

Palm Sunday

I heard this story from a pastor the other day that sheds light on what I want to share this morning. This pastor is into UFC fighting. I know a lot of people don't care for the violence and the message it promotes. This pastor enjoyed the fights and even had people in his church who were coaches in the UFC. One day he was watching a fight and one of the fighters took their gloves off and dropped them on the mat. The pastor said, "Oh wow can you believe that?" The wife had no idea what was going on and asked, "believe what?" The pastor then said, "The fighter took his gloves off and threw them on the mat." The wife said, "Good they were probably gross and sweaty." The pastor said, "No, you don't understand. When a fighter takes his gloves off like that he is 'hanging up his gloves' meaning he is retiring. He won't be fighting anymore." This fighter began martial arts when he was three years old and has fought almost fifty times in the UFC. It was a big moment in his career. The pastor knew what the gloves meant but the wife had no clue. They were both watching the same fight but had two different perspectives.

Today we are going to look at the account of Palm Sunday. On this day, Jesus rides into Jerusalem as the Savior King. Just like the pastor and his wife, there are two different perspectives in the triumphal entry I want to explore and teach on this morning.

If you have your Bibles, this morning please go with me to the Gospel of John. Palm Sunday is in every Gospel account, but I love John's perspective for a number of reasons. First, John was the only one at the cross of Jesus. He didn't sell out in fear. The second is how much time John gives to the final week of Jesus in his Gospel. The book of John has 21 chapters and chapters 12-21 are dedicated to the final week of Jesus. That's almost half of the book.

I hope you are at John 12 let's begin in verse 12:

12 On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel." 14 Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, 15 "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." 16 These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him. 17 So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify about Him. 18 For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him."

– John 12:12-19 NASB1995

Jesus here is coming down into Jerusalem, and all could see. Jerusalem is swelled with people coming from all parts to participate in Passover. There are several very interesting things happening in this picture. The first is that on the 10th Day of Nissan (not the car), Jewish families would select a lamb that would live with them until it was sacrificed on the 14th day of Nissan. It was on this 10th day of Nissan that Jesus, the Lamb of God walked into Jerusalem. The historian Josephus said that one census of the lambs brought into Jerusalem for Passover was 256,500.

Think about this, that is about five NFL stadiums full of people and lambs. Again, the Lamb of God surrounded by sacrificial lambs that could never fully take away sin.

Jesus was always doing things outside of the box. Jesus comes into Jerusalem riding on a donkey. First off, Jesus never rode anything. Jesus always walked everywhere. There were even times when Jesus decided not to be in a boat but just walked on the water. So, Jesus sitting and riding on an animal was significant, but it goes deeper because He was riding a donkey not a warhorse. If the king of a nation came into town riding a horse, it meant it was time for fighting, time for war. If a king was riding a donkey, it meant he was coming in peace. After all the wars and blood of King David, Solomon took over as king and 1 Kings 1:33 says that on the day Solomon became king, he rode a donkey. This was significant because all of Israel wanted a militant king who would come in and rescue them from their oppressors the Romans. They really wanted a King Jesus not a Savior Jesus. They wanted armies that would overthrow the Roman Empire and allow Israel to rise up again.

As Jesus came riding in the crowds laid down their cloaks and waved palm branches while shouting “Hosanna.” Hosanna is only mentioned in the Triumphal entry in the Gospels. It comes from the Hebrew word *howoshia-na* meaning “save us, we pray” which comes from Psalm 118:25. By saying this the Jews were acknowledging Jesus as Messiah. By saying “in the highest” they were declaring Jesus as God who was bringing salvation. It echoes the angels who declared in Luke 2:14 “glory to God in the highest.” One scholar paraphrases the cries of the crowd to say, “Save us, our Messiah, who comes to fulfill God’s mission! Save us, we beseech You, as You take Your rightful throne and extend heaven’s salvation to us!”

Here's the problem though, the Jews could not recognize Jesus for who He really was. They wanted certain things from Jesus. They recognized Jesus had supernatural power, but they didn't submit to Him as Lord and Savior. They wanted a political hero not a Spiritual Deliverer. They were so caught up in their society, political climate, and social customs that they failed to understand there was something more urgent than their country. The souls of humanity were destined for hell, and the Son of God came into our world to make a way back to the Father.

Today we are celebrating and *remembering* Palm Sunday. It was the day our Savior came to die in our place to forgive us of all our sin so that we could be reconciled to the Father. The question and challenge I have for you today is this: How do you see Jesus? Is Jesus your Savior and Lord or is He your good luck charm that can bail you out of troubles of life? If you still have your Bibles out, I want to show you a sobering reminder in the book of Matthew. Look with me at Matthew chapter 26 beginning in verse 20:

20 Now when evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples. 21 As they were eating, He said, “Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me.” 22 Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, “Surely not I, Lord?” 23 And He answered, “He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me. 24 The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.” 25 And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, “Surely it is not I, Rabbi?” Jesus said to him, “You have said it yourself.”

