

Palm Sunday 2015
March 29 & 30, 2015
Mark 11:1-10

See our Lord's Final Journey!

There are times in life that events take a dramatic turn. A horrible accident of a plane crash suddenly turns into a suicide/murder investigation. How could one pilot get locked out of the cockpit by another pilot? A quiet flight home, suddenly became a final journey of terror. In 8 minutes, laughter, small talk, quiet reading turned into deafening cries for help. One horrific event that will probably change a direction on rules and regulations for the airline industry across the world.

As we once again look at Jesus' triumphant march into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday, who would have guessed how fast life was going to take a dramatic turn for Jesus and his disciples? For some, the cries of "**Hosanna**" would change to the words - "**crucify him!**" This was Jesus' final journey to the cross.

Jerusalem was full and alive with people. Thousands and thousands of people had made the journey to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. One can only imagine how quickly word spread that Jesus was coming into Jerusalem. People soon lined the streets to get a glimpse of the man who had become known as the "**King of the Jews.**" Mark tells us: "**Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest!"**

The Palm branch was a symbol of victory. When a king won a battle, he would return to his city, and all the people would greet him, waving palm branches to celebrate with the victorious king. People grabbed Palm branches from the trees and laid them down in front of Jesus. They laid their coats on the ground as a symbol of deep respect and understanding that they were in the presence of royalty. They were shouting "**Hosanna.**" It means "*save*" or "*save, now.*" They were excited.

Why were they so excited? Many of them probably had no idea what Jesus would be doing for them that week. Did they sense the excitement of the disciples? Did they just get caught up in the moment. Did they all fully understand that Jesus was THEIR King or just A King? Did they know that Jesus would be winning THE victory over Satan in a few short days? Did they know that Jesus was going to save them by dying for their sins and the sins of the world? How much they all knew we do not know. But they would all know soon what this powerful King was going to do for them. What the people proclaimed as they waved their palm branches was true – Jesus was the King of the Jews. We, too, know what this king has done for us!

Jesus knew who he was. He knew He was the Messiah spoken of by the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus dressed for the occasion, preparing Himself for the kind of entrance into Jerusalem described by Isaiah and Zechariah. Those prophets declared that the Messiah would come. He would be One different from the average king. This One would be humble, making His entry on a donkey.

Why a donkey? Most kings ride white stallions or ride in a chariot. But King Jesus rides a donkey. He knew what He was doing. He chose His vehicle of transportation. The horse stands for war; that's what the people wanted. They yearned for a leader who would set them free from the yoke of Rome. Jesus rode a donkey, a symbol of meekness, of peace. How different are the swishing of palm branches from the click of crossed swords or the deafening blast of a twenty-one gun salute.

Even though Jesus appeared to enter as a victorious king, he came to work. He came "**not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**" (Mt. 20:28) He came riding a donkey to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies. He came riding a donkey, "**which no one has ever ridden.**" God had told the Old Testament Christians that when animals were going to be used for spiritual reasons, they should not have been used for any other purposes. Could there not have been any more sacred purpose for an animal to be transporting the Son of God to carry out the salvation of the world?

He came to save. Zechariah tells us this King comes with "**gentleness.**" Jesus came to proclaim peace. This world is looking for peace, and Jesus has it. A peace that is far superior than any nation on this earth could ever offer. John the Baptist exclaimed: "**Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!**" Your sins are forgiven. "**See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.**"

What a comfort to know that in those times when things don't seem to be going our way, our King says to us: **"Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you."** What a comfort to know that in our darkest and most lonely hours, our King has promised us: **"And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."** What a comfort to know that when events take place that leave us stunned or sad or that we can't for the life of us understand, our King has promised: **"All things work together for good to them that love God."**

This is a Different Kind of King! He is a King that loved us enough to set aside the full use of his power and humbled himself to live and die for our sins. But he is also a King that triumphed over sin and death and now reigns forever. We've been given a new life of peace and joy! We now have a Savior that will motivate and a Savior to imitate. As he humbled himself, we humble ourselves. As he loved, we will love. As he was finally exalted and glorified, when this life is over we will be exalted and glorified. This different kind of a King gives us a different kind of attitude as Paul talks about in our second lesson for today.

Today we march behind our King with Palm Branches. We will follow to the Upper Room, then to Pilate's Inner Room, then up to Calvary. This is a King that rides on, rides on in majesty in lowly pomp rides on to die. It will also be a King to rise victorious next week.

Our lives will be filled with all kinds of moments that will turn us a completely different direction – some good, some not so good. Let's follow our King to the cross and to the glorious of heaven. Amen.