

Sunday March 24, 2024 Palm Sunday
The Courageous King
Portions adapted from SermonCentral .com. The Courageous King

Today is known as Palm Sunday on the Christian Calendar. This marks the beginning of what we call Holy Week or Passion Week. Palm Sunday is the day in which we commemorate Jesus' courageous entrance into Jerusalem which kicked off the week of exciting victory and courageous actions and teachings. However, the world would probably disagree with the idea that this was a week of courage and victory. I am emphasizing the Courage and Victory but to the world at that the events that took place that 1st Holy Week seem to be in contrast to our theme of Courage & Victory... For example, He rode into town on a humble, borrowed donkey, He washes the feet of His disciples (which was a job for lowly servants), His close friend betrayed Him, He was abandoned by the rest of His friends (disciples), He was forcefully arrested, falsely convicted, brutally crucified, then sadly buried in a borrowed tomb. By worldly viewpoints, Jesus had a week of nothing but failures. However, we don't look at things from the world's viewpoint. We must see them from God's Heavenly Kingdom Viewpoint. This is actually a key highlight in God's Good News Story. It is the point where the Redemption and salvation of mankind is made

possible. The Holy Week events were not a failure, they were all part of the greatest act of Courageous Love, Mercy and Grace we could ever imagine.

Let's turn our focus on Jesus Christ and His Courageous entrance into Jerusalem. But 1st let's get a little background on this event so we can better understand God's bigger plan. Most of you are familiar with the Old Testament and the story of Moses and the Passover. Listen to Exodus 12:3, 6... *³Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. ... Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. ... ⁶Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight.*

This year Passover begins at sunset on what we call April 22. Unfortunately because of the way Passover and Easter dates are calculated they don't always fall the same week. Passover this year then, comes in what we call the 4th month of the year, but the Biblical calendar started in the spring using the first full moon after the spring equinox to determine the 1st month. They would then count 14 days back from this full moon to establish the actual 1st day of the month.

I know it sounds complicated, but it is what it is. LOL. So, once the 1st day of the month is establish, then on the 10th day (according to the passage in Exodus 12) they would set aside the unblemished lamb to be used for Passover and for the next four days after that they were to watch and care for it. Now why, you may ask, am I making a point of this. Well, hang on, let's go to the Gospel of John...

John 12: 1-3... ¹*Therefore, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² So they made Him a dinner there, and Martha was serving; and Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. ³ Mary then took a pound of very expensive perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.*

John 12-16... ¹² *On the next day, when the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ¹³ they took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, indeed, the King of Israel!" ¹⁴ Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: ¹⁵ "Do not fear, 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 for Him.

So what appears to be Saturday, Mary anointed Jesus for His burial and as a sign of loving worship and devotion. Then the next day, what we call Palm Sunday (which appears to be the 10th day of the month (Remember. That's the time when the lamb for Passover was to be brought out and made known and watched over). It seems that by the time of Jesus, the tradition was to make a celebration of this event. **They would bring all the lambs and parade them through the streets proclaiming,** "*Blessed is he comes in the Name of the Lord*". So, theologically, Jesus is fulfilling the Old testament Passover, by presenting Himself, as the True Passover Lamb. There is also another Old Testament and prophetic fulfillment when Jesus chose to ride in after the lambs on a donkey. Listen to this prophetic scripture from Book of Zachariah (written around 520-510BC) ...

Zechariah 9:9-10... ⁹ *Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is righteous and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

¹⁰ *And I will eliminate the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; And the bow of war*

will be eliminated. And He will speak peace to the nations; And His dominion and authority will be from sea to sea, And from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth.

SO, we find Jesus fulfilling both the Passover Lamb scripture but also the prophecy of Zachariah. Remember, Jesus said He didn't come to abolish the law and Old Testament covenant, He came to fulfill it. In Jesus we have the full manifestation of God's Good News Story of Redemption.

Let's read the account from Matthew and Luke...

Matthew 21:1-10 & Luke 19:39-48

Matthew 21:1-11... ¹*When they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus then sent two disciples, ² saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with it. Untie them and bring them to Me. ³ And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them on immediately."* ⁴*Now this took place so that what was spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled: ⁵ "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold your King is coming to you, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"* ⁶***The disciples went and did just as Jesus had instructed them, ⁷ and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid their cloaks on them; and He sat on the cloaks. ⁸ Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others were cutting***

branches from the trees and spreading them on the road. ⁹ Now the crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!" ¹⁰*When He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, "Who is this?"* ¹¹*And the crowds were saying, "This is Jesus the prophet, from Nazareth in Galilee."*

Luke 19:39-48...³⁹*And yet some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples!"* ⁴⁰*Jesus replied, "I tell you, if these stop speaking, the stones will cry out!"* ⁴¹*When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, ⁴² saying, "If you had known on this day, even you, the conditions for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ For the days will come upon you when your enemies will put up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, ⁴⁴ and they will level you to the ground, and throw down your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."* ⁴⁵***And Jesus*** *entered the temple grounds and began to drive out those who were selling, ⁴⁶ saying to them, "It is written: 'And My house will be a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers."* ⁴⁷*And He was teaching daily in the temple; but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to put Him to death, ⁴⁸ and yet they could not find anything that they*

might do, for all the people were hanging on to every word He said.

