

March 28, 2021
Palm Sunday
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Hands of Praise

Palm Sunday is largely a day of praise. The King, the messiah, so long waited for has finally come, and now he about to enter the Jerusalem the city of the Kings of Israel.

In some way we can probably learn something about how to be excited and joyful and how to praise Jesus from these crowds. As we read through our text we want to notice all the way in which the people show their praise, their excitement, their faith. But we also want to pay attention to what they are missing.

Mark 11:1-11

Verses 1-2

Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; ² and He said to them, "Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring *it*."

This was really a strange thing that Jesus told his disciples to do. Go and take some one else's donkey. From any outward view they are stealing a donkey. On top of which Jesus and his disciples have walked from Bethany to Jerusalem many times and never has Jesus asked them to go fetch a donkey. It would not be surprising if Peter were to stand up at this point and question the Lord.

But this time at least the disciples do not do that, but rather they praise Jesus with their actions. They hear his word, believe it, and do what he has commanded. "Blessed are those who hear God's word and keep it."

It is easy to praise Jesus with our voices. It is harder to go home and praise him with obedience to his word.

Jesus has asked us as well to do some strange things. One of the most difficult is that we live our life "faithful unto death." Jesus doesn't ask us to simply accept that we will die someday. But more than that to live our life in preparation of that day. We don't live and work to treasure up our days on this world but we live in preparation of the day we die.

To believe his word and do what he wills even when it seems so strange to us is to praise God with our actions.

Verses 3 - 8

³ "And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here." ⁴ So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. ⁵ But some of those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, loosing the colt?" ⁶ And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go. ⁷ Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. ⁸ And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread *them* on the road.

First the owners of the donkey but then also the people praise God with their possessions. That is, they willingly give to the Lord when the Lord has use for it.

The owners see the disciples taking the donkey. Imagine you see someone taking your horse or motorcycle or something, but when they hear it is from the Lord they simply let it go. If the Lord has need of it, take it.

Then also many who lay down on the road not just palm branches but even their coats. It would be one thing to go lay your coat down on the road out here which is asphalt and relatively clean. It is quite another to lay down your coat on an ancient Israelite road which was probably not paved. And was undoubtedly covered with animal waste from the many pilgrims bringing animals for slaughter to Jerusalem. On top of that it is quite another thing to lay down your coat on top of a filthy road knowing that a donkey is going to step on it grinding it into the mud and muck.

These people praised God with their possession giving whatever the Lord had need of.

We all try to teach our kids to share. We know how kids want to horde what they see as "mine." Even if it is something they are not using now. We try hard to teach them to share. If you're not using it let your brother use it. Yet are we that much better? Do we give and share of our possessions when there is need? Would we be so quick to say to the Lord oh sure I'm not using that donkey right now and you have need take it? Would we be so quick to lay down our coats? Here Lord you have need of this, take it?

We still tend to think "mine." And to some degree that is true. The Apostle Peter said to Ananias, **"While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control?" Acts 5:4.**

Those things that we have God has given to us, they are our responsibility. No one can judge the way we use them except God. And we should not judge how others use their possessions.

Nevertheless we join the crowds in parsing Jesus when we say, not only about our possessions but also about our times and abilities: "Do you have a use for these Lord, if so take them and use them."

We just had an example yesterday of five young people who gave their time and talents to the Lord and said here Lord you have need of my time and my talents. And thereby they gave glory to the Lord instead of seeking to use those things for their own glory or income.

Verses 9-11

⁹ Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!" ¹⁰ Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" ¹¹ And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Finally, they praise God not just in deed and with their possessions but also with their mouths singing, "Hosanna."

For these people, the miracles of Jesus were not the long distant past but very personal. For these people, the person of Jesus was not a thing they were taught to believe in even though they could not see it, but he was there. They could see it they could touch it. For these people all their dreams were about to come true, or so they thought. And so, it was easy to get excited it was easy to praise Jesus with obedience and with possessions and most of all with their lips.

But praise to the Messiah was only half the purpose of the Palm Sunday.

Jesus didn't come to be accepted but to be rejected.

Jesus came to be crowned king, yes, but also to die.

John tells us:

John 12:16 ¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and *that* they had done these things to Him.

It is called Palm Sunday but it is also called passion Sunday. Because yes, Jesus rode in and was praised as king but he also rode into Jerusalem to die. His disciples did not understand what was really going on that day, the true nature of his ride into Jerusalem. They did not understand the true nature of what it meant that he was king.

The crowds had very a good reason to be excited. Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus had changed water into wine. Jesus had fed five thousand with a few loaves. Jesus had healed every kind of disease, he had cast out the demons. He had even raised the dead. What more could you possibly want from a king? All the wine you could want, all the bread and fish you could want, no more disease, no more demons, no more death. Are you surprised that the people were excited? They thought they were going to get all of this.

But the disciples did not understand, and the crowds did not understand. Jesus rode into Jerusalem to die.

Our selfish sinful nature gets more excited about a king who comes around handing out bread and checks, but the true reason for Jesus' ride ought to make us even more excited.

We have better reason to praise Jesus. We have more reason to get excited than they did. Because we know that truth that he came to die for our sins. It might not be as exciting to our sinful nature. But it is the type of King that we really need.

Amen