

## Palm Sunday: Scripture Lessons

**Psalm 118:19-29** (NIV)<sup>19</sup>Open for me the gates of righteousness; I will enter and give thanks to the LORD. <sup>20</sup>This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter. <sup>21</sup>I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation. <sup>22</sup>The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; <sup>23</sup>the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. <sup>24</sup>This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. <sup>25</sup>O LORD, save us; O LORD, grant us success. <sup>26</sup>Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you. <sup>27</sup>The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine upon us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar. <sup>28</sup>You are my God, and I will give you thanks; you are my God, and I will exalt you. <sup>29</sup>Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.

**Isaiah 50:4-9a** (NIV) <sup>4</sup>The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught. <sup>5</sup>The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back. <sup>6</sup>I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. <sup>7</sup>Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame. <sup>8</sup>He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other! Who is my accuser? Let him confront me! <sup>9</sup>It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me. Who is he that will condemn me?

**Philippians 2:5-11** (NIV) <sup>5</sup>Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup>Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup>And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! <sup>9</sup>Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup>that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**John 12:12-33** (NIV) <sup>12</sup>The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup>They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the King of Israel!" <sup>14</sup>Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written, <sup>15</sup>"Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." <sup>16</sup>At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him. <sup>17</sup>Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. <sup>18</sup>Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him. <sup>19</sup>So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!" <sup>20</sup>Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. <sup>21</sup>They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." <sup>22</sup>Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. <sup>23</sup>Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup>I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. <sup>25</sup>The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup>Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. <sup>27</sup>"Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. <sup>28</sup>Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." <sup>29</sup>The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. <sup>30</sup>Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. <sup>31</sup>Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. <sup>32</sup>But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." <sup>33</sup>He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

## Your King Is Coming

John 12:12-33

Today is Palm Sunday when we remember the culminating events of Jesus' earthly life—beginning with His triumphant procession into Jerusalem on Sunday and ending with His crucifixion on Friday.

For the people lining the road waving palm branches that day, Jesus was a magnet for all the dreams and desires of their hearts.

The people were looking for the Messiah to come—the one who would bring the Kingdom of God to earth—who would defeat forever the occupying Roman legions; who would rule over the whole earth with justice and righteousness.

**The people were looking for a king** and hailed Jesus as their as their long-sought sovereign.

Indeed, Jesus seemed to fulfill their dreams. He purposely chose the way He entered Jerusalem, in conscious fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9:

*<sup>14</sup>Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written, <sup>15</sup>"Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, **your king is coming**, seated on a donkey's colt."*

Jesus rode into Jerusalem to become King of Israel, and indeed, King of the whole world. But the method by which Jesus would assume that office was astonishingly different from every religious and worldly expectation.

I've titled this message, **Your King Is Coming**. This morning I want us to discover, what it meant, and what it means today for Jesus to be hailed, King.

To do that, we first look at:

### □ **The arrival of the King** (John 12:12-21)

*<sup>12</sup>The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took **palm branches** and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the **King** of Israel!"*

We are told here that a *great crowd . . . had come for the Feast*: Based on historical records, it is estimated that between 2-3 million people jammed into Jerusalem during the feast of Passover, and that over a ¼ of a million lambs were sacrificed.

Many of the pilgrims arrived for the feast of Passover by traveling down the Jordan valley and through Jericho, which has long been called the city of Palms.

There they would have picked palm branches and then begun the final leg of their journey to the temple in Jerusalem. They would be singing what were called the songs (psalms) of ascent—sung as they were going **up** to Jerusalem. The road climbs more than 3,000 feet in less than 20 miles. The final song of ascent was Psalm 118 which was read this morning. As they crested the Mount of Olives and beheld Jerusalem and the Temple, in all its glory, spread out before them, they would be singing:

*<sup>24</sup>This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. <sup>25</sup>O LORD, save us [In Hebrew that word is Hosanna]; O LORD, grant us success. <sup>26</sup> Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you. <sup>27</sup>The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine upon us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.*

The Palm tree was the unofficial symbol of ancient Israel and featured on coins minted by the Jewish people. Waving a palm branch was like waving the American flag for us on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. So you can picture this parade with palm branches waving.

<sup>17</sup>Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. <sup>18</sup>Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him.

So, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem, the crowds **passionately** cheered Him. Some of them had witnessed first-hand the incredible miracle of Lazarus coming out of the grave—raised to life after being dead four days. Others excitedly told about the miracles and wonders **they** had seen.

One crowd came with Jesus from Bethany, and another crowd came out of Jerusalem when they heard that Jesus was coming.

These two great crowds surged together like two waves breaking on the shore—meeting at the final descent into Jerusalem, with the golden roof the temple gleaming before them.

