

He Comes

To Open - To Build - To Enter

Pastor Matthew Ude

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Palm Sunday

Psalm 118:19-29 ¹⁹ Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go through them, *And* I will praise the LORD. ²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD, Through which the righteous shall enter. ²¹ I will praise You, For You have answered me, And have become my salvation. ²² The stone *which* the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. ²³ This was the LORD'S doing; It *is* marvelous in our eyes. ²⁴ This *is* the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it. ²⁵ Save now, I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity. ²⁶ Blessed *is* he who comes in the name of the LORD! We have blessed you from the house of the LORD. ²⁷ God *is* the LORD, And He has given us light; Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar. ²⁸ You *are* my God, and I will praise You; You *are* my God, I will exalt You. ²⁹ Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is* good! For His mercy *endures* forever.

Jesus rides into Jerusalem to be our king. Not a distant king, but a king who rules over every part of our life.

Tom Holland is historian who recently wrote a book titled *Dominion: How the Christian Revolution Remade the World*. I haven't read the book yet, but I have heard a couple of lectures from Tom Holland. One of the things he talks about is the word "religio." In the ancient world this word does not refer to a separate realm, the way the word religion is often used in modern times. Rather religio was just as much a regular part of the daily lives of the people as washing and eating and working.

Just as we often think about religion as this thing that is separate from the rest of our lives, this thing that belongs on Sunday morning, so we here in America we also often think of government as a thing that it is better to keep out of our lives as much as possible. We prefer the government to interfere with our lives as little as possible.

Jesus as King and Lord is not a separate part of our lives. On Palm Sunday Jesus came to be the King of the Jews, he came to rule in the hearts of God's people. He is not the kind of king who is distant and separate from our daily lives. Jesus came to rule over every aspect of our lives. He came to rule not through force or power or punishment or armies. But to rule through his word in grace and every blessing.

1. To open the gates of righteousness

In ancient days city walls and castles were built to protect people from their enemies. When there was an attack people would rush inside the walls. If you didn't make it in time, you could be stuck outside and be unable to get in.

The Psalmist has come to the city of God, but the doors are shut tight. They are the gates of righteousness. Only the righteous can enter. Therefore, the psalmist says, "open to me the gates of

righteousness.” We cannot open these gates. We cannot enter these gates. These are gates only the righteous can open and enter.

Jesus rides into Jerusalem as the righteous one. The Lord has come to open the gates to the city of God so that we may enter.

The final verse of our Psalm says.

Psalm 118:29 Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is good!* For His mercy *endures* forever.

This is the righteousness of our God that his mercy endures forever.

The mercy of man does not endure anything. If we do something that is good, we might do it once or twice and if those for whom we are doing it do not give us thanks, than we stop. Or we may do something good but then the one we are trying to help mistreat us. So, what do we do? We get angry and say I will never help that one again. Our supposed goodness is so short and so easily broken that it is clear that it never was goodness. Rather we did it to feel good about ourselves, or to receive praise or to receive thanks.

The mercy and goodness of our Lord lasts forever. He does not stop providing for us because we are evil and mistreat him and speak against him. He is good even the Jews who on Sunday proclaimed him king, and on Friday proclaimed him criminal. He did not stop doing good for them even as they shouted, “Crucify Him, Crucify Him.”

His mercy is forever; therefore, his goodness is true righteousness. Therefore, he is able to open the gates of righteousness, and not only ride in himself but open the gates for us as well. For this reason, He comes to open the gates of righteousness.

2. To build the city of God

He comes also to build the city of God.

In years past when men wished to build a wall or a house or a city, they would bring stones one by one and they would fit them together. This one is the right shape for this spot, and this one is the right shape for that spot. They would pick carefully and they would turn them to fit and align them so that surfaces were even with one another. Occasionally a stone would not fit right, and they would lay it aside and try it later. Rarely a stone would not fit anywhere and that stone would be thrown out.

It is that stone, the one rejected by all the builders that the Lord has chosen.

So, it was on Palm Sunday. The Jewish leaders did not know what to do with Jesus. He didn't fit anywhere in their religion, politics, or life. In fact, he stuck out so much that they felt they had to get rid of Him permanently.

Yet this one that they rejected is the one the Lord had chosen. The Lord chose him not to be a stone in the wall, not to fit in, but the Lord chose him as the chief cornerstone, the one on whom the city of God would be built.

So, to Jesus often does not fit in our lives. We have certain comfortable lives, we have friends, we have a job and we tend to try and fit Jesus into the cracks. But that never works. If we try and stick him in after the fact that never works. Jesus is the chief cornerstone. The city of God is built on him. He cannot be a later addition.

Our lives must be built on Jesus or there is no room no place for Him.

The Psalmist proclaims, **“This is the Lord’s doing and it is marvelous in our eyes.”**

That is, he sees two cities. The city of men in which there is no place for Jesus. And the city which God built in which Jesus is the chief cornerstone. It is this city that Jesus comes to build. And it is this one, the one which is “the Lord’s doing” which is marvelous.

He sees the city of God and wishes to be a part of that city, not the other. Therefore, he desires his life to be built on Christ. For this reason, Christ comes to build the city of God, and to build our lives on Him.

3. To enter in the name of the Lord

Exodus 12:3,6 ³ "Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: `On the tenth *day* of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of *his* father, a lamb for a household. ⁶ `Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight.

Four days before the Passover the Jewish people were supposed to choose the lamb which they were going to use for the Passover.

The Psalmist reminds us that: **“Blessed is he who [enters] in the name of the LORD!”**

Jesus entered Jerusalem bearing the name of the Lord. He came as the Lord’s chosen lamb. The one whom the Lord had chosen to be His Passover lamb, to pay for the sins of the whole world.

Psalm 118:27 Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.

The true sacrifice for sins has arrived, let it be offered to the Lord for the sins of the world.

And again, he says, **“this is the day the Lord has made.”** And again **“He has given us light.”**

What he means is that now is a new day, a new thing. For again and again the men of Israel had chosen lambs for sacrifice, but never were they enough, never were they good enough. But now the Lord’s chosen sacrifice has come.

“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.”

That is to say the one who comes bearing the Lord’s name is the one who comes to be a blessing to us.

Jesus has come to rule by his grace in our hearts, over every aspect of our lives. He opens the gates of righteousness for us, so that we might have his righteousness. He becomes the chief cornerstone of our lives, giving us a solid and everlasting foundation for our lives. He accomplishes all of this not through force or armies, but by being the chosen sacrificial lamb, whose blood makes atonement for our sins.
Amen