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Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is
House of Prayer
Various passages
March 25, 2018, Jeff Germs

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Last September we began our series called *Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is*. We have been doing a whirlwind tour through the entire Bible. Last week, Ryan brought us to the book of Nehemiah where the exiles had been in captivity in Babylon, until Babylon was conquered by the Medes and Persians. The new ruling king, Cyrus of Persia, permitted them to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city that had been decimated by the Babylonians. Ryan showed very clearly how God is moving history towards a final conclusion. He, again, showed the three threads that have been weaving their way through all history and even through our own personal lives.

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- 1. God is up to something: He is restoring the *shalom* that was lost at the fall of humankind.**
- 2. Satan is up to something: He is trying to destroy God's *shalom*.**
- 3. We, left to our own devices, without the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, most naturally move away from God.**

Today, we are going to continue showing these threads. We are going to fast forward through over five hundred years of history, to the New Testament in the time of Jesus in Jerusalem.

Today is Palm Sunday. It's the day in the Christian calendar that commemorates Jesus's entrance into Jerusalem just before he would be arrested and ultimately crucified. We aren't going to look just one main text today. We are going to look at a several Scripture texts and harmonize the ones that refer to this day so we can make sense of it a bit. We'll land on one verse at the end and bring it home.

Jesus was about thirty three years old at this time. He had spent three years with his disciples teaching them what it means to live in the kingdom of God and preparing them for the events of the days following his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

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Luke 9:51 (NLT)

51 As the time drew near for him to ascend to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.

The ESV says Jesus "***set his face to go to Jerusalem.***" The Greek word for "set his face" or "resolutely set out" is ***stērízō***. You can probably guess an English word that we get from that Greek word – **steroids**. Do you get the picture? Jesus was like a man on a mission on steroids. His whole life on earth was meant for this time. As a matter of fact this would be the climax and hinge point of all history.

[5]

So, everything we have been talking about thus far in our series is leading us to this time.

In Matthew 20 Jesus prepared his disciples for what was going to happen.

[5]

Matthew 20:17-19 (NLT)

17 As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside privately and told them what was going to happen to him. 18 "Listen," he said, "we're going up to Jerusalem, where the Son of Man will be betrayed to the leading priests and the teachers of religious law. They will sentence him to die. 19 Then they will hand him over to the Romans to be mocked, flogged with a whip, and crucified. But on the third day he will be raised from the dead."

It was a Sunday. Jesus came from Bethany, which was less than two miles from Jerusalem.

He got his disciples to borrow a young donkey for him to ride into the city, which is how it was prophesied, over five hundred years earlier, that the Messiah would enter Jerusalem.

[6]

Zechariah 9:9 (NLT)

⁹ Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey— riding on a donkey's colt.

He rode down the hill from the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mt. of Olives where he would later pray so intensely that he would sweat blood.

As he was descending the hill huge crowds gathered around him and followed waving palm branches in the air and laying their coats and palm branches on the ground sort of making a royal carpet for him to ride on. And they were shouting praises to him.

[7]

John 12:12–13 (NLT)

¹² ...the news that Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem swept through the city. A large crowd of Passover visitors ¹³ took palm branches and went down the road to meet him. They shouted, "Praise God! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hail to the King of Israel!"

[8]

The NLT says, "Praise God" here. The ESV and some others use the transliterated Greek word, *Hosanna* which comes from a Hebrew phrase *hoshiya na*. And that Hebrew phrase is found only in one place in the whole Old Testament, Psalm 118:25, where it means, "Save, please!" It is a cry to God for help, sort of like if you crashed your boat or plane on a deserted island and you wrote an S.O.S sign in the sand, and when a plane or a boat would come near you would shout and wave your arms, "Help, save me" ... "Hoshiya na!"

But something happened to that phrase, *hoshiya na*. As what happens to all language, the meaning changed over the years. Over the centuries the phrase *hoshiya na* stopped being a cry for help in the ordinary language of the Jews. Instead it became a shout of hope and exultation.

It used to mean what you would say when you wanted to be rescued. Over time it came to mean what you would say when you finally saw the coastguard coming to save you! "Hosanna!" in New Testament times meant, "Hooray for salvation! We are saved. It's here! Salvation! Salvation!"

[9]

They were hailing Jesus as their new king. You see, what they expected was that he would be the Messiah, a military leader who would overthrow the Roman government and finally liberate the Jews from their clutches. They had a mistaken idea of what the Messiah would do.

