

**Palm Sunday 2018**

John 12:12-43

**Hymns: 169, 86, 306, 361, 292, 511.**

**Introit: Psalm 31:9-16**

**P** Be gracious to me, O LORD! For I am in distress.

**C** **My eye has become weak from irritation, my soul, and my body also.**

**P** For sorrow has consumed my life, and groaning has consumed my years.

**C** **My strength has failed because of my iniquity, and my bones have become weak.**

**P** Because of all my enemies, I have become a disgrace, especially to my neighbours. I have become an object of dread to my acquaintances.

**C** **Those who see me on the street have been running away from me.**

**P** I have been forgotten in people's minds like one who is dead.

**C** **I have become like a broken vessel.**

**P** For I have heard the defamation of many people. There is terror on every side while they conspire **together against me.**

**C** **They have been plotting to take my life.**

**P** Nevertheless, I myself trust in You, O LORD.

**C** **I have been saying, "You are my God."**

**P** My times are in Your hand. Deliver me from the hands of my enemies, and from those who persecute me!

**All** **Make Your face shine on Your servant! Save me by Your mercy!**

**Collect:** Almighty and everlasting God, You sent Your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon Himself our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross. Mercifully grant that we may follow the example of His great humility and patience and be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**Old Testament: Zechariah 9:1-12**

**Epistle: Philippians 2:5-7**

**Gospel: John 12:20-43.**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for the sermon is the Gospel heard before in John 12: 20-43.

**20** There were some Greeks among those who were coming up to worship at the Feast. **21** They approached Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

**22** Philip went and told Andrew. Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. **23** Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. **24** Truly, truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but, if it dies, it produces much grain.

**25** "The person who loves his life loses it, and the person who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. **26** If anyone serves Me, he should follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honour him. **27** Now My soul is troubled, and what am I to say? 'Father, save Me from this hour!?' No! For this reason I have come to this hour. **28** Father, glorify Your name!"

Then a voice came from heaven: "I both have glorified it, and shall glorify it again."

**29** Therefore the crowd that was standing there and heard it began to say that it had thundered. Others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him."

**30** Jesus answered: "This voice has not come because of Me, but because of you. **31** Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. **32** I, if I am lifted up from the earth, shall also draw all people to Myself."

**33** He said this to indicate the kind of death that He was going to die.

**34** The crowd answered Him, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains for ever. How, then, are You saying that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this 'Son of Man'?"

**35 Then Jesus told them, "The Light is still among you for a little while. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness may not overtake you! The person who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. 36 While you have the Light, believe in the Light so that you may become children of light!"**

**After Jesus had said these things, He went away and hid from them. 37 Although He had done so many miraculous signs in their presence, they would not believe in Him, 38 in order that the Word that the prophet Isaiah had said might be fulfilled: "Lord, who has believed our report? To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"**

**39 This was the reason why they could not believe. For Isaiah said again: 40 "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so that they may not see with their eyes, and that they may not understand with their hearts, and may not be converted, that I should heal them."**

**41 Isaiah said these things because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about Him. 42 Nevertheless, even among the rulers many became believers in Him, but they would not confess it publicly because of the Pharisees, to avoid being put out of the synagogue. 43 For they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us in your truth. Your Word is truth. **Amen**

Dear friends in Christ,  
Peace be with you.

Today is a day of many contrasts. Jesus enters Jerusalem to the praise of the Passover Pilgrims and yet He knows that He'll die before the week is over. He's incredibly popular with some, but, as with all popular people, He has powerful enemies. Jerusalem welcomes the coming of the anointed one - the Christ - the Messiah. Yet, the crowd's ignorance shields them from the knowledge that this anointed one has come to Jerusalem to suffer and to die. Jerusalem celebrates while all of history holds its breath as it prepares to witness the single most important event in all of time.

