

NORTH MAIN SERMON APRIL 13, 2025 PASSION/PALM SUNDAY

Our 3 Gospel reading for today document the walk Jesus took to Jerusalem. The Third reading tells of the great expectations of the Crowds

Mark 10:32-34

Jesus Predicts His Death a Third Time

³² They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. ³³ “We are going up to Jerusalem,” he said, “and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, ³⁴ who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.”

Mark 11:1-11

Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King

11 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, ² saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’” ⁴ They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, ⁵ some people standing there asked, “What are you doing, untying that

colt?”⁶ They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go.⁷ When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it.⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields.⁹ Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, “Hosanna!^[a]” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”^[b]¹⁰ “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!” “Hosanna in the highest heaven!”¹¹ Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

John 12:12-19

Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King

¹² The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem.¹³ They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, “Hosanna!^[a]” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”^[b] “Blessed is the king of Israel!”¹⁴ Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written:¹⁵ “Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.”^[c]

¹⁶ 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 these things had been done to him.

¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him.¹⁹ So the

Pharisees said to one another, “See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!”

THE WORD OF GOD. THANKS BE TO GOD.

The scene has now shifted from a private setting of the dinner that was given for him to a public setting. They are expected to attend the feast of the Passover in Jerusalem. The Gospel readings record for us that Jesus was on His way up to Jerusalem when He was telling His disciples things that “astonished” them and “frightened” His other followers. This was not the first time He spoke “plainly” to them about His suffering, sacrifice and passion! Then, as if to emphasize the inability of his closest followers to see what’s really going on, Jesus does one last miracle before heading up to Jerusalem. He heals a blind beggar named Bartimaeus whose only request is to see and to receive mercy at the hands of the one he calls “Son of David.

But then, remarkably, as if they hadn’t heard a word He had just spoken about everything that He would be undergoing, James and John came to Him quietly asking not about what He might need, but wanting something for **themselves!** They asked Him to “write them a blank check!” They asked Him to grant them everything they wanted, and what they wanted was the privilege of sitting in honor and power with Him in His glory. The other disciples became aware of James and John’s request and a quarrel broke out among them about who was the greatest; who deserved the positions of greatest honor. Jesus finally “stepped in” to settle the dispute by explaining that “whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. We can’t imagine that in the face of His impending suffering and death the disciples only cared about which of them might be considered “first, greatest

or best. Given the tensions and expectations that have been growing, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is very dramatic. By openly entering the city where he is a marked man he takes the first step toward the final confrontation. News arrives that Jesus is *on his way to Jerusalem*, and a crowd of pilgrims, presumably those who had been wondering if he would come, goes out to meet him. Mary's private expression of emotion is now matched by the crowd's public outpouring of enthusiasm. Palm Sunday was the first time Jesus ever appeared in the great, bustling city of Jerusalem.

Jesus knew that His ministry would not be complete and His mission would not be successful unless and until He took His gospel message from the small towns of Galilee in the northern part of Israel and declared it in the great Temple in Jerusalem. On the day we now call Palm Sunday, He left behind places such as Nazareth, Capernaum and Bethany all the small towns that was familiar with, and marched His followers into Jerusalem. He had the right message and Jerusalem was the right place to preach it if He wanted to reach the widest possible audience.

Tension and anticipation would have been thick in the air. Pilate made the trip into town to uphold law and order. Pilate must have entered the city in a procession of pomp complete with war horses and an armored army. In stark contrast to this display of military might, Jesus arrives just before Passover feast and curiously instructs two disciples to borrow a colt for him to ride. When its owners ask the two what they are doing, they answer as Jesus told them to: "The Lord needs it."

After a cloak is spread over the colt and more are laid on the road, the simple parade begins. It's a procession of humility and gentleness. It's a demonstration of meekness and vulnerability. Instead of a big show of military might, Jesus defies

expectations and comes in a different way. He doesn't rally the crowds to incite revolt. His coming invites in them the response of, "Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven"

