

Remnant Life Church
March 24, 2024
The Power of Holy Week:
Palm Sunday
Mark 11:1-11

Today is Palm Sunday

- On the yearly church calendar, it holds a great deal of significance
 - It marks the final week of the season of Lent, which concludes on Good Friday
 - It marks the beginning of the last week of Jesus' earthly life, known as Holy Week or The Passion
 - And it is the day that Jesus entered Jerusalem as their King

How this time of the year, culminating with next Sunday, came to be known as Easter is uncertain, but the origin of names or titles is always important

- The 8th-century English monk Bede wrote that the name derives from the word *Eostre*, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring and fertility
- This in and of itself is a reason many in the church, myself included, tend to use the term Resurrection Sunday rather than Easter
- Given the early church's aversion to anything pagan, there was an explanation offered that the origin actually lies in the Latin *alibis*, which became *eostarum* in the Old High German language, or *ostern* in modern German, which became a precursor to the English *Easter*.

There are many cultural customs leading up to Easter Sunday, none of which have anything to do with the church

- Colored eggs – most likely an extension of the fertility rites, a hold-over from the pagan celebrations
- There is the Easter Bunny, who is similar to Santa Clause at Christmas in his spiritual significance and importance
- And, of course, there is candy – lots and lots of candy
 - Chocolate
 - Jellybeans
 - Marshmallow Peeps – 700 million peeps sold during the season
 - Second only to chocolate
 - Over the past 15 years, well over 200 million have been consumed at my house alone
 - More candy is purchased and consumed than at any other time of the year, with the exception of Halloween
- But for us in the church, Holy Week culminating with Resurrection Sunday, is of the most important of times with a significance and meaning that is eternal in its importance

READ – Mark 11:1-11

Palm Sunday is important for many reasons

- Of special note is that it brings Jesus to Jerusalem

- If you remember, His disciples were actually encouraging Him not to go
 - There had been many threats made at Jesus over the past couple of years
 - Remember that after He raised Lazarus from the dead, the religious leaders began to plot how to have them BOTH killed (**John 12:9-11**)
- But Jesus clearly shows His intent and resolve, knowing that to do this was a part of accomplishing the will of Father
- It is interesting to note that Jesus' entry is recorded in all four of the Gospels (**Matthew 21:1-17; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-40; John 12:12-19**)
 - The importance of that moment is demonstrated by this fact since it was very unusual that all four Gospels include a particular event
 - For instance, the only miracle of Jesus in all four Gospels is the feeding of the 5000

The setting for this first day of Holy Week is actually a pretty chaotic one

- There are a huge number of people in and around the city of Jerusalem
 - In Jesus' day, the normal population of Jerusalem was likely between 50 and 60,000
 - During the time of Passover, that number could easily swell to between 125 and 150,000
- Why did this event take place every year? What was going on?
 - You must first know its origin
 - **Ex 9:12-13** - *On that same night, I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.*
 - This was the final miracle of the 10 plagues that delivered Israel from slavery and their bondage in Egypt
 - Well then, who determined that the night of the death angel passing over should be remembered and recognized every year?
 - God's words to Moses
 - **Ex 12:14** - *This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come, you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD—a lasting ordinance.*
 - God decreed that the day should never be forgotten
 - Why was this time significant regarding the life and ministry of Jesus?
 - **Matt 26:1-4** – *When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, "As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified." Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and they schemed to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. "But not during the festival," they said, "or there may be a riot among the people."*
 - He knew that the time had come for Him to fulfill and complete His purpose and mission.

There are two primary elements that come to mind when we think of this day

1. Jesus riding on a donkey (vv 30-35)
 - a. This is the only time in the Scripture that we read of Jesus riding anywhere
 - b. He walked – perhaps as a way of identifying Himself with everyone He would meet as an approachable common man
 - c. Why a donkey?
 - i. Very few horses in that area
 - ii. In Jesus's day only the very rich or nobility
 - iii. Horses were also for the military and associated with war
 1. When a conquering king came into a city he had just vanquished, he rode in on a magnificent steed
 2. But when a king entered a city on a donkey it was a symbol that he was coming in peace
 3. Jesus was coming not as a king of war but as the prince of peace
 - iv. Like all things, Jesus had purpose in everything He did
 1. He knew that the meaning of how He was entering the city would not be lost on those who were witnessing it
 2. The people would know, but so would the Pharisees

If you look back at the history of Jerusalem, there were many who had attempted to lead the people in an effort to escape the oppression and rule of other people groups and nations