Perhaps you can remember anticipating an important event in your life - your graduation, your wedding, the birth of a child, the first day on your new job, the last day before retirement, or the day of an up and coming major operation, or some other type of milestone in your life. When the day seems far in the future, you might push that event to the back of your mind and almost forget about it. As the time gets closer that event begins to take front and center in your thoughts. If the milestone is something positive, the anticipation begins to build. If the milestone is negative, the dread begins to set in. The emotional level builds. Eventually, the time comes and you must deal with the situation.

Jesus, in His state of humiliation, never used His divine powers for His own benefit. One of the things that means is that He experienced emotional ups and downs just as any human would. The emotional ebb and flow of anticipation and dread were part of His life just as they would be for any human being. Jesus always knew that one day, in Jerusalem; He had an appointment with a cross. Surely, Jesus experienced days when that future appointment seemed to be a long way off. Those days were now behind Him. It was less than a week to His death, and the dread of upcoming events could only grow.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, He knew that He was quickly approaching the point of no return. As He heard the shouts of Hosanna and saw the palm branches in His path, He knew that there was another group of people in Jerusalem who were ready to shout, "Crucify him!"

Many times He had told His followers that a Gauntlet of beatings, floggings, crucifixion, and death waited for Him in Jerusalem. Up until the day that we call Palm Sunday, He had always said, "My hour has not yet come," but after He entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, He said, **"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly, truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but, if it dies, it produces much grain.** He also said, **"Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out."** It was clear to Jesus that everything was now in place for His sacrifice. The final events that would lead to His death had begun. The climax of his mission was mere days away.

Anticipation of these events already began to take their toll. He shared His thoughts with the people who had praised Him and now listened to His teaching, "**Now My soul is troubled, and what am I to say? 'Father, save Me from this hour!'**"? **No! For this reason I have come to this hour. 28 Father, glorify Your name!**" Jesus is the perfect human being and His impending suffering and death bothered Him just as much as it would bother anyone. He knew very well what was about to happen and it troubled His soul.

He could have backed out. He could call on His Father to rescue Him, but that is not why He, the Son of God, had taken on human flesh. He had taken on human flesh so that He could take our place. He came to live the perfect life that we could not live and He came to take God's wrath in our place. This was His purpose. This was the reason He had taken on human flesh, and this was the reason that He entered Jerusalem to celebrate one last Passover before He died.

As Jesus was sharing His heart with the people who came to hear Him, He once again told them how He would accomplish His role as Christ. "**I, if I am lifted up from the earth, shall also draw all people to Myself.**" Here John the Evangelist added an editorial comment so that we could understand Jesus just as the people in the temple understood Him: **He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.** Here Jesus is saying that His death on the cross will invite all people to follow Him.

Once again, His hearers struggled with the teaching of His impending death. The crowd answered him, "**We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains for ever. How, then, are You saying that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this 'Son of Man'?**" Once again, the human mind resists the teaching of Christ. The plan of salvation is alien to the sinful human mind. The idea of salvation coming from one who suffered the shame of death on a cross just doesn't make sense. The idea that it would be the Christ who would die was beyond comprehension.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the Passover Pilgrims saw Him as the one who would restore the Empire of Jerusalem back to the days of King David. They rejoiced. They celebrated. They prepared a way with palm branches and cloaks. They were ready for Jesus to restore the rightful place of Israel back among the empires of this world.

When Jesus told them that He came to Jerusalem to die on a cross, His hearers were confused. This Jesus wasn't what they expected. They didn't understand that although the Christ will establish an eternal kingdom, He must suffer and die to do that. They didn't understand that Christ's kingdom is not of this world and that the entrance to that kingdom is through death and resurrection. They didn't understand that the Christ's death and resurrection from the dead were a part of that eternal reign.

We are often like the Passover Pilgrims of Jesus' day. We like the idea of a Jesus who will come and make us more important. We like the idea of a Jesus who will make us richer and better looking - a Jesus who will solve all the strife in our family and nation - a Jesus who will bring back the economy and secure our borders. We like a comfortable Jesus who will make us feel better about ourselves. We like that kind of Jesus.

