

## JESUS MAKES AN ENTRANCE

John and his friend George went golfing together one Saturday morning as they had for 24 years. They were fanatics about their golf game. Later that day, John returned home completely exhausted and plopped down in his easy chair. His wife was quite concerned since he was more exhausted than usual after his Saturday golf game. She asked him if something went wrong with the game. He replied, "No, hon, I had the best game in years! As a matter of fact, I started out the first three holes at 4 under par, birdied the first two and then had a hole-in-one on the 3rd." "That is great, so then why are you so worn out?" she asked. "Well, George had a heart attack and died on the 4th hole." "What!? Are you so exhausted from trying to save him?" He said, "No, honey, it was quick and there was nothing anyone could've done. But after that, it was just hit the ball, drag George, hit the ball, drag George..."

The good news was that John had a great game of golf! The bad news was that George was dead and had been dragged all over the golf course! The good news was Palm Sunday and the big celebration! The bad news was what was going to happen in the coming week. The crowds that shouted Hosanna would soon be shouting crucify Him.

John 12:12-21 The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. 13 They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna! " "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the King of Israel!" 14 Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written, 15 Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt. 16 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 they had done these things to him. 17 Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. 18 Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!" 20 Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. 21 They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus."

To understand this story you have to understand the context. In the Jewish culture, what was happening that day was clearly understood. The waving of palm branches and the shouting of Hosanna was a traditional greeting. It was the greeting people would give a national hero or a conquering king as they came into the city. The palm branch was a national symbol of victory. They would shout "Hosanna" which means "Save us now."

It is amazing that different people can view the same event through completely different eyes. Think about a large sporting event. For some the game is a triumph. For others it is a tragedy. Same game, just different expectations. There were actually three distinct groups of people there that day as Jesus entered Jerusalem.

### The Committed – Jesus' Disciples

The first group were the disciples. These guys they had walked with Jesus, they had been with Jesus, they made a commitment to follow him and his teachings and his work. But all through their experience with Jesus, He had been holding them back.

When Jesus healed the leper He told him not to tell anyone;

Matthew 8:2-4 A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." 3 Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cured of his leprosy. 4 Then Jesus said to him, "See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

When Jesus healed Jairus' daughter He told them not to tell anyone;

Luke 8:54-56 But he took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!" 55 Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. 56 Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.

When Jesus was coming down from the mount of transfiguration he told the disciples that had been there and had seen this amazing sight not to tell anyone;

Mark 9:7-9 Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" 8 Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. 9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Now the day has finally come. Here they are walking into Jerusalem, with people waving the palm branches and shouting Hosanna. The disciples must have been thinking 'FINALLY!' This is what we have been waiting for. The people are finally getting it. They finally understand the truth.

In the Luke account it says that the Pharisees tried to rebuke Jesus;

Luke 19:39-40 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" 40 I tell you, he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

Finally, no more hiding. Jesus is declaring who He is. This is what they have been waiting for. And yet at the same time they were also confused. Though the crowds were finally understanding the truth, things were not going according to plans. Jesus had made his intentions clear.

Matthew 16:21-22 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. 22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

The disciples knew who Jesus was, but they did not yet fully understand His plan.

The Competition - Religious leaders

The second group were the religious leaders. They knew the prophecies and the Scriptures. They knew that Daniel had prophesied over three hundred years before that the Messiah would come. They knew that Zachariah had prophesied that the Messiah would come into Jerusalem riding on a donkey. Their perspective was simple. I'm in control. They wanted control. They had a really good thing going. They didn't want Jesus to mess it up.

The Romans pretty much let them do what they wanted. They had some control over the Jews and the Romans kind of left them alone to govern things. The religious leaders were scared of Jesus. They were intimidated by him because they thought he was going to attempt a political coup. They knew that they were losing control of the situation.

John 12:19 So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"

Our desire for control creates in us an unteachable heart. The Pharisees, even though they knew the law, even though they knew the Scripture, even though they should have been able to see what was happening, even though all accounts pointing to this very special day and to this very special man, they missed what was happening. Because they had an unteachable heart hardened heart, they insisted on being in control.

