Palm Sunday – The Reason He Came

I. Walk With Me

A. Let's go back in time. Matthew 21:1-11.

B. If you listen, you can hear the crowd. You draw closer and finally can make out the word: Hosanna!

C. Look at the people. They have come from all over to celebrate Passover. They are early, restless, excited.

i. A rumor draws them out into the streets: the Messiah has come! Jesus is here!

ii. They have heard so much about this man and now he has come.

D. Feel the press of the crowd. Smell the dust, the donkeys, the cooking aromas. Hear them say "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

E. And here he comes, riding on a donkey.

F. The crucifixion is six days away. Jesus knows that, but he enters the city anyway. He has a lot to do in the next six days and one of the most important is to enter the city riding on that donkey. Why? Good question!

i. We have no record of him riding before. He always walked. He expected no special privileges. He ate, worked, slept, and sweated right along with the rough and common men who accompanied him.

ii. But now – this day – is different. Today, he enters as a king. Solomon entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey (1 Kings 1:33).

iii. And not just any donkey. Only an animal that had never been used as a beast of burden could be used for such an important task. Jesus specified this donkey – a young colt that had never been ridden before.

II. The People

A. Imagine you are one of Jesus' disciples: finally! Finally, he is stepping up and announcing who he is! Your heart would be near to bursting. They draped their cloaks on the donkey so that Jesus would be more comfortable and so that the donkey would look more presentable.

B. The crowd joined in, laying down their garments for Jesus to ride over. (what a sacrifice this was!)

C. They believed that their deliverance had come – and they were right – but they were also wrong.

i. The last time they had truly been independent and free was a hundred years ago when Judas Maccabeus had led them to a great victory over the occupying Greek army.

ii. His symbol had been the palm branch. It was on his coins and palm branches were used in the celebrations he led at the temple.

iii. When the people saw Jesus climb on the donkey and head toward the city gates, they quickly grabbed palm branches as a sign that they recognized Jesus as king.

D. They thought they had a king again… but even more than a king, they believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Promised One.

i. They had, many times, waved branches in the air and sang "Hosanna!" to God ("help" or "please save").

ii. Those who didn't recognize Jesus asked "Who is this?"

iii. And that is the question, isn't it?

III. The Problem With Palms

A. There is a problem with palms: once cut, they soon wither and die.

i. And there is a problem with peoples' expectations: they can turn on you.

ii. These people were willing to follow Jesus to the throne but not to the cross.

iii. They were ready for freedom but they didn't reckon on the price.

B. This is where we need to place ourselves in this story and ask two very important questions:

i. Why did Jesus come here at all?

ii. And of what is Jesus king?

IV. The King Who Bowed Down

A. I do not judge the people of Jerusalem. This was something very new. They hadn't heard the story before. They were willing to settle for earthly freedom and a return of their prestige, but that isn't why Jesus came.

i. We make the same mistake when we mine the scriptures looking for a way to escape illness, loss, setbacks, pain, problems, or death.

ii. That isn't why he came.

B. He came because we needed a priest who could forgive us of our sins. All of us have corrupt hearts. All of us have failed ourselves, failed others, and failed God.

i. Our best efforts cannot reverse that salient, obvious fact.

ii. And he knew that. He knew us. He knew our sin. In fact, no matter how aware you are of your sins, he knows more bad about you than do you!

iii. And still, he came.

C. He knew that some of these people would soon cry out "Crucify him!" And still he came.

D. He knew that the very ones who welcomed him didn't understand him. He knew he would soon disappoint many of them. And still he came.

E. He knew that even after his death, even after his resurrection (!), many of them would not accept him. And still he came.

F. For the people were more right than they knew. A king had come. A king who had a spiritual kingdom that would long outlast all other kingdoms in the history of the world.

i. A king who would rule in love. A king whose yoke would be easy and light – how unlike the yoke of any other king!

ii. A king who would die for his people rather than requiring them to die for him.

As we think of Palm Sunday, we need to ask ourselves the questions: Why did Jesus come here? And of what is he king?

We must remember, or we will forsake him as did they. He must be king over every aspect of our lives. Because his kingdom never ends

we call on you to make him king of your life, the guardian of your ways, the Lord of your heart, and the reason and mission and meaning of the rest of your life.

For everything has changed, for the Lord has come! Say it with me, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”