So, you have to picture this in your mind: Jesus is riding on a young donkey, winding his way down the hill from the Mount of Olives with huge crowds of people surrounding him, laying their coats and palm branches in front of him and hollering, "*Hosanna*," or in English, "We're saved!" But, there's a little twist to the story.

[10]

Luke (19:41-44) tells us when Jerusalem came into view Jesus wept. The Greek word used here for "weep" does not mean the kind of crying you would do when you watch a heart warming movie. It doesn't mean that Jesus' eyes sort of teared up and he sniffled a bit.

John 11:35 has Jesus crying when he found out that his friend Lazarus was dead. The Greek word there is *dakruo*. It means to shed tears, to sort of tear up a bit. In Luke 19 a different word is used. It's the word, *klaio* and it means to bawl or wail and lament bitterly with deep, heavy sobs. Picture that as I read this passage.

[11]

Luke 19:41–44 (NLT)

41 But as he came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city ahead, he began to weep. 42 “How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes. 43 Before long your enemies will build ramparts against your walls and encircle you and close in on you from every side. 44 They will crush you into the ground, and your children with you. Your enemies will not leave a single stone in place, because you did not recognize it when God visited you.”

Jesus knew that the eyes of the people had been blinded to the truth and as a result Jerusalem would be destroyed by the Romans. There would not be one stone left on another because they would not accept Jesus for who he was. They rejected the *shalom* that Jesus came to offer.

This was an extremely emotional time for Jesus. He knew that even though the throngs of people were now hailing him as king on this Sunday, by Thursday these same people would reject him and demand that he would be crucified, and then by Friday he would be hanging on the cross. You really need to understand just how intensely emotional this was for Jesus.

We call this the Triumphal Entry. Most of the Jews at that time, who rejected Jesus, though, by the time Friday rolled around, would have called it a colossal failure on the part of Jesus.

[12]

He continued down the mountain, through the **Kidron Valley** and then up the hill to Jerusalem. He went through the **Golden Gate** on the Eastern side of Jerusalem, near the Temple. The Gospel of Matthew says that the whole city was stirred up wondering who Jesus was. They were expecting that something big was going to happen.

[13-14]

In the same account in Matthew and Luke, it seems as if the first thing Jesus did upon entering the Temple was, in a fit of rage, clear it of the money changers. But Mark makes it clear that the cleansing of the Temple happened the next day.

What really happened was, he walked into the Temple, looked around, and then walked back up the mountain with his disciples to Bethany. Talk about anticlimactic. It's almost laughable.

There is an expectation in the air. It is electric. Everybody is expecting Jesus to make his move. He has set this up perfectly. He enters Jerusalem on the donkey, which says loud and clear, “Hey I am the Messiah. I am your only hope.” He gets off the donkey, walks into the Temple, scans the courtyard, looks at his disciples and says, “Hmmm. Let's go home.” He does nothing, absolutely nothing.

I would imagine that those who were hailing him as their saviour were supremely disappointed. He didn't try to draw a crowd and stir anything up.

The next day he did cleanse the Temple, but he did nothing against the Romans. All of his teaching and acts, in the next chapter, were against the religious Jews, not against the Romans.

As a matter of fact, after he cleared the Temple, the religious leaders were obviously ticked off at him and began trying to trap him up in his words so they would have reason to have him charged with treason against Caesar.

In Mark 12 they came with some Herodians, meaning Jews who were in cahoots with the government of Herod, and tried to trap Jesus into saying that the Roman government didn't have a right to collect taxes from the Jews. That would imply that Jesus' intentions were to incite a rebellion against Caesar, which would be

grounds for crucifixion.

However, instead of rallying people against the Romans, here's how Jesus answered their accusations in Mark 12. Jesus asked them to show him a coin. He said, "Whose picture is on the coin?" They answered, "Caesars."

[15]

Mark 12:17 (NLT)

17 "Well, then," Jesus said, "give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God." His reply completely amazed them.

Jesus must have been a colossal disappointment to the religious leaders. Not only did he not attempt to overthrow the government, he actually seemed to support them. It's no wonder that in a few short days the same people who hollered their hosannas would be shouting for Jesus to be crucified, and the Roman government would find him innocent.

Immediately the next day Jesus went to the Temple again, and it's there that we see him in a very emotional display of anger. It's quite shocking because we are so used to him being steady and unruffled.