### The Crowd

The third and largest group that day were the crowd. Some of them had been there when Jesus rose Lazarus from the dead and they had heard about the other miracles.

John 12:17 Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. 18 Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him.

Most of them were probably thinking "what is in this for me?" They had been waiting for a Messiah, a political leader that would help them break free from their Roman oppressors. Perhaps Jesus was the one who would finally help them to break free.

When they hear that Jesus is coming they get excited. Surely if he can raise people from the dead he can handle the Romans. So they grab palm branches and they start waving. "Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" While a lot of them really didn't know who Jesus was, they all knew what they wanted. They wanted to be free. They wanted a political saviour.

It is amazing that the same people who were shouting "Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" would, a week later, be shouting "crucify him." The reason was that their expectations were broken. When they realized Jesus was not coming to defeat the Romans and establish an earthly kingdom they turned against him. Our tendency to be self centered leads to deception. We all have a propensity, to be self centered. It's called human nature.

That self centeredness leads to deception. We can't really see and understand what we need because we're so focused on what we want and what we think we want. All three of those groups – the crowd, the Pharisees, the disciples – they all experienced that entrance. They were there when Jesus came in. But non of them really understood what it was all about. It wasn't quite what they expected. Has Jesus ever shown up in your life in a way that you did not expect?

A little boy was sick on Palm Sunday and stayed home from church with his mother. His father returned from church holding a palm branch. The little boy was curious and asked, "Why do you have that palm branch, dad?" The father said, "When Jesus came into town, everyone waved Palm Branches to honor him, so we got Palm Branches today." The little boy replied, "Aw Shucks The one Sunday I miss is the Sunday that Jesus shows up"

Do you see yourself in any of these three groups? I do. I can see myself in all three of them on any given week. But there's something special that happens when Jesus makes an entrance into your situation. What happens when Jesus enters your life?

### 1. Gain a New Presence

When Jesus enters your situation, he creates a beautiful disruption. He interrupts the status quo. He forces you to get out of the rut. He changes everything.

It is easy to get in a rut. Have you ever been driving in your car and you forget where you are going. It is like you just default to autopilot. When we were in Kuwait we went out for dinner one night. After dinner we got in the car and drove home. We were talking all along the way. As I was driving into the driveway I suddenly remembered, we had moved. We did not live there anymore. In fact, we lived in a completely different area of town now. The problem was, I was on autopilot.

Life can be like that. The same old routine, over and over, the same old pattern. Like me driving the car, there are times in life when ingrained pattern control our behaviour. Often these ingrained patterns are not healthy. Some of those patterns are not productive. What is a rut? Think about like this – RUT - Robotic Unchallenged Thinking. Doing the same thing over and over.

Then Jesus comes into our lives and everything changes. Everything is turned upside-down. Jesus comes in and he disrupts things. He shakes it up. That new presence leads to the next thing...

### 2. Get a New Perspective

Your perspective is your reality. Your perspective is the framework through which you view the world and you interpret everything that happens. Like going to the sporting event, we see the same game but it is our perspective that determines if it is a triumph or tragedy.

It is amazing how your perspective changes things. A man was getting on an airplane when he suddenly detected this foul unbelievably horrific odor. Instantly it had a physiological effect on him and made him gag. The smell was that someone had thrown up on the airplane. The man started looking around to see where the smell was coming from. Looking a few seats back he sees a guy eating a pepperoni pizza with parmesan cheese on it. Suddenly he realized that what he was smelling was not barf, but the pizza. The big slice of cheese covered pizza. The second he saw that, everything changed. He went YUK to YUM! That smells good! Oh what he would not give for some pepperoni pizza. His perspective changed everything.

John 12:16 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 they had done these things to him.

At first they did not understand what was happening, but eventually they got it. Then they understood what was going on. Then they understood what Jesus was really there to do. A new presence led to a new perspective which then led...