You can be sure that the spectacle did not go unnoticed by the religious leaders in Jerusalem or even by the Roman soldiers who witnessed it from their vantage point of the Antonia Fortress which overlooked the temple precincts.

In verse 19 we read: <sup>19</sup>So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how **the whole world** has gone after him!"

And then the very next verse seemed to make their hyperbole into prophecy:

<sup>20</sup>Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast.

These Greeks would have been Gentile converts to Judaism

<sup>21</sup>They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request.

The Greeks probably approached Philip, because he had a Greek name, came from a town that had close connections with Greek culture, and most certainly spoke Greek himself.

"Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus."

At that very moment when it seemed Jesus had reached the pinnacle of success—when indeed the world was coming to Him, Jesus began talking about what it meant to truly be his followers.

Jesus had many fans that day, but Jesus wasn't looking for fans; He was seeking faithful followers. His very next words spoke about:

#### □ **The cost and reward of following Jesus**

(John 12:23-26)

<sup>22</sup>Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. <sup>23</sup>Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup>I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. <sup>25</sup>The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup>Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

Jesus plainly said that the path to faithful and fruitful following begins with death. A death to self and self-centered ambition; giving up our own cherished dreams, desires and expectations.

The reward, is not to receive honor from the world, but to receive honor from God. *My Father will honor the one who serves me.* The reward of "losing your life," Jesus said, is gaining *eternal life*.

We follow Jesus to his death and beyond to a new life through His resurrection.

In his classic book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer echoes these words of Jesus when he compares what he calls “cheap grace” to “costly grace.”

“Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves.” It is “forgiveness without repentance.”

“Costly grace is a treasure hidden in a field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has. . . . Such grace is *costly* because it calls us to follow, and it is *grace* because it calls us to follow *Jesus Christ*. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is *costly*, because it cost God the life of His Son: “You were bought with a price,” and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is *grace* because God did not reckon His son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered Him up for us.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* p. 39.

And that brings us the final and most important truth of this passage:

#### □ **The glory of the cross** (John 12:23, 27-33)

*<sup>23</sup>Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be **glorified**.*

What did it mean for Jesus to be glorified? It certainly did not mean that Jesus would receive glory from the crowds declaring him King! Jesus had already left the glory of heaven and the adoration of countless angels to come to this earth.

The world is filled with those who seek their own glory—who boast and swagger and seek the positions of prestige and power. Jesus did not seek his own glory, but to glorify the Father.

Jesus said in verse <sup>27</sup>"Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. <sup>28</sup> **Father, glorify your name!**"

Jesus then said: <sup>31</sup>Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. <sup>32</sup>But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." <sup>33</sup>He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

Jesus would be glorified by defeating sin, death and the Devil on the cross. Then, and only then would He draw all men—all of humanity to Himself—that He would become King and bring the Kingdom of God, as the Kingdom of grace to the world.

The Epistle lesson for today tells of what it meant for Jesus to be glorified, to the glory of God the Father:

**Philippians 2:5-11** (NIV) <sup>5</sup>Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup>Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup>And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! <sup>9</sup>Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup>that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, **to the glory of God the Father.**

Jesus received the glory of the Father by laying down his life for the sins of the world. Jesus had already said in John 10:

**John 10:11, 18 (NIV)** "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

<sup>18</sup>*No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This **command** I received from my Father."*

Jesus came to be king, but not through a coronation with a crown of gold adorning his head.

Jesus came to become king of our hearts through a crucifixion with a crown of thorns crushed down upon his brow.

**Jesus came to fulfill our true need**—our need to be reconciled to God, to be free from the weight of our own sinful selfishness; to be free from guilt. This was done—not through His triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Sunday, but in his tortuous walk out of Jerusalem on Friday, when whipped and bleeding, He carried His cross outside those gates to be crucified.

On Palm Sunday Jesus set the stage for his real work—the work of redemption.

What would seem like the pinnacle of Jesus' earthly ministry, was only the prelude to Jesus true triumph—His defeating of sin and death on the cross.

It was through the cross that Jesus would become King—the King of love—the one who rules with gentleness and compassion; the one who extends pardon, mercy and grace. Ar

And Jesus calls us to follow him—follow him to the cross, and beyond to a new life through the resurrection. It was Bonhoeffer (again echoing Jesus) who said, “when Jesus calls a man, He bids him, ‘come and die.’”

**Galatians 2:20** (NIV) *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Are you a fan, or a follower of Jesus Christ?

Let us pray . . . .

Benediction:

**Romans 11:33, 36 (NASB)** Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! . . . <sup>36</sup>For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.