[16]

Matthew 21:12-13 (NLT)

12 Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out all the people buying and selling animals for sacrifice. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves. 13 He said to them, "The Scriptures declare, 'My Temple will be called a house of prayer,' but you have turned it into a den of thieves!"

Why was Jesus so angry? Jesus actually quoted from Isaiah.

[17]

Isaiah 56:6-8 (NLT)

6 "I will also bless the foreigners who commit themselves to the LORD, who serve him and love his name, who worship him and do not desecrate the Sabbath day of rest, and who hold fast to my covenant. 7 I will bring them to my holy mountain of Jerusalem and will fill them with joy in my house of prayer.

[18]

I will accept their burnt offerings and sacrifices, because my Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations. 8 For the Sovereign LORD, who brings back the outcasts of Israel, says: I will bring others, too, besides my people Israel."

We are going to camp out here for the remainder of the morning. What the moneychangers were doing was taking advantage of the poor. They were likely selling animals at exorbitant profits to those who had travelled a distance to Jerusalem for the Passover. They were using God's house as a way to get rich. They had lost sight of the real purpose of the Temple. It was, as Jesus said, "**to be a house of prayer.**" - *for all nations.*

Instead, it had become a market place, or a "den of robbers" as Jesus called it. And so, in a very calculated outburst, Jesus "goes terminator" on them. It looked as if he had lost control, but I don't think he did. I think he knew exactly what he was doing and it was calculated. He knew that his time had come to go to the cross and he was setting the stage for that to happen. Jesus once again went head to head with the self-serving religious system because they were so far from God's intention for them. **His house was meant to be a house of prayer.**

Why was Jesus so angry and emotional? He saw what his people had become. They had become a powerful religious system, blind to the relationship God had called them to. They were more interested in their

interpretation of the law than they were in relationship with God or people. Jesus called them hypocrites and play actors. He had very harsh words for them. They laid heavy burdens on people and stood in judgement over them instead of helping them to get to know the God who was seeking them for relationship. He knew they had rejected all of God's advances towards them.

That is why Jesus wept when Jerusalem came into view. That is why he overturned the tables of the money changes in a fit of anger.

It's interesting that Jesus didn't get all worked up about how the Roman government was corrupt and depraved and how they were making life hard for the Jews. His concern was for the spiritual well-being of God's people. It was their spiritual blindness and hypocrisy that moved Jesus to tears and anger. They should have been seeking the heart of God, asking him to change them so that their hearts would break for the things that break God's heart, that they would love others the way God had intended. They should have been caring for the poor and loving those around them instead of weighing them down with heavy religious burdens and trying to get rich off them in the Temple. They should have been on their knees praying and repenting of their critical judgemental attitudes.

Let's rewind to the Old Testament when David's son Solomon built the Temple of God to house the Ark of the Covenant. Solomon dedicated the Temple to the Lord and God spoke to him, foretelling that there would be times when his people would wander away from him and suffer the consequences of their wanderings. The blessings of God would leave them. When that happens he said, they need to call out to God. Then he said this to Solomon:

[19]

2 Chronicles 7:14–16 (NLT)

14 ...if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land. 15 My eyes will be open and my ears attentive to every prayer made in this place. 16 For I have chosen this Temple and set it apart to be holy—a place where my name will be honored forever. I will always watch over it, for it is dear to my heart.

Fast forward again to Jesus' day and how the religious leaders had desecrated the Temple and made it into something God did not intend it to be. They refused to humble themselves and call out to God. That is why Jesus grieved so deeply when Jerusalem came into view.

God's intention for his people was that they would be a blessing to the nations, that they would ***"...act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God"*** (Micah 6:8). He wanted to use them to restore the *shalom* that had been lost at the fall of humankind, but they totally missed the point. They should have been on their knees asking God to change their hearts.

After Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead, the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost and is living in followers of Jesus.

[20]

We are now the Temple of the Holy Spirit. We are God's Tabernacle. If you have trusted Jesus to forgive your sins based on his death on the cross, he lives in you.

Imagine you are the Temple and Jesus is riding the donkey, winding his way down from Bethany. He comes over the crest of the hill and you, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, come into view. How would Jesus respond when he sees you? Would he see a heart that loves him? Would he see someone who is walking humbly with God? Would he see someone who is continually growing in purity? Would he see someone who is bearing the fruit of the Spirit in greater measure each year, more love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control?

