Welcome to all in house and all online

Prayer: Kens Mom Freda,

Be sure to invite someone this week to one of our services.

He’s Not Who They Thought He Was...He’s More

John 12:12-15 / John 13:1-5

4/2/23 (Palm Sunday)

Being Palm Sunday, I want to discuss this morning the reason for Palm Sunday. Today generally gets rolled into Easter, but Palm Sunday marks an important beginning to Holy Week,

* It signifies an essential aspect to the character of God that culminates on Easter Sunday.
* Jesus’ actions provide us with an example of how to follow his lead.

We’re going to look at John’s account of what we now call Palm Sunday.

* ​John 12:12-13 - *The next day, the news that Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem swept through the city. A large crowd of Passover visitors 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!”*

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Jesus had gained a reputation, and many came from all over the land to see him in

Jerusalem...And why? Because for those who believed, and knew the Scriptures, they understood that Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem meant the establishment of Israel as the great

super-power to which the chosen people of God rightfully belonged. And Jesus was to be the king, the Messiah, to make this possible.

The people present on that day signified this by placing palm branches at his feet, proclaiming the entry of royalty and power. The day belonged to the nation of Israel!

* When you think back upon the history of Israel from the Old Testament, then the actions of the people that day make sense. The entire history of Israel, with the exception of a few very short periods, existed under the oppression and rule of higher authorities.
* They had been an oppressed people from the time of Abraham through the present day; oppressed under the Egyptians, Canaanites, Assyrians, Babylonians & the Romans. The people of Israel longed for freedom and rescue from the tyranny of oppression.

The people of Israel believed that for any Messiah to fulfill his role to establish Israel as a great superpower, that person would come by way of power & with the force of a mighty army of soldiers. How could a meek leader face the tyranny of the Romans?

* The people desired a powerful king who would free them from political and social bondage and place them in their rightful position of power and authority.
* They longed for a king who would restore Israel to the times of long ago during the reign of King David, which was one of the few periods in their history when they experienced prosperity.
* Essentially, the people of Israel assumed that their Messiah and Savior would roll up, exercise his power and authority, demonstrating not only to Rome but to the whole world that Israel, God’s chosen people, were the strongest and most powerful people in the whole world!

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So, let’s continue with the passage...

Jesus rolled on his tank into Jerusalem with a mighty army and led a mission of “Shock and Awe” in order to overthrow the Romans and take his rightful place as king of Israel…​

* John 12:14-15 - *Jesus found a young donkey and rode on it, fulfilling the prophecy that said: “Don’t be afraid, people of Jerusalem. Look, your King is coming, riding on a donkey’s colt.”*

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What’s awesome about this donkey is that John is actually recording a prophecy that was fulfilled by Jesus which was made several hundred years earlier in the Old Testament by the prophet Zechariah,

* ​Zech. 9:9 “*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.*​

Now this is an important piece of the story.

* Kings wear royal clothing to display their power.
  + Jesus wasn’t in royal clothing.
* It was known that Kings rode on mighty steeds.
  + But Jesus is found riding a donkey. This seems so unkinglike; in fact, it seems downright wrong & weak. I can imagine that as people laid palms for the coming of the King of Israel, the Messiah, the powerful Ruler of All Nations, that many thought, “Is that a donkey? Is he really on a donkey?”
    - Now you need to know the ugly underbelly to the hope of the people on that day. During that day and age, when kings entered into new lands, riding on steeds, showcasing their power, wealth, and strength, it meant only one thing... CONQUER and ACQUIRE...which required death and destruction.
    - Donkeys, on the other hand, donkeys mean something quite different. Donkeys mean humility, meekness, gentleness.

According to John, Jesus chooses to ride a donkey rather than a mighty steed to fulfill prophesy about the character of his kingship. Jesus intentionally rode a donkey to express the radical, counter-cultural reality of the true Kingdom of God! A kingdom ruled by a caring, loving, sacrificial King!

Let me ask you a couple questions: What takes more courage? Who has more authority?

* A king who displays his power by the number of soldiers in his army & by the amount of wealth acquired through conquering other nations.
* OR the king who rides a donkey, displays humility, and bears the presence of peace?

Which king possesses more courage and authority? We’ll come back to that.

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Sometimes my imagination goes wild, and a part of me thinks that God had been waiting with anticipation to reach this point in human history when Jesus would ride into Jerusalem and begin the final part of his public ministry, to save humanity, and to rescue us from the consequence of our sin. To reconcile us into the kind of relationship that God longed so much for us to have with him.

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Jesus not only needed to be in Jerusalem on that Palm Sunday afternoon, but I think he desired to be there more than any other place in Heaven or on Earth! Jesus wanted it and had been preparing for Holy Week since the beginning of time.

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Contrary to who they THOUGHT He was, the people proclaimed, “the king is here!” But this king, was a righteous and victorious king. He’s a king who desires to be amongst his people. He’s not a loser king, who is coming now and will be unseated a generation later. Rather, he is righteous, he is good, and he is victorious. He will rue the day against the powers and principalities who attempt to overthrow him because he is FOREVER victorious. Though this king is humble, riding on a donkey’s colt, He will remove the battle chariots from Israel and the warhorses from Jerusalem. He will destroy all the weapons used in battle, and this king will bring peace to the nations. His realm will stretch from sea to sea.

