

Palm Sunday

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[0 : 0 0] Well, it's Sunday again, and even if, like every other year, we're truly on the way to saying to each other, my, my, my, the year has just gone by.

You know when there's a donkey walking down the aisle at Holy Trinity, palms waving, that it's not just any Sunday, it's Palm Sunday, and Easter is just sitting on the horizon.

Now, when I was working as a physio, commuting, I would always be able to tell when it was Easter, even without looking at the calendar, because as the Christmas traffic, sorry, the traffic from Christmas is fairly low, low key, but as the year goes on, it just keeps building up, and as school comes back, you get more cars on the road again.

But then, one Monday morning, sitting in traffic, and you realize, as I'm driving by that school, I don't have to go 40 kilometers an hour anymore. Now, it's, it's a small thing, but it's one of those signs that you remember in the year that something is happening, something different, something special.

Now, don't get me wrong, it's not the same as seeing a vision before you of something that was prophesied 400 years before coming towards you, or in our case, waiting some 2,000 years for our Savior to come again.

[1 : 3 0] But we'll get there. Let's pray. Dear Lord, we thank you for your word. We thank you for this morning that we have, to be able to hear it, and to be able to praise you and rejoice.

So, Lord, I pray that we would be able to open our hearts to hear your word. We put these things in your hands. Amen. Now, in the passages before Matthew 21, it's actually very obvious, this buildup towards Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

Now, in the last chapter, Jesus actually makes sure, in chapter 20, that he tells the disciples exactly what's going to happen when he gets into Jerusalem.

He actually tells them three times that he's going to be condemned, that he's going to be crucified, and that on the third day, he's going to rise again. He's told his disciples they should know what is happening.

Now, after that, we've got two stories that are side by side. The first story is that of James and John, and of course, James and John asking whether they can sit at Jesus' right hand when he comes in glory.

[2 : 4 9] Now, the second story is of two blind men, and those two blind men calling out, Son of David, have mercy on us. Now, of course, Jesus heals those two blind men.

But already, as we're thinking of this passage, we should have queued up in our minds that idea of James and John, two disciples, two blind men, and them calling out the Son of David.

So remember those things, and we'll get back to them as we go through the passage. Now, for our passage, looking there at verses one to four, you can see that Jesus, he's at the Mount of Olives.

He's about to enter Jerusalem, and he sends two, two disciples, and he tells them very specifically what they need to do. He says that they're going to find a donkey and a colt, and that they're going to bring them back to him.

And he continues there, verse three, if anyone says to you, what are you doing? Just say this, the Lord needs them, and it'll be fine. Now, just as an aside, if, and I do emphasize if, these two disciples were James and John, you could be excused for thinking that Jesus might just be messing with their heads just a little bit.

[4 : 06] So the two disciples, again, James and John, they're talking about glory and honor, and Jesus asks, he's about to make his big entry, he asks them to do something very important for him.

But it's not to stand at his right or left side. It's not even to find a great white stallion for him to ride in on. Now, in the King James Version, it says that they are to fetch an ass and a colt.

Now, I'm guessing that might not quite be what James and John had in mind. But the reason that he's asking them to do all of these things is in verse four.

You can see there, it's very specific. It's to fulfill the words of the prophet. Now, those words of the prophet are in Zechariah 9.9. Now, that is on page 773, but we've got it up there on the wall.

Now, I'll read it out for us, though. So it says, Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion. Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem. Lo, your king comes to you.

[5 : 10] Triumphant and victorious is he. Humble and riding on a donkey. On a colt, the foal of a donkey. Now, hopefully, you're looking at your passage there, Matthew 21.

And you can look up onto the screen there. It should be very familiar, because he said it almost word for word. And it's actually a very distinct image, isn't it? I mean, Zechariah is the prophet, and he's written about this event that's going to happen.

And he's actually written about it just after they've come back from exile. So there's still the Israelites at that time. They're still being held down by their oppressors. But here they have a picture of when they're going to be saved.

It's a picture of victory. Israel's king is going to be crushing their enemies. He's a warrior king. And he's riding into his city, not on a stallion, but on a donkey and on a colt.

So there it is. But finally, after waiting, the king, Israel's king, is going to come, riding triumphantly.

[6 : 22] And he's coming to restore his kingdom. Now, still looking at Zechariah 9.9 there, I've underlined the bits in the passage, and you probably have noticed as well, those underlined parts are the parts that aren't in Matthew.

So he doesn't quote the shouting or rejoicing. And he actually also doesn't quote that it's a triumphant entry. But you can see, though, it's very clearly the same image.

