

Palm Sunday 4-16-00

We are entering into the week in which most of the Christian world remembers the events of the last week of Christ leading up to the crucifixion and resurrection. This is the third and last visit to Jerusalem during Jesus' ministry. Jesus' ministry lasted three years and yet one third of the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and almost half of John is devoted to this one week. Did you realize so much of the Gospels is focused on one week?

Things are reaching a boiling point with the religious establishment. Mk 10:32-37 Jesus tells His followers exactly what will happen. The twelve are astonished that He is headed straight into the camp of those who hate him. They have seen his power to raise the dead, to heal, to cast out demons, and are expecting Him to set up a physical kingdom. The other disciples are fearful of the consequences of this visit. James and John make a play for the lead positions in the coming Kingdom. This seems to indicate they have not understood yet what Jesus is saying plainly to them about his death. They are blinded by the interpretation of Scripture that is popular in the religious world at the time. They can only imagine Jesus reigning as King David did.

They have not yet understood that to promote your self is the road to ruin. Or that Jesus' example was to serve and lay down your life for the sake of others. Have we understood yet? It is so contrary to the ways of the world. 42-45

And then we come to that mysterious story of Jesus sending the two in to get the colt. I have read commentator's explanations for this, that Jesus made some prior arrangement... I just think it was another miracle. If He could see Philip's heart when Philip prayed under his fig tree, I think He knew the heart of this donkey's owner. He knew the owner would gladly lend it to Jesus. He knew what words needed to be said.

Then we have a beautiful portrayal of the message Jesus' wanted them to understand. The kings of Judah, called Lions of Judah, rode on a stallion for war, but when they came in peace they rode a donkey. Zechariah had prophesied that Israel's king would come in this manner. (9:9) righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. This colt had never been ridden. Man was given dominion over the animals. Even now they retain a fear of man, but sin robbed man of his authority. But Jesus, knew no sin. The colt was under his dominion. It could not resist, in fact, I think it may have gladly submitted to its Maker. He was righteous as Zechariah prophesied the coming King would be.

'Having salvation' there is no other name under heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12 As the God man, He alone is the way to

the Father. He alone could be the sacrifice in our place. He alone could be innocent so that He would not have to die for His own sins and thus could die for the sins of the world.

Riding on a donkey is usually thought of as humility and certainly Jesus was humble, but the message is one of his gentleness, coming in peace. The day will come when He will ride a stallion but this was not that time. If He wanted to He could have fulfilled their desires. "Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?" Mt 26:53 But thank Him for not giving us what we want but what we need. Many churches today want an earthly king. They want a man they can look to instead of a personal relationship with Christ, the head of the church. What shortsightedness! Let us never be guilty of that but go forward to all that God has for us in Jesus – our gentle king, who alone has the way of salvation, who has come in righteousness. Don't mistake his gentleness for lack of power or will to act justly. That is what the Pharisees did. It is his mercy and love for man that He came in gentleness.

The Law commanded the Israelites during the Feast of Tabernacles to take palm fronds, leafy branches and poplars and rejoice before the Lord. Although this was not the time of that Feast they had done this before and were now rejoicing before the Lord who was physically present before them. The cloaks laid in the path were meaningful also. A common person only had one or two cloaks and they would be a treasured possession. Are ours laid before Jesus?

The shouts went up, Hosanna! Which means 'Save!' It is a word of praise. It says, "You are able to save us, please do so!" And this was exactly what Jesus had come to do. They may have been quoting Ps 118:25,26. Luke 19:37 says the crowd consisted of disciples and that they were joyful and praising God for the miracles they had seen. On the way up from Jericho Jesus had healed two blind men.

The Pharisees understood the significance of what was being said and asked Jesus to rebuke his disciples. Jesus responded that if they were silent the rocks would cry out. At this jubilant fulfillment of prophecy, and recognition that praise was due for the work of the Father in the Son you would have thought that Jesus would have been ecstatic. But He does not respond as we do. He sees the unseen Lk 19:41,42 Because they will not receive the peaceful king upon the colt that has come to save their souls, they will be completely destroyed. And He weeps. I wonder what the disciples thought, that throng of followers that had been praising Him, as they watched Him cry.

Then there is the Temple cleansing – we have seen a number of times how Jesus was seeing the shadow and how it represented mammon in the heart of his followers – the Temple of God. We are to be a house of prayer.

What a day! What does it say to you? Have you dwelt on what it means to you? For me it means I must always be considering the events He brings into my life and what they mean spiritually. I need to look deeper, beyond conditions that overwhelm my senses and see what God is doing in the spiritual realm. I need to let my heart be broken for the consequences of sin in the lives of those around me, in Sedona. I need to continually turn from the worldly desire to be first, important and always seek to be a servant instead.

In this day I see the authority of Jesus, in leading us, in giving sight to the blind, in fulfilling the details of prophecy as my king, my Savior, the Lord of Creation. I see his heart for fallen man, his gentle reaching out to us in mercy. And at the close of the day, His just demand for our hearts to not be a house of merchandise, but a house of prayer. That is not a selfish demand, but one that has our best at heart. That is what He created these temples to be. He deserves no less.

What a day! What does that day speak to you?