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So, yes Jesus enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday as a King, make no mistake about

That...but as the only “King of Kings!” He had fulfilled prophesy that day from Zechariah about kingship and the role that God placed upon him to do. Yet, he did so, bearing witness to a different kind of kingdom...one ruled by a loving God who makes himself known to us through Jesus as a God of peace.

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The triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem signifies the inauguration of a generous, redemptive, merciful, gracious, and perfect King who rules over broken men! You see truth is there is a major difference between your kingdom, my kingdom and God’s kingdom. Broken folks like you and me rule from the seat of selfishness. God, however, rules by sacrifice and love.

Jesus demonstrates for us what this kind of kingship looks like. He dismounts the donkey, and he models for us for what his God’s kingdom means. Quickly turn to the next chapter John 13, and let’s read what Jesus does a bit later in the city.

* ​John 13:1-5 - *Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end. It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.*

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Remember my questions from a few minutes ago when I asked, “Which king has more courage and authority? The one who must prove himself by the strength of his army, or the one who rides on a donkey?

* The king who proves himself by the strength of his army & carries authority, can only do so insofar as he can prove his own worth.
* But Jesus carries the authority of the creator, maker, and owner of the universe and all within it.

And what was his response to this kind of authority and power? He took off his robe, knelt down, and washed the feet of his broken, flawed disciples… people just like you and me.

All of this begs the question, why would Jesus use his authority and power on earth for such an act as this? This is God’s moment! This is holy week! It’s Passover, the most important event on the Jewish calendar! Jesus is in the epicenter of religious and political culture within Israel. One might expect him to shout from the rooftops about the nature and character of God, but instead, in a hidden upper room, away from the masses, he washes the feet of his disciples.

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Jesus did all of these things as a humble King.

* rode on a humble, shameful donkey,
* washed the feet of his broken, frustrating disciples,
* and eventually went all the way to the cross on Friday...all because God desires you to have ABUNDANT LIFE through his ABUNDANT LOVE for us!
  + John 10:10 *“The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full!”*

When faith begins from a place of abundant love and life, other things become reconcilable to each other. Imagine what Lompoc would look like if Christians walked in abundant love and life and then truly showed that same kind of love to others.

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To have an abundance of something is to have more than you need. Abundance is the opposite of lack of. Abundance touches everything. The abundant love of Jesus Christ touches every part of our lives.

* It touches the places in our life that awaken us and make us come alive. It is the ignition to the places in our lives that drive us and make us overwhelmed with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control.
* It’s that abundant love that I can respond in love & respect to those who scoff at me, ridicule my faith, or attempt to shame me for being a follower of Jesus.
* Abundant love also touches the rough places...the hurt places, the places of pain, the hidden places that we keep from everyone, including God. Abundance touches the hidden secrets. Abundance touches the places of hurt caused by others, as well as the places of hurt caused by us and will bring healing.
* Abundant love, however, also touches the places of shame and guilt from the pain that we’ve caused others. Abundant love is a spark to confession. When abundant love touches those places, your need to confess becomes undeniable, at which point that abundant love of Jesus can bring healing and restoration to a broken relationship. Abundant love solicits forgiveness and grace.

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I think Paul sums up Palm Sunday and the Holy Week best in his letter to the Philippians.

* Philippians 2:5-11 *You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a servant and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

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Closing:

On that Palm Sunday, those who believed in Jesus laid down palm branches and clothing for their Messiah who was entering into Jerusalem on a donkey. Though they thought He was something He wasn’t, He ended up so much more than they could have ever imagined! Not a military savior or King, but a savior and King for their hearts and souls!

This week, as you reflect on the abundant love of Jesus for you, what do you need to lay down at the feet of Jesus? What are you going to focus this week on laying down and submitting to the King of your heart?

Maybe you’re hearing this for the first time and thinking truth be told, I am not worthy to lay anything at the feet of Jesus. I want you to know this morning, that the same God who walked on Earth in human form as Jesus Christ, rode on a donkey on Sunday, and who died on a cross Friday, loves you no less now than he did then.

Jesus exemplified & showed compassion in choosing to ride into Jerusalem. How can we deny the One who walked on earth with all power and authority and still choose to use it to redeem us and rescue us from the consequence and destruction of our sin. God freely, out of his abundant love for me & you, chose to save us!

This morning, I encourage you to choose to believe with your heart. Choose the abundant love and forgiveness that he has for you. In making this choice you are choosing to have an abundant life, a new life FULL of newness and joy! Let the abundance love of Christ touch every part of your heart this morning and receive the very thing that He gave His life for...Your Salvation; An opportunity to have a relationship with real God who loves you and desires to have a relationship with you today.

Then you’ll know exactly who Jesus is and find out that He’s even more than you could ever think!

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