Now, going back to Matthew 21, as soon as the crowd sees this, they should actually know what they're looking at. And they do. They see their king.

And you can see the crowd's response. It's in those quotation marks there. Verse 9. They shout out and rejoice. So that's the bits that we're missing there. Not there anymore. That's okay. That's the bits that we're missing there.

The shouting and the rejoicing. And that's what Matthew is telling us here. Now, a little bit unlike what we've just witnessed in very nice music and a very orderly procession.

[7 : 25] It actually says in verse 10, you can see there again, it says turmoil. All of this that was happening, this was a huge uproar. And in my mind, I've got the people there.

They're ripping off branches. They're throwing their cloaks down. And they're shouting out, Hosanna! Hosanna! God saves! He saves us! He's the son of David! This is their king, their Messiah.

He's their savior. And he's come towards them. If you can imagine those words written on your pages, materializing. And you can see Jesus, your king, right in front of you.

Of course they're shouting on joy. There's passion there. Now, there are two things that I think we need to point out from the passage, though. Now, in the passage, you'll see there are two quotes there, verses 5 and verse 9.

So, what we have in between those quotes is actually the heart of the passage. And what we can see at the heart of that passage is what we just talked about there, that pure, unrestrained worship and joy at the sight of their king.

[8 : 43] And their response is definitely the right one. You can scan your pages, scan over the page, just to that second column there, verses 15 and 16. Jesus says, this is the right response. Hosanna to the son of David.

It's the right response. And we heard from Psalm 118, the branches and the spreading of the cloaks. It's in 2 Kings 9. It's all there.

This might be a riot, but thankfully for the evangelicals, it is a biblical riot, at least. Now, that's the first point.

The crowd is rejoicing at the sight of their king and that's right. The second point though, and some of you may have picked up on this already, but Matthew's actually trying to tell us something, that despite the celebrations, something's not quite right here.

Now, in the passage itself, he makes sure to tell us that the crowd is calling Jesus a prophet and a son of David, but nothing more. Nothing else there.

[9 : 54] He misses that part of the quote from Zechariah, as we said, that it's a triumphal entry. So again, this title might be that little bit misleading. And again, in the context of the entire path of that passage in the book of Matthew, we can see that we remember those two foolish disciples hoping to be at Jesus' right and left side.

Now, the irony, of course, that we know is that if Jesus actually granted their wish, they would have been crucified with him just a couple of days later. But the reason that the disciples asked is because they had in mind what the blind man had in mind and what the crowds had in mind.

You remember the crowds or the blind man said, or they cried out to the son of David. And the crowds are crying out to the son of David. So Matthew's telling us something very specific here.

And it's this. The blind man, the crowds, the disciples, while they're right to praise Jesus in the way that they are, they've also got it wrong.

As many of you know, the Jews at this time, they are waiting and hoping for a prophet, for a king, for their Messiah, and definitely for a son of David.

[11 : 15] Now, they've been waiting 400 years for him ever since they returned from exile. Now, all of them, having seen Jesus coming towards them, they believe that Jesus is their king.

And they're right. after all, that is the charge that Jesus was crucified for, wasn't it? But they're expecting him to be like the kings before him as well.

Kings that sat in an earthly throne that ruled over an earthly kingdom in Israel. All of them are expecting Jesus to be their savior.

And they are right. But they're expecting Jesus to save them from their earthly enemies. The Romans, who have been oppressing them for over 100 years now.

So they're shouting, they're rejoicing, they're carrying on, thinking, this is it, this is the day that we are going to overthrow the Roman Empire. But Matthew's telling us the blind men, the crowds, the disciples themselves, they've got it wrong.