### 3. Give a New Praise

When Jesus comes into our lives He sets us free. The response is praise. The word Hosanna come from the Greek words YASHA and NA which means SAVE US NOW. The word YASHA comes from a root that means to open or widen or free something that is trapped.

Our sin imprisons us. It traps us. Back in 1985 I was working for the summer at Canada's Wonderland on the roller coaster Skyrider. At Wonderland they had a summer concert series. Different music groups would come, and we always dreaded those days. One night The Grateful Dead were playing. The park was filled with deadheads, many of them on drugs. These two guys cut through the line. They pushed their way to the front and then, when the gates opened, pushed others aside to take the front seats of the ride. I politely informed them that they would have to wait in the line like everyone else. They proceeded to start yelling obscenities and threatening me. So I just smiled and let them on. I helped them into their seats – their upright restraints. I made sure they were nice and tight, and then I pulled them really tight so that they were locked in place. Then I calmly went and picked up the phone and called the police to come and get them. When they realized they were trapped they thrashed about and begged and pleaded to be released.

All of know what it is like to be imprisoned by sin. Many here also know what it is like to be set free.

In July of 2002 nine miners were trapped in Quecreek, Pa when mine shafts collapsed due to floodwater. The men were trapping in a pocket of air 244 feet down in the 50-degree cold waters. The miners gasped for air as floodwater rose to their chins. They tied themselves together so all of their bodies would be found if they drowned. One of the miners asked his boss for a pen when the water in the shaft kept rising. He wanted to write his wife and kids to tell them he love them. Night and day rescuers fought to reach the men. On Sunday July 28, 2002 the rescue workers broke through the coal-mine wall to find the nine trapped miners all alive and well. I still remember the news report that day. People were weeping and cheering at village roadsides and television sets at the news that the trapped miners had been rescued. There was great celebration.

I hope you understand what it is to be free this morning. Likewise, the end result of freedom is worship. It results in celebration. That worship in turn leads to witness.

John 12:20 Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. 21 They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus."

Back when we lived in Kuwait we started something called the Night of Joy. Once a year we would have a large outside worship event on the church compound. This one year we had it the same evening as a public holiday. The church is right in the heart of the city, across the road from the gulf and a large park that many Kuwaitis used, especially on holidays. As our worship started the music filled the air. People were standing up lifting their hands and praising Jesus. Gradually I began to see people on the edges joining in. They were locals who had come from across the street because they heard the music. At one point the whole church joined hands and was singing Jesus Christ is Lord of this nation. The locals just joined in, grabbing hands with us and singing the same thing. IOt was a powerful moment.

Maybe you are here today and you are asking yourself the same question that the crowds were asking so many years ago, "What is in this for me?"

It is not enough to simply follow from a distance. It is not enough to simply shout hosanna with the rest of the crowd. You have to understand who and what you are doing, and who and what you are following.

A few weeks ago Naomi and I went up to Muskoka to pick up Amanda. Of course, on the way back there was a snowstorm. All I could do was get behind a car and follow its rear lights, there was almost zero visibility. I heard the story of a woman who was driving home one night. The weather was really nasty. Rain was coming down in buckets and visibility was very poor. Seeing taillights ahead of her, she followed the car in front. Not being able to see, the car in front seemed to be going in the right direction. So she stuck with it. All of a sudden the car in front of her came to a stop. She began to wonder what had happened; perhaps there was an accident. Perhaps the car in front had hit a deer or some thing like that. She began to feel uncomfortable; thinking being stopped in the middle of the road can often lead to accidents. Much to her alarm the car in front of her turned off their lights. Her concern was now growing as well as her anger, and she was then startled by a knocking on her window. She looked up and there was a man standing in the pouring rain wanting to speak to her. She cracked the window open and asked the man what the problem was. The man replied by stating that that was the question he was going to ask her. She retorted that she wasn't the one who had stopped in the middle of the road and then turned off the car lights. It was only then that she realized that they were not in the middle of the road, but she was parked in his driveway. Obviously, this woman had chosen the wrong leader to follow. She had chosen a leader who would not take her to where she wanted and needed to go. She had chosen the wrong leader and the wrong road.