

**Sermon on Mark 11:1-10 for Palm Sunday**  
**March 24-26, St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church, New Ulm, Minnesota**

*As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.' " <sup>4</sup> They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, <sup>5</sup> some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" <sup>6</sup> They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. <sup>7</sup> When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. <sup>8</sup> Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. <sup>9</sup> Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" <sup>10</sup> "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!" <sup>1</sup>*

**Hosanna to our King!**  
**Look at who he is.**  
**Look at what he has come to do.**

It's happening and it's big. Are you ready for Saturday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018? Do you have your spot all picked out for where you are going to watch the caravan and processional/recessional of the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle? You will be able to get a glimpse of royalty. In fact about 1200 specially nominated young people from around the United Kingdom will get an exclusive invite onto the grounds of Windsor Castle. They won't get into the chapel, but they'll be able to get a glimpse of royalty up close on the big day.

On a grander scale, and more importantly, are you ready for today, Palm Sunday, as we bring our palm branches and our songs of praise to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, as he rides by on the road to Jerusalem? Can you see the royalty in the midst of his humility? Can you see his divinity despite the human flesh of this carpenter's son from Nazareth? Join the festal throng and sing his praises, "Hosanna to Our King!" He rides for us.

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<sup>1</sup> *The New International Version*. (2011). (Mk 11:1-10). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Like the Super bowl of religious festivals, the Passover celebration brought everyone home to Jerusalem. The faithful came from all over the known world. The city and surrounding towns swelled. There was a constant flow of people in and out of the city. Rabbis taught. Priests and worshippers sacrificed to the Lord and sang psalms to him for his goodness to them. The people enjoyed fellowship and family reunions.

This Passover was going to be the greatest Passover yet. Jesus and his disciples came to Bethany, where Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. On three occasions at least he had warned his disciples of what awaited him in Jerusalem – betrayal, judgment, a cross, a tomb and his resurrection. But the disciples were blissfully incomplete in their knowledge and putting two and two together. But Jesus was serious and does everything to bolster their faith now and for retrospect after he would rise. He sends two disciples ahead of him with exact directions on where to find a colt for him to ride and what to say when the owners balk at their taking the colt. Everything happened just as he said. I'd like to see someone else try to get a donkey rental for free at such a peak time.

But this was more than just a ride into a city Jesus had walked many times before, it was to fulfill Zechariah's prophecy – *"Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey"* (Zechariah 9:9). And as his disciples put their cloaks on the donkey's back to make it more comfortable and honorable, Jesus sat on the donkey and rode the just under two miles of path to the temple in Jerusalem. And the people, overcome with excitement that the Messiah might actually be there and ready to save his people, joined in the procession. Those around him in Bethany and Bethphage put their coats and palm branches before him. Those having heard about Jesus' arrival came out from Jerusalem and did the same.

And they sang, *"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 heaven!"* These were the words of the Great Hallel which believers sang for centuries on their way up to the Passover. They sang them to the LORD their God. And today they did the same as they sang to Jesus, the Messiah, the LORD.

The fervor will be at a high on Saturday, May 19<sup>th</sup>. Many people love royal weddings. Designers know that fashion styles will be set by what people wear at this. News agencies, photographers, television stations and talk shows are going to ride this wave all the way to the bank. And all for what? I have great respect for people in authority. How will this wedding, procession, recession and what

people wear to this event help me in my life except for a smile and a momentary happy feeling of royal wedding fervor? And I'm saying that as someone who will probably be tuning in to watch the wedding. Enjoy it.

With Jesus, though, here on the road to Jerusalem, it's so much more than an opportunity for royal fervor. Our eternal soul and our spiritual and mental wellbeing here and forever depend on who Jesus is and what he does. They sang, "*Hosanna*" which means "*Save us!*" While some may have been thinking of more of an earthly king who could overthrow Rome, the words speak of the Messiah, who would deliver God's people once and for all. As the LORD had rescued his people from their slavery in Egypt, the real Messiah would rescue his people from their slavery to sin, guilt, shame and eternal condemnation. And they would be free – now and for eternity.

They sang, "*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*" Yes this is true in a sense of all those who proclaim God's Gospel message, but so much more here as the one who comes is in the name of the Lord because he is the Lord who was promised in Malachi 3:1 – "Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come." And he will do the work of the Lord, however difficult and gory and terrifying it will be. But he will do it and achieve for his children, for you and for me, relief from condemnation, forgiveness and life and a kingdom.

They sang and shouted, "*Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!*" Christ comes to establish his kingdom – God's rule in human hearts through the Gospel message and the eternal kingdom of the Son of God in heaven. This was the kingdom that was to come, to which King David himself looked forward to for so long. It's not a kingdom like David's which started unraveling already by the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation. It's a perfect kingdom. And Jesus came to make us citizens of it.

This time of year is busy. And the devil, the world and our sinful nature like it when we are busy and stressed. Our sinful nature would rather us look in at our sins and our shame and our inability to get anything right. The world calls with cares and ill-conceived and ill-gotten pleasures to distract and entice. The devil tries to trap you with his temptations or his lies about your status – God can't love you. You are lost. Give up. God has forsaken you. And so we look and worry or we run and distract ourselves and we grow tired and weary and we have no one to blame but ourselves. But then you hear the chants and songs. In your darkness and distraction, the familiar promises come back and you look, there is

Jesus, riding on a donkey, humble and perfect. Could it be true? The Messiah come to save us?

Your tickets have come in to see royalty. It has your name on it. Join the crowds – the ones celebrating, the ones jeering in the courts, the ones accusing before the high priest, the ones looking on helplessly, the ones mourning before the cross and the tomb, and the ones gathering early Sunday morning to see what victory God has won. Keep your eyes on the royalty, Jesus, who he is and what he has come to do. See his concern for your heart and others as he teaches in the temple. See his complete humility as he washes his disciples' feet and gives to them of his own body and blood for their forgiveness. Listen to his words on trial, to his words spoken from the cross. Only do not take your eyes off of Jesus. Wait with the disciples for Easter Sunday morn where you will see Jesus risen from the dead – proof of your life and forgiveness, proof of your solution to every problem this world can throw at you, proof that you are not forsaken, but forgiven. Don't take your eyes off of Jesus. But praise him, "*Hosanna in the highest heaven!*" Hosanna to our King. He is our God who humbled himself to take on flesh. He came to save us and he has. *Hosanna! Amen.*