



**Sunday, April 2, 2023**

**Speaker:** Pastor John VanderWindt

**Scripture:** Luke 19:28-44

**Sermon:** Loving as the King Loved

It is good to be here this morning celebrating Palm Sunday together. This morning, we got to see the younger children. Katie (Nieman) did invite all the children to the front. I will admit I was one of the children who did not come up to get a palm branch but you know, maybe we should have all grabbed palm branches and sung praises to God.

Today, we'll look at that story in D6. If you look at this week's Bible section, it's all about Good Friday. And we are going to gather on Good Friday. But today we need to celebrate Palm Sunday and so we're going to do so with the story of Palm Sunday as it is found in Luke 19. The story of Palm Sunday is in all four Gospels, and it is actually in the Gospel of John where they mentioned that they use palm branches. Matthew and Mark both talk about the story. They both talk about people waving branches. Luke on the other hand does not talk about the people waving palm branches and there is a reason for that. Luke is writing to Gentile Christians. Matthew, Mark, John were writing to Jews who had become Christians and to Jews in general. And they were showing that Jesus was Lord and a palm branch was in many ways a sign of victory.

In the Old Testament, when kings would return from war, they would wave palm branches. A number of years before Jesus was on earth, there was the Maccabean revolt in which they went against Antiochus. As part of the symbol of celebration, they use the palm branch almost as a national flag. So Luke is writing to people saying, "Well, I'm writing to Gentiles. They won't really get the significance of the palm branch as a national celebration victory for a king. And I also want to make sure that we talk about the king, not just of Israel, but the king of all people." So you'll see in this reading today in Luke 19, that it doesn't talk about the waving of branches and the palm branches and anything like that. But there are some significant pieces in here which show us that Jesus is King. So I would invite you to turn to Luke 19:28-44. It goes as follows.

**28** After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. **29** As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, **30** "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. **31** If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' say, 'The Lord needs it.'"

**32** Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. **33** As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” **34** They replied, “The Lord needs it.” **35** They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. **36** As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. **37** When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

**38** “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” **39** 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.” **41** As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it **42** and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.

**43** The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. **44** They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”

This is the Word of the Lord. Let's pray. Dear Lord, we come to you this morning and Lord, we ask that you will help us recognize the coming of the time. Lord, help us to see you as king. Lord, help us to bless you and to praise you, and to glorify you and honor you as King. Lord, as we look into your Word, we pray that you will open our hearts and our ears, that we may hear your voice and, Lord, we pray that the power of your love may mold us in such a way that we desire to share your love with those around us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

So here we are. Palm Sunday. A story, which I was reminded of this morning, we've been doing every year for the past 2000 years. That story of Palm Sunday. Every year, we celebrate Jesus being crowned as king coming into Jerusalem and we say that this is the greatest day and we listen to the crowds as they bless our Lord, and they crown Him as King knowing Friday's coming. Many of the same people who today crown Jesus as King on Friday yell, "Crucify Him." So today we want to look at, "What does it mean that Jesus, in the power which he gives, loves people.

It begins in the very first verse - **Luke 19:28**. "After Jesus had said this, (he just told a parable) he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem." Jesus was intentional about where he went. Jesus knew very well what was going to happen later that week. Jesus knew that He was going to die on a cross just a few days later. But yet Jesus did it.

In the video which we saw at the beginning of the service today, it talked about how love is not just a feeling or an emotion. It is a commitment and a decision. Here at the beginning of this piece, we see the power of Christ's love for us as a decision to go to Jerusalem, knowing that He would be crucified in just a few days.

Talk about the power of love. Jesus, as He is preparing to go and get the disciples to get the donkey (young colt), he knows that the people are going to be singing his praises, knows that these same people will fall in a few days. And yet, Jesus does it.