Lessons To Note From This Event:

1. Jesus Fulfills Old Testament Prophecies & Requirements

I have already addressed this in the previous section above.

2. Jesus Blends Together the Perfect Example OF Courage, Authority and Peace.

First, He Courageously proclaims Himself as the King of Peace. As the riding into Jerusalem on a donkey is a highly intentional move by Jesus. In the ancient world, if a king rode into town on a horse he intended war and aggression; but if he rode into town on a donkey, he intended peace. Jesus rode into town on a donkey to demonstrate his kingship will be one of peace!

The passage from Zechariah continues: ***“I will take the chariots from Ephraim and the warhorses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from seas to sea” (Zechariah 9:10).***

This is a Messianic prophecy that Jesus is fulfilling. He is the anointed one, the messiah, the king coming into town proclaiming peace instead of conflict. The war is over. There will be no more violence. I don’t think the disciples, nor the crowds fully understood what Jesus was doing right before their eyes.

The gospel of John says, *“At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him” (John 12:16).*

Secondly, Jesus is Courageously proclaiming with authority to be the True Messiah King.

The crowds declared Jesus to be *“the prophet from Nazareth”* (21:11), but that’s not what Jesus claimed for himself. He was more than a moral teacher and more than a prophet. He was —and is— the King and Messiah.

“During his life and ministry Jesus consistently demonstrated true authority. Jesus had —and still has— all authority over nature, demons, sickness, and death. He spoke with authority and not like someone who memorized all the right answers (**Mark 1:22**). He protected people from storms and waves (**Mark 4:39**);

healed them from blindness (**John 9:7**), leprosy (**Matthew 8:3**), and fevers (**Mark 1:31**); set them free from evil spirits (**Matthew 8:32**), and demons (**Luke 4:41**) and more. At Jesus' word the devil left him (**Matthew 4:10**). Demons left, fevers disappeared, and paralysis went away because he had all authority over them.

Nature had to obey him because nature is under his authority. The devil and his demons had to obey him because they also are under his authority. The same with sickness and disease: they are fully under his authority. Just as God spoke the cosmos into existence in Genesis, everything under Jesus' authority must comply with whatever he speaks because he is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

The early Christians understood. Their creed was, "*Jesus is Lord.*" The word Lord meant *absolute authority*. It was not a fancy way to say Mister, as in Mr. Jesus. When they confessed, "Jesus is Lord!" they were proclaiming his complete authority over everything in this world: nature, sickness, demons, death, **and themselves!** This proclamation got them killed, by the way, because only Caesar was lord. The Christians' proclamation was punishable as treason.

While Jesus was brutal against severe weather, demons, and sickness, he was loving, welcoming, and direct with people. This is the Jesus who ate with tax collectors, sat with sinners, and let sinful women wet his feet with their tears. He touched the untouchable. He loved those who were oppressed AND loved their oppressors! Why? Because "*God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him*" (**John 3:17**). **Jesus used his authority to save, heal, and make people whole.** He never used it for selfish purposes or gratuitous displays of power. He used his authority humbly as a way to demonstrate God's self-giving love in ways consistent with his mission.

Thirdly, Jesus Courageously Confronts the Jewish religious leaders and denounces their false faith as He cleanses the temple and prophecies the destruction of the temple. Symbolic of man-made religious efforts.

"The Jewish leaders were already plotting to kill Jesus. The most dangerous way Jesus could enter the city was in broad daylight with a lot of attention and noise from the thousands of spectators. And that's exactly what he did. Jesus courageously made Himself the sacrificial lamb entering the city. He knew those who hated Him and wanted Him dead would be triggered, but His

actions and decisions were based on doing God's will rather than on how the men in power would react. Jesus was courageous and He calls us to be courageous also.

There is so much more that can be said, but let me draw to a close as we prepare for Observing the Lord's Supper/Communion in a few minutes.

Jesus showed Himself to be the perfect example of Courage, Authority, Peace and Obedience.

Jesus, models these for us and we should strive to emulate these traits in our lives. How may that look for us today?

- You will do the right thing regardless of the consequences.
- You will feel fear but do it anyway.
- You will not stop in the face of failure.
- You will be willing to risk being criticized.
- You will pursue purpose over comfort.
- You will seek peace from a foundation of authority in Christ, but not shy away from standing your ground in faith and obedience.

I think Jesus was being courageous in each of those ways. To be courageous is to be Christlike! Too many of us are stopped by fear, avoid failure and criticism, and

are stuck in comfortable lives with little meaning or purpose.

Conclusion Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey knowing full well he would trigger the religious and political authorities. Jesus' mission required him to demonstrate incredible courage regardless of the reactions of others. He is Lord, the absolute authority over all things. The question is, does He have all authority over you, too?

C.S. Lewis said, "Let us not say, 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God.' That is one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic--on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg-- or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great moral teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."¹ C.S. Lewis, in *Mere Christianity*

The question is, who do you say that Jesus is? Is He a prophet? Is He a moral teacher? Or is He your Lord, your absolute authority?

¹ C.S. Lewis, in *Mere Christianity*