– Matthew 26:20-25 NASB1995

Jesus is deeply grieved and knows that Judas will not only betray Jesus but will never truly accept salvation. Jesus says it would have been better if Judas was never born. Notice that all the disciples asked Jesus “is it I Lord?” when Jesus said one will betray Him. All except Judas who said, “Is it I *Rabbi*?” I will translate this to say all the disciples saw Jesus as Lord and Savior where Judas saw Jesus as Rabbi and Master. You and I cannot live this life wanting a Political or situational savior. What we need is Jesus being Lord of our lives. This is interesting: the word “savior” is used 37 times in the Scripture, while the word “Lord” is used over 7,000 times.

How do we make Jesus Lord of our lives and the object of our affection?

The first thing we need in order to make Jesus Lord of our lives is an Encounter with His presence. In the book of Genesis Jacob was running from his brother and one night had an encounter with God as he wrestled with the Man all night long. By the morning, Jacob was no longer Jacob, but Israel. Before receiving Christ, Paul was the best of the best in the Jewish world He had the best education, the best genealogy, and followed everything perfectly within religion. But one encounter with Jesus and everything changed. Notice that in the crowd on Palm Sunday many were there that saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead after four days. All of us here should be waking up in the morning and seeking the Lord first and foremost. Many people call them “morning devotions.” I think we need to change the title to “morning encounters.” You and I have the privilege of encountering God any time we want. God’s presence is one thankful prayer away.

One day when I was a kid I remember slamming into a sliding glass door with my face. I don’t remember why I was so excited to go outside but I didn’t even have my shoes on. I literally grabbed my shoes and ran towards the backyard thinking the glass door was open. Kudos to my mom for keeping that glass so clean it looked open. Man, I can’t even imagine how many concussions I got as a kid. The point is that I crashed into a glass door because I was distracted and impatient. There are a couple of things that will keep you from encountering God. Those things are sin, distraction, and impatience.

Sin won’t keep you from the love of the Father. But it will callous your heart enough to where you lose interest in pursuing His presence. The motive for sin (outside of the flesh nature) is that you are either trying to get something through sin you don’t believe you can get from God, or you are trying to numb some kind of pain/mask something. Adam and Eve were the perfect example. The devil deceived them thinking if they sinned, they would become like God. We of course know, they were already like God made in His image. Then after their sin, with the weight of regret on their hearts, they hid from God rather than pursue Him. They didn’t submit to God’s direction; they attempted to cover their shame instead.

If you want to make Jesus Lord of your life, you need to consistently encounter Him so that you can seek His will in all things. The beauty of the grace of Jesus is that even in your sin...when you have failed, you can still boldly approach the throne of grace so that you may find mercy in your time of need.

The second thing we need to make Jesus Lord of our lives is the strength of Holy Spirit. I've used this analogy before, I'm sure but it helps my perspective. A Christian counselor doesn't just hear you and give you advice. Instead, they ask a lot of questions and try to get you to answer your own problem. It's almost as if they want you to pull it out of your heart and up to your face so you can realize what the issue is and determine to take action. I've never liked that. I want a coach who can just tell me what to do. Well, thankfully the Holy Spirit is one who will tell us exactly what we need to hear and what we need to do. Holy Spirit is our Teacher, Counselor, Comforter, and Guide. Jesus told His disciples that they wouldn't even have to think of what to say in the moment because the Holy Spirit would give them what they needed in that hour. If you are desiring to encounter God more so that Jesus can be Lord of your life, you need to rely on the Holy Spirit.

The final thing we need to make Jesus Lord of our lives is a decision of ongoing surrender.

Romans 12:1 says, "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship."

We are motivated for surrender by the mercy of God. Why do you want to live surrendered to God? What's your motive? There are so many. Jesus humbly laying down His life for us should cause us to want to live surrendered. The fact that God is omniscient and knows all things should cause us to not lean on our own understanding but seek His in surrender. Maybe you need to meditate on the mercy of God in that you were a rotten sinner on your way to hell but by the mercy of God welcomed you into His family and saved your soul. Your past sin debt that was forgiven should be motivation to live a surrendered life.

Surrender in the Kingdom of God is not failure or giving up. It's not like you have a gun pointed at you and you put your hands up in surrender.

CONCLUSION - The Hebrews were required to kill the Passover lamb and put the blood on the sides and the top of their doors. The angel of death would see the blood and pass over the household, and no one would be harmed. Now, let me say this, if an angel from the Lord couldn't go past the bloodline, then no demon or devil could either. Today we declare and plead the blood of Jesus over our lives, families, and situations.