So it goes on and it says in **Luke 19:29-30**, "As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, (Bethany is the place where Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived. Jesus spent a lot of time in Bethany. Bethpage is this place where we see only when we talk about Palm Sunday. It is probably, if Bethany had a suburb, it would be Bethpage. Just a little place) he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden." A young donkey. When we read the story in the other gospels, it goes back to quoting Zechariah 9:9 which says, "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

It was a much different aspect than when the king went out to war and came back riding on his war horse. This was very symbolic and very purposeful in Jesus. I mean, the reality is, Jesus has been walking all his life. Nowhere else do we ever see, except for when he gets in a boat, but otherwise, we always see Jesus walking from place to place. So it's not like Jesus is going, "You know, I finally had enough walking. I think I need a ride into Jerusalem today." In reality, if Jesus is riding on a young donkey, chances are he's sitting there holding his feet up so that they don't touch the ground. So this was Jesus very intentional again saying, "I am coming to you as your King. I am coming to you as a person who has authority over everything." And the people got it.

In the other gospels, they use the palm branches. But in this gospel, it also says that after he gets the colt, that in **Luke 19:35-36**, "They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road."

This was a sign of total submission. This was a sign from the people that said, "You have us and we are under you. We are submitting to your authority." Some of us might still be back in that piece of like, "Hold on." He just told these two guys to go get a donkey. And the guys went in there and said, "God, the Lord needs it." The guy's like, "Okay, I have my donkey." And we might be thinking, "Well, that's a little odd." There's all kinds of thoughts on that. Did Jesus already make a connection there? Did the people who owned the donkey know Jesus, and were they also disciples of Jesus? And they thought if Jesus needed it, "Hey, I'll get it." That's irrelevant in the story, the pieces that Jesus is King and people are submitting to him. They give him the donkey.

People put their cloaks on it. Sometimes, in some of the commentaries which I read, they talk about the cloak, not just the outer cloak but for many people, they would also have a prayer shawl. And they would put that on there as well, knowing that Jesus is the Lord of all. And Jesus rides down the hill. Notice it says, "... when he comes near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives."

Oftentimes when we see pictures of Jesus on Palm Sunday, the scene is Jesus riding into Jerusalem. But most of the story actually happens on the way down the mountain. If you take the Mount of Olives - I thought about showing a picture, but I thought I don't want to give you this image because the image that it would give you would be that of what it looks like today, which is not what it looked like back then - you've got a mountain which comes down into the valley, the Kidron Valley, and in that valley, you've got the Garden of Gethsemane. And then there is a slight incline back up to the city of Jerusalem. And as you would be going into the city of Jerusalem, you would have in front of you two huge, beautiful gates that would open up so that you could pass through the wall into the city.

Today when you're at the city of Jerusalem, this inclines up to where the eastern gates are, the gates are now about half buried, it is cemeteries on both sides. So imagine if you can, Jesus coming down on a donkey, people waving branches, putting their cloaks on the ground saying, "I submit to you. I give you authority." And then you hear the murmur begin and it grows louder as the people say in **Luke 19:38**, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" And being a Jew, you're automatically drawn back to two passages. **Psalm 118:25-26** says, "Lord, save us! Lord, grant us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord we bless you."

Other gospels use the word Hosanna. Hosanna is the English translation of a Hebrew word, hoshi'a na, which means Lord save us. So here you are in that crowd yelling, "Lord save us." Then you hear people yelling, "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" And you're thinking, "I've heard that before."

Just over 30 years earlier, we heard the shepherds talk about the angels. The angels said in **Luke 2:14**, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." And now you're thinking, "Here it is. That same piece." Jesus came when he was born to give peace on earth so that we may know peace, and now Jesus is coming down making that decision to go to the cross so that we may have peace in heaven. And all of that is to the glory of God. In fact, Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem, which is the city of peace. It has peace within the name of Jerusalem. And here is Jesus humbly riding on a donkey, accepting the praises of the people.

Then, of course, you know, we've got this whole bit and it's going great but then you've got the Pharisees. They've walked down from Jerusalem to see what all the fuss was about, because they've heard the noise and they're like, "Hold on. Hold on. We've gotta check this out." And so they walk up and they're like, "Oh, no, we can't have people crowning you as king. We've got other plans for you. So they tell Jesus to rebuke his disciples and Jesus says in **Luke 19:40**, "'I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

Now, if you take the trip from the Mount of Olives, down through the Kidron Valley, up to Jerusalem, you will realize that you live in a desert. It is not a green pasture, even though the Garden of Gethsemane is there. But in the Garden of Gethsemane, you've got olive groves but that's about it. You have got a lot of stones there. You've got more stones there than you have people.