Or, would he weep and say, “**Oh, my son, my daughter, how I have longed for you to live in my love and allow me to satisfy you with the richest of fare, but you have sought after counterfeits that do not satisfy. How I have longed to hold and cover you like a mother hen protects her chicks, but you would not have it. You sought safety in other things.**”

This coming week is the week we traditionally call Holy Week in the Christian calendar, the week leading up to Easter. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday we are having a Prayer Encounter for us to come and make things right with God. If you have never been before, you might feel threatened by something called a “Prayer Encounter.” This year we are calling it “All of Me.”

We’ve done these Prayer Encounters for a few years now. Typically, as soon as we announce a prayer meeting people find whatever excuse they can to have something else to do, for a number of reasons. For some people they think, “What could be more boring than a prayer meeting?” They’d rather watch paint dry. These Prayer Encounters are far from boring. I’ve been to every one and I have left inspired, changed, and motivated each time.

For others there is fear of the unknown. Maybe you are new to prayer and you don’t know what to expect. These Prayer Encounters are different than anything that most of us have experienced. Nobody will be praying aloud in public. There will be a bunch of prayer stations that you will visit alone. At each of the stations you will meet with Jesus and deal with something in your life that you need him to heal.

We really believe that it is imperative that we humble ourselves and do business with God. Each of us needs to take the time to humbly and honestly go to God and ask him to reveal if there is anything in our hearts that does not honour him.

Each time I have done these I have come away blessed in a bigger way than I could have imagined. The Holy Spirit showed me something each time that was getting in the way of my relationship with him and others. There are some false beliefs I have about myself and others and God that need to be changed.

[21]

I want to share a journal entry I wrote back in March, 2015, after the Prayer Encounter.

March 26, 2015

“Last night Ruth and I went to the prayer experience that Leora organized. It was quite powerful for me. There are some false narratives I live by such as ‘I don’t belong,’ and ‘I am unlovable.’ These messages I believe are the reason I find it hard to move towards people. They are the reason I stay outside groups. I believe I do not belong. They are powerful narratives that make me live in unhealthy ways and keep me hearing the nagging voice inside my head that tells me I am bad and EVERYBODY despises me.

*As I quieted myself and spent time with the Lord I sensed that he wanted to give me a new narrative to live by. ‘I Chose You. **I Chose You.**’ I meditated on those words and each of the three words was powerful. “I, God, Yahweh, the God who created the universe, the self-existent one, your heavenly Father, chose you. I want to be with you.”*

*“‘I **Chose** you. I picked you, out of the group, to be with. I could have picked anyone, but I chose you.’ Now, of course, this is equally true for everyone, but he chose me. He **Chose** me. I didn’t beg him to choose me. I didn’t have to prove myself. He took the initiative towards me.*

*‘I chose **YOU.**’ Me? ‘Yeah, you.’ He didn’t look the group over and bypass me. He chose ME. He didn’t choose me because I was the ugliest, or the one with the least potential and he felt sorry for me. He chose me*

because he wanted to be with ME. That doesn't make sense to me because that is not what I have experienced in my 54 years, or at least it's not what I experienced in my formative years growing up. I was never chosen. I was the one bypassed. I was taken by my parents and continually moved to different neighbourhoods, different schools, different cities so I had no chance to be a part of a group. I came to believe that I was not wanted. I came to believe I was different, that I had something to be ashamed of. I would always be outside the group.

Father, I want to believe those things you believe about me. Help me to destroy the false narratives I have about myself. Help to move towards people, even though everything in my being tells me to do the opposite. You are good."

Those are hard things for me to admit, but it is also vitally imperative that I own my brokenness so I can allow Jesus to heal it. We want to encourage you all to come out on one of the nights and spend some time prayerfully walking through the prayer stations and allow Jesus to touch your heart. You are his Temple. He lives in you and he wants you to care for his Temple.

Come out and pray, not only for you and your relationship with God, but also for your relationship with others. Pray for our city. Pray for our province, and our country. Pray for our church, that God would use us to reach out to our community with the love of Jesus. He wants to use us to restore his *shalom* to relationships. He wants to use us to bring healing to broken people in Campbell River. In order for that to happen we need to humble ourselves and pray. Would you pray with us? We so need a move of the Spirit in our church and in our city.