- [12 : 24] As Doug pointed out, I've always wondered who, specifically, of all the people in that crowd, expecting Jesus to lead them to victory over the Romans, who of them were so disappointed?
- So disappointed in realizing that Jesus wasn't going to overthrow the Roman Empire at all. how many of them yelled out, crucify him?
- So the first point, we should rejoice, should be excited. That is the right response. But the second point is that they actually don't really know who or what they're rejoicing about.
- And I think the problem for us is this. For many of us, if, if we don't remember who Jesus is, we forget that he didn't come to be served, but to serve.
- Now that's when we start looking for Jesus to conquer the Roman empires of our worlds, our problems and our needs. That's when we stop looking for the new people among us, or the people that are unwell, or the people in need, forgetting that the way that we treat even the least of them is the way that we are treating our own Lord.
- [13 : 47] That's when we come to church thinking that someone else can do it. Because I've done it before, I've done enough. Rather than looking for just the smallest way that we can help.
- Coming to the service thinking that, you know, what am I going to get out of today? Rather than looking at how you can help out. maybe even worse, if we don't remember who Jesus is, we lose the key that holds the entire universe together.
- And so all we settle into is a slow, monotonous, repetitive routine. That's what a life without Jesus is.
- Now, if that's who we are, we might as well be yelling crucify him. So, remember, remember, remember, remember, remember, Jesus.
- We sit on the other side of the cross. We know who Jesus is. We know that Jesus is far more than an earthly king or a prophet. He's the king of all the heavens and the earth.
- [15 : 03] We know that he didn't come to defeat some earthly empire, but that he came to conquer the most, something of the most heavenly proportions. The sins of every single man, woman, and child that has ever lived.
- And we know that because of his sacrifice for us on the cross, all the evils, all the evils of this world have lost their hold on us because we have our home and our hope in heaven.
- So, remember and rejoice. Rejoice. This isn't one of those technical things that scholars have been debating for centuries.
- It's plain and simple. Rejoice. I think sometimes with all of the things that happen in the world and in our lives, you can almost be afraid to show joy.
- It's almost like it's socially unacceptable because there are so many things to be serious about. One thing I noticed in any social situation, if you're at work or if you're at a wedding or at a party or chatting over morning tea, most conversations have their usual flow to them.
- [16 : 28] Now, if it's someone you don't know or haven't met before, you'll ask them, you know, how do you know such and such or what do you do for a living wherever you traveled before? Or if it's someone that you do know, you'll ask, how's your weekend?
- Have you been up to anything interesting lately? How's the kids going? And so, you're standing there talking to one another, kind of looking at the ground and eventually you find that point in the conversation where it's okay to excuse yourself without socially offending the other person.
- And we are all trying to, our best to be polite to one another and to know each other. But every now and then, every now and then, you actually do stumble on a topic that stirs up a little bit of passion in them or in you.

And it's very obvious. You can see it. Their eyes light up a bit. They talk a little bit faster. They maybe smile. You can see that they're truly excited about it, talking about it, just thinking about whatever it is.

It brings them joy. We're God's people. God's ambassadors. That's the joy that we have.

[17 : 46] The very fact that we're celebrating Jesus' death and resurrection next week, just thinking about Easter, it's joy. Now, if you don't know Jesus and you don't know that joy, find out.

And for any of those among us who we can share that joy with, it might not be that bad if we do tear some branches down and throw our cloaks through the aisles and start yelling out, Hosanna.

And as I said, it's okay. It's biblical. We can do that. Now, when Andrew comes back and if he does ask about this, let's just be clear, though, I'm not saying that we should do that.

But it is one of those things that if we're talking to someone about Easter in the next week, next few days, or any time this year, when you're telling someone what your plans are, whether you're coming to church, when you're telling them that you're celebrating the greatest reason for living, it's okay to break out a little bit.

Just break out of that routine. Have that bit of joy. Now, I know, I do know, it's not an easy thing.

[19 : 13] For me this week, it's one of those weeks. For many of us, I'm sure as well. But this is the joy. This is the joy that as deep as any pains or sorrows or troubles that we might have, this is the joy that God promises us and it is far deeper than any of those things.

And we wait for the day when we can crowd, Hallelujah! Holy, holy, holy is our Lord. And that's a hope, that's a joy that no one can take away.

Now, it's only actually when we expect Jesus to solve the problems of this world through human means, that's when we end up having very human disappointments.

Now, we can see from this passage, we can trust God's words because he did come and he has solved the root of every problem on this earth by coming and dying and rising again.

he has made all of the words of history ring true and they will ring even truer when he comes back to finish. And so that's why we remind ourselves and we keep reminding each other of who Jesus is and what we're waiting for.

[20 : 47] Come, Lord Jesus. Let's pray. Dear Lord, we thank you so much that you came to this world and you lived a perfect life and that you died for us and you fulfilled all of the words of all of the prophets in this great book that we look at.

Lord, we thank you that we can have that joy and that hope because we know you. You are in us and we are kept to the very end and we know that that is a surety that nothing else can take away.

So, Lord, I pray that this week, hopefully every day, that joy that is deep inside us can come out and that we can keep being your ambassadors and your people and showing the world what it is to praise you and to worship you.

We put these things in your hands, Lord. Amen. Amen. Amen. Pardon. Amen.

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