

REFLECTION ON PALM SUNDAY

Jesus' Glorious Entry Into Jerusalem

After Jesus performed many miracles including the feeding of the four thousand, He told His Disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, “and suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised. “ And they were overwhelmed with grief.

The Gospel of John

Six days before Passover Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. They gave a dinner for him there, and Martha served, while Lazarus was one of those reclining at table with him. God used the blood of a spotless lamb to save the Israelites from physical death. Jesus, being a devout Jew, celebrated Passover, as commanded by God, with His disciples.

[The] large crowd of the Jews found out that he was there and came, not only because of Jesus, but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. And the chief priests plotted to kill Lazarus too, because many of the Jews were turning away and believing in Jesus because of him.

On the next day, when the great crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, they took palm branches and went out to meet him, and cried out: “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the king of Israel.” (John 12:1-2, 9, 11-13)

The Gospel of Matthew

When they drew near Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find an ass tethered, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them here to me. And if anyone should say anything to you, reply, ‘The master has need of them.’ Then he will send them at once.”

The disciples went and did as Jesus had ordered them. They brought the ass and the colt and laid their cloaks over them, and he sat upon them. The very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and strewed them on the road. The crowds preceding him and those following kept crying out and saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest." And when he entered Jerusalem the whole city was shaken and asked, "Who is this?" And the crowds replied, "This is Jesus the prophet, from Nazareth in Galilee." (Matt 21:1-3; 6-11)

REFLECTION

The entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on that first "Palm Sunday" was the start of the most important week in the history of all mankind. -- It was the week when God fulfilled His promises made to Adam and Eve; -- promises made at the time of their disobedience – a disobedience which caused them and us, their descendants, the loss of God's grace.

The promise of a redeemer is actualized in the person of Jesus in His suffering and death. By His sacrificial death and His resurrection, He purchased for mankind the restoration of friendship with God.

Picture – if you will – having left the home of Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary. Jesus is seen coming over the hill of Mt. Olivet on his way to the city of Jerusalem. From this vantage point, the city below gleams with the morning sun – the temple, the very center of the city, is more resplendent with the golden glow. Immediately, His disciples and those who had been with Jesus at Bethany, openly declare to those nearby – it is Jesus – the miracle worker – the healer – the prophet from Nazareth. Consequently, there is great excitement – everyone wishes to catch a glimpse of such a prominent man – a person of eminence – and yet - seated humbly upon a donkey. And, spontaneously, - in order to give appropriate welcome as to persons of eminence, they wave palm branches and lay them on the path, - chanting – gleefully with joy and excitement the words found in Psalm 117 - "*Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.*" -- What a glorious event.

However, many in this crowd, in less than five days – will be among the throng in the presence of the Roman procurator chanting – Crucify him.

Let us look within ourselves - - do we welcome Jesus into our very lives in like manner? – Do we also become a part of that wretched mob who wish to dismiss Jesus – by our sins and negligence – and cry out “*Away with him?*” Do we give Him a crown of thorns?

Do we align ourselves with Jesus or are we against Him? - How could we be against Him? We are His followers!!

Perhaps we are among the people of Jerusalem who welcomed Him when He performed healings and miracles – but then reject Him when we our humanity is weakened by our sins – our selfish attitudes – our disobedience.

Cheers and acclamations can be viewed as homage, but it is how we live that counts.

Are we truly Disciples of Christ? – Or are we influenced by money, self gratification or other worldly desires? Do we forgive – are we persons of love? – Do we make Christ the center of our lives?

Jesus offers His blessings to everyone. Let us be truly sincere and seeks Him above all else.

PRAYER

My dear Lord and King, with joy and gladness and with such perfect humility, you rode into the venerable city of Kings, Jerusalem, astride a common donkey and accepted the accolades, the praise, the homage, the cheers of the people. Yet, you knew how short-lived would be this triumph and praise. You realized that in five short days some of these vey people, afraid for themselves and lacking courage to resist the rowdy crowd, would be substituting their acclamations with shouts of “*Crucify Him.*”

Have I been one of those fickle persons?

Have I been right there in the midst of that welcoming crowd who so eagerly forgot your goodness, your love?

Do I pay lip service of praise and then become part of the mob in the courtyard of Pontius Pilate condemning you to death on the cross? How could I be so disloyal?

Have I toyed with temptation ---- been swept away by human regard into lies, deceitfulness, unkindness, blinded by frailty, impervious to the impulses of your grace?

How often I have been among those same people by my sinful ways and negligence? ---And yet, you accept me as I am with all my faults and weaknesses.

Help me to know what you want of me ---- Help me to avoid those occasions of sin.

Therefore dear Lord, make my faith in you strong and my love a tower of strength, that I may give you joy.

Teach me to channel all my feelings into love. Teach me to discipline my human shortcomings. Let me never give into attractions that draw me away from you. Let my dying-to-self be motivated by your dying for me. Give me the courage to stand by those principles that you have engraved onto my heart.

May I each day, pause, and cast an interior glance at You. Your love for me is more than I could ever give. But let me give you more of my thoughts, more of my desires, so that I may do all things to please you as I long for the day when this life of mine will be lived in perfect union with You, the Father, and the Holy Spirit.

My Lord, open my eyes, give me the overwhelming desire to appreciate all of your graces of redemption.

Finally, Lord, draw me to you. You are my closest companion in this, my journey towards heaven. Amen