulfill His mission. Likewise, He requires no perfection from anyone. He accepts each person as they are—weaknesses included—and fits them into His plan. This highlights His love’s beauty: He stoops to humanity’s level, meeting people where they stand, rather than demanding they climb to Him. The donkey bore Jesus into Jerusalem; today, He bears each believer through life, upholding them when they falter.

Last year hurricane Helene wreaked havoc in areas of North Carolina. A small town faced a severe flood. Homes suffered damage, schools shut down, and families grappled with loss. Amid the struggle, volunteers—ordinary folks, not professionals—stepped in. They delivered food, cleared wreckage, and offered support. One volunteer, a young girl, collected blankets to share. Her simple gesture warmed cold nights and lifted spirits, reminding people they were not alone. Jesus acts similarly. He enters lives quietly, like a King on a donkey, bringing aid when despair looms. Life’s floods—whether of water or worry—cannot overwhelm His love. He saves through humble means, proving His strength shines in weakness.

This applies to daily life. Students may wrestle with school pressures—homework piles up, or friends drift apart. Families may face concerns over finances or health. News carries tales of storms, wars, and unrest. These weigh on the heart. Yet, Jesus remains King. He sits not on a distant throne but near His people, promising, “I am here.” When He entered Jerusalem, He knew the cross lay ahead. Still, He pressed on—for every person, past and present. His love fueled that sacrifice, securing salvation. This truth stands firm: He helps through every trial.

Consider a boy named Samuel, whose story reflects this. Months ago, a severe fire destroyed his family's home, forcing a move. A new school and strange surroundings left him scared. His mother said, "Jesus stays with us, even now." They prayed together, seeking strength. Soon, Samuel found friends and peace. Jesus, the King of Palm Sunday, entered Samuel's storm, bringing help. He offers the same to everyone, turning chaos into hope.

Palm Sunday calls believers to honor Jesus as King. The crowd waved branches; today, people lift trust and praise. "Hosanna" pleads, "Save us!"—and Jesus answers fully. He aids in struggles and promises eternal life. Each person faces burdens—a fear, a loss, a doubt. Jesus invites all to bring these to Him. He rode into Jerusalem to carry humanity's load, and He carries it still. Holy Week draws near, tracing His path to the cross and beyond. He is no mere figure from history but a living King, loving deeply. His entry on a donkey led to victory—death defeated, salvation won. Today, hearts can rise to Him. Faith in His love, help, and salvation grows, for He reigns forever. Amen.

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