- Most were little more than skirmishes that were quickly crushed, and their leaders executed
 - But in 167 BC, an uprising occurred to throw off the Seleucid (or Greek) rule over Israel that had been established during the reign of Alexander the Great
 - When Alexander died at the age of 32, his kingdom was divided among his generals following a 40-year war known as the War of Successors
 - Judas Maccabee led the revolt against the Greeks, and after three years of battle, Jerusalem was reclaimed.
 - When Maccabee and his army entered the city on horseback, the people spread their cloaks as well as palm branches on the road in front of them
 - When Jesus rode into Jerusalem after the Romans had been in power for over 60 years, the people - who knew their ancestor's history - believed that Jesus had come to do the very same thing as Judas Maccabee and free them from their oppressors
 - Yes, Jesus was coming into the city for a very specific purpose
 - But it was not to free them from the Romans
 - It was to free them from the bondage of sin
2. The waving of palm branches
 - What is it about the palm branches that sets them apart?
 - Was there more significance to this or was it simply a case of using what was available with the people believing that this was a welcomed and familiar historical event getting ready to repeat itself?
 - I can assure you that, like the donkey, and everything else about Jesus' life, there was specific and important meaning in all that was being done

First of all, you will find palm trees and palm branches in the Scripture from **Exodus** all the way through to **Revelation**

- In the OT, palm trees were associated with comfort, rest, and even provision
 - In **I Kings 6:29**, we read this regarding Solomon's temple; *On the walls all around the temple, in both the inner and outer rooms, he carved cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers*
- In early Christianity, palm branches signified goodness and victory
 - In John's book of the **Revelation**, we read that every nation will raise palm branches to honor Jesus
 - **Rev 7:9** - *After this, I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.*
- And then, consider some of the characteristics of the palm and how they connect with the believer's life
 - They are resilient
 - In 1963, seeds from a date palm tree were discovered in a sealed container on the Plain of Masada, and were determined to be over 2000 years old
 - They were later found again after having spent 40 years in a storage area
 - One of the seeds was planted in southern Israel near the northernmost gulf of the Red Sea
 - In 6 weeks, it had sprouted and in 3 years stood over 4' tall
 - God sustains us and makes us resilient through His power in our lives
 - They cannot be bound as they grow
 - If a band is placed around a tree, the band will cut into the bark and flesh of the tree, eventually killing it
 - If a palm tree is banded, it will eventually snap the band because of the toughness of the tree itself
 - Satan wants nothing more than to secure bands of the past, guilt, depression, and shame around your life
 - The power of the HS in your life will break them!
 - Finally, the palm tree will bend, but it will not break
 - The flexibility of the wood makes it exceptionally strong
 - It can withstand hurricane-force winds without breaking
 - Then, after the force of the wind has bent it down almost flat to the ground, it will then stand back up straight
 - The storms of life are going to come but God's power and strength in your life will keep you from breaking and permit you to stand
 - **2 Cor 12:10** – *That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

The people believed that they were welcoming a conquering hero sent by God on that first Palm Sunday

- But when they saw Jesus arrested and beaten

- When they realized that Jesus was not going to free them from the Romans, they turned on Him
- This presents us with a clear truth regarding the human condition
 - Man is sinful in his heart and very deceptive
 - And until the heart is changed, the actions will not
- This is not only true of the non-believer but the Christian as well
 - It is foolish and perhaps vain for a man or a woman to believe that, if they are a Christian, they need not be concerned about the condition of their heart or their actions
 - The sinful nature remains even though it is under the headship of the Holy Spirit in our lives
 - This is what Paul is writing about in **Romans 7:15** - *I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate, I do.*
 - We must continually be willing to examine our lives in order to submit all aspects of it to Him
- And it is this time of year that so clearly brings into focus and perspective our need for Him as we more closely examine what Jesus did for each and every one of us.

The palm branches were being waved to welcome a coming King

- But the people were looking for the wrong type of King
- Who are you looking for this Palm Sunday 2024?
 - Are you looking for the king of your life for what He will do for you?
 - To free you from financial struggles?
 - To ease the troubles you may be experiencing?
 - To smooth out the rough areas of your life?
 - Or are you seeking Him with the heart of a servant who only wants to live for Him without stipulations, without your own plans, and without focusing on your own wants?
 - That is not always easy, but it is the mark of a man or woman who is looking to welcome the right and true King of their lives.

The power of Holy Week is, first and foremost, Jesus!

- The cross is a symbol of His sacrifice, but the power is in the love of God through Jesus and His sacrifice for each of us
- The empty tomb is a symbol of victory, but the power is in the resurrection of our Savior that conquered death, sin, hell, and satan
- This week is filled with the symbols of what makes this time so important, but the power is in the presence of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit in each of our lives!