So Jesus is claiming that, "I am not only Lord of the people who have submitted to me, but I am Lord of the universe. I can (and Satan acknowledged it when he tempted him. He said, "You could take this stone and turn it into bread.") and Jesus says, "I can if I want to create a choir which would drown out everybody. But I'm not."

But the Pharisees also heard something else. In Habakkuk 2, there is a phrase in there where it's talking about how God speaks through Habakkuk telling them that they are going to be taken into captivity. And in **Habakkuk 2:11** it says, "The stones of the wall will cry out..." As a Pharisee, they knew that. It would send other thoughts in their minds as well. And we'll get to those in just a minute because Jesus also alludes to that piece.

But Jesus is in this place of adoration, and being adored as King of kings. Then it says this in **Luke 19:41**, "As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it..." Talk about a change. Right? You've got this celebration coming down the hill. And as he's coming down the hill, he's come over top of the hill, and people are just singing his praises and it's a celebration. And part way down that hill, he has this beautiful view of the city of Jerusalem. And coming in on the east side, what he will see is the eastern wall with its gates, called the Beautiful Gates. And just behind there, he will see the magnificent structure of the temple. And then he weeps.

I'm sure that people with them are going, "Well those must be tears of joy." But they're not. Because Jesus understood the power of love and he understood the aspect that, "This is painful for me but I cry for the people who don't know me." Because he goes on to say in **Luke 19:42**, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace..." And then in **Luke 19:44**, "... because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you." Jesus is saying to these people, "I have been with you for three years. I have shown you the power of love that God gives you. For three years. And you can't see it. And not only can't you see it, but you choose to go in ways which are going to hurt you far beyond what you can imagine.

If we go back to **Luke 19:42-44**, it says, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another..."

Just under 40 years after Jesus said this, the Romans, in reaction to the Jewish rebellions, came and destroyed the city of Jerusalem. And in destroying the city of Jerusalem, they also destroyed the temple.

And the temple which was originally built by Solomon - refurbished a few times, the latest one by Herod - has never been rebuilt. Right now on Temple Mount there stands a Muslim mosque.

And Jesus wept for these people going, "I wish you could see what I offer. But you can't. You refuse to. Instead you choose to go your own way and you say, "This is better." In the end, you're destroyed and you lose the most precious gift to you that you had." And Jesus has said at this time, "I weep for you."

Some of you might be thinking, "That's not a very cheery Palm Sunday service." But maybe what we need to hear this morning is that for many of us, as we give accolades to our King, we also need to hear that Jesus weeps over our city, that Jesus weeps over our family, that Jesus weeps over you and me when we choose things that are not of Him.

This week, Jesus spent his week teaching. The last sermons which he preached. And Jesus will die on Friday. We know that we will celebrate next Sunday and I promise you, it won't be that much of a downer. Next week will be a celebration. But in order to get to that time of celebration, we also have to realize that there are things that we need to do in our own lives to put us in that place of peace, so that we too may see God as he really is. Are there things that we need to do in our lives to share the gospel with people around us? Do we weep for our city? Do we weep for the people in our neighborhoods?

The video said it's not an emotion. It's not a feeling. It's a commitment. It's a decision. And this week, each of us have decisions that we will make. But there's also decisions that we can make. We can decide to have that conversation with somebody who needs to hear the gospel and invite them to church next week. We can decide, as we prepare for Good Friday, that we are going to take the necessary steps to prepare our hearts. So that on Friday when Jesus feeds us with the bread and the juice and says, "Your sins are forgiven," we know that it is not because of cheap grace and we just go, "That's okay. We'll be forgiven anyway." But that we come to a place and we understand the depth of Christ's love.

And we take this week to prepare our hearts to really be able to