The people shout Hosana, Hosana..the King is coming. And line the road with Palm branches. All in the rapidly increasing throng were happy and excited. They could not offer Him costly gifts, but they took off their garments and lined his path, as a carpet with them. They thought they were escorting Christ to take possession of the throne of David in Jerusalem. The Saviour had never before allowed His followers to show Him kingly honors. But at this time, He desired especially to manifest Himself to the world as its Redeemer. On the one hand, there were people who were laying their garments on the ground and tearing off branches from trees to create a kind of "red-carpet arrival" for the Man they believed to be the Messiah, the Son of God—or at least the One they thought might be the Son of David, an earthly king who would overthrow the Romans and re-establish Israel to its former glory as it enjoyed in the days of David and Solomon. These were the people who were making all the noise and creating all the uproar; they were welcoming the change they thought Jesus' arrival was about to create. On the other hand, there were the urbane and sophisticated citizens of the bustling city of Jerusalem who had no idea what was going on that day. There were, after all, 12 gates into and out of the city of Jerusalem. Depending on the gate through which you entered, it was possible for most people in the city to have no idea that anything was going on across town. Most of those who observed the events of Palm Sunday had no idea who this was at the center of all the commotion. So, not everyone in town was shouting Hosanna; for many in that ancient city, the only response to the procession was: Who is this?? He wasn't dressed

in the latest fashions or moving about with the swagger or confidence of the great leaders they frequently saw moving through their city. After all, He was dressed in common robes. It seems that not that many actually knew anything about this day.

And then there were the Romans who saw Jesus riding a donkey, they probably thought it was all a joke. After all, what king rides a donkey? Wouldn't the Messiah be riding a powerful war horse? Even Christ's own Disciples did not understand the importance of what they were witnessing. They expected that the one who would come to take over Jerusalem would be clothed in armor with an army which could defeat the enemy. They expected that there would be loud blaring trumpets, not a raggedy group of people waving branches.

While the crowds build, the Pharisees, on the other hand, are getting more and more upset. The Son of God was about to become a sacrifice for the sins of men. His church in all succeeding ages must make His death a subject of deep thought and study. It was necessary, then, that the eyes of all people should now be directed to Him. After such a scene as this, His trial and crucifixion could never be hidden from the world. It was God's design that each event in the closing days of the Saviour's life should be so plainly marked that no power could cause it to be forgotten.

In the vast multitude surrounding the Saviour were the evidences of His miracle-working power. The blind whom He had restored to sight were leading the way. The dumb whose tongues He had loosed, shouted the loudest hosannas. The cripples whom He had healed leaped for joy, and were most active in breaking the palm branches and waving them before Him. Widows and orphans were exalting the name of Jesus for His works of mercy to them. The loathsome lepers who had

been cleansed by a word, spread their garments in the way. Those who had been raised from the dead by the life-giving voice of the Saviour were there.

And Lazarus, whose body had seen corruption in the grave, but who was now enjoying the strength of glorious manhood, was with the happy throng that escorted the Saviour to Jerusalem.

As new numbers were added to the throng, they caught the inspiration of the hour, and joined in the shouts that echoed and re-echoed from hill to hill and from valley to valley: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest. Who is this? Was the question in the crowd on that day, and that question stands here today waiting for each one of us to offer an answer.....

In the meantime, the wicked are besetting Jesus and plotting against him and looking for a traitor to betray him. The past three days have been awash with drama. Jesus entry into the City, the Temple cleansing and all the other things that were going on...and now Judas have been inspired to hand Jesus over to the high Priests. For this he was paid thirty pieces of silver.

Starting this coming Thursday, marks the beginning of the sacred "three days." Earlier this day Jesus had given instructions to the disciples on how to prepare for this most holy meal, which will be his last supper. The disciples have been with him since the beginning of his ministry. But now he must go this alone...He has to be out in front..this is the only way..... As we will see, the crowds will play their part in the days to come. Some awaited more miracles – more excitement and drama – from Jesus and they were disappointed in the results. The events that lead Jesus to the cross are filled with intrigue, suspense and an impending sense of disaster.

Looking back on the last 5 weeks, ask yourself, where has God been faithful to you during your Lenten journey? What ordinary miracles have made themselves known to you? Have you been overwhelmed by grace or had a miracle performed for you, you know a big, huge miracle that happen and we have no other option except to just be stunned? How has God been leading you through the wilderness. When you are done naming all the ways God has been present to you since Ash Wednesday, remember that Jesus recognizes the good and the bad in us and offers new hope to each and everyone of us.. **look toward Easter Sunday** and continue on the path of light and life and know that these past days have been all in preparation for Easter. The words of Jesus are all the assurance that we need. He is with us every day and offers us forgiveness and grace that no matter... what we will be born anew through the power of the holy spirit... Let us pray.... Loving God, walk with us on the road to Calvary. Hold us close so we might see your love in the midst of the twists and turns. Let us feel the heavy weight of sorrow removed from us by the weight of the cross and know that Jesus did that for us..Walk with us today and throughout the coming days remaining lead us to Easter and the promise of live eternal life that you and only you gave to us. Help us to answer the question, who is Jesus... He is Lord. Amen

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