On the other hand, the Jesus who dies for your sins is an uncomfortable Jesus. We don't like to admit that we have sins for which someone must die. We don't want to look at the reality of the cross and realize that that should be us up there. We don't much care for the Jesus who tells us that we are born spiritually dead in trespasses and sins and that we need His forgiveness in order to come to life.

Jesus knows all this about us. He knows about our stubbornness - our hard hearts - our desire to be the center of the universe. He can see the true motives of our actions. He knows that those deeds that seem right to us often flow from a desire for recognition rather than selfless love. He sees deep into our hearts and knows the ulterior motives that drive those actions that seem so selfless to the world. As today's Gospel says, we often love the glory that comes from man rather than the glory that comes from God.

In spite of our self-centered nature - in spite of our total lack of lovable characteristics, God still loves us and sent His Son to ride into Jerusalem - into a situation that will lead to His death. Jesus entered Jerusalem in majesty on Palm Sunday to set in motion a series of events. Those events will lead Him to carry a cross out of Jerusalem on Good Friday.

Jesus carried something else along with that cross. He carried our sins. The one who entered Jerusalem in majesty on Sunday would die in shame outside of Jerusalem on Friday. With His death would come our forgiveness - forgiveness from all those selfish sins - forgiveness from our ulterior motives - forgiveness of our hypocrisy - forgiveness for each and every one of our sins - both those we know and those we do not know.

From a worldly standpoint, the procession into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday seemed a lot more victorious than the procession out of Jerusalem on Good Friday. Nevertheless, the true victory took place on that Friday. There on the cross, the King who rode in majesty will battle sin and defeat it with His own death. The victory that He won with His death will enable a new procession, a procession that began three days later and has not yet ended. This is a procession up out of the grave and into eternal life. Jesus led the way with His resurrection from the dead and all those who believe in Him will follow Him into eternal joy. **Amen** the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Hymn: 306**

### **Prayer of the Church Palm Sunday**

**P** Because our King has come to us righteous and having salvation, let us pray to our heavenly Father for our brothers and sisters in Christ and for all people in need.

*Brief silence.*

**P** For the Church, that she may be defended against the assaults of Satan, that she boldly proclaim that Jesus humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death for us, and that she be enlarged as the Holy Spirit turns unbelievers to repentance and faith, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

**P** For all whom our Father has given authority in civil governments, that God guide their decisions and desires so that life is defended, justice upheld and the will of Him before whom all knees will bow is done, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

**P** For those stricken by the Storms and Cyclones and bush fires of resent times, and for those who are in any need, that our heavenly Father hear their pleas, meet their needs, relieve their suffering and lead them to rejoice in Him who never fails us in our time of need, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

**P** For the members of this parish who are sick and recovering, (*including* ) that they may trust in Him who gave Himself humbly as a sacrifice for us, we humbly give ourselves in service to Him and the people of this world; that we shout our hosannas of welcoming praise; and that we never fail to trust Christ, whose Passion provides our salvation, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

**P** For our Christian lives, that we be granted faithfulness in times of temptation, forgiveness when we fall, a humble love for all our brothers and sisters in Christ, reconciliation with those from whom we are alienated, and boldness to confess the Christ who was crucified for us, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

**P** For those who live without faith in Christ, that the Holy Spirit call them to repentance and grant them a confident trust in the King who comes in the name of the Lord, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

**P** For all those our heavenly Father has united in marriage, that God grant them faithfulness, use them to care for one another and continually renew their love for each other with His eternal love for them, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

**P** For those who receive this day the Holy Supper of our Lord, that with repentant hearts, we eagerly welcome the Christ, who comes today in the name of Lord; that we gratefully receive His forgiveness; and that we be strengthened for lives of faith and good works, let us pray to the Lord:

**C Lord, have mercy.**

Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**C Amen.**

**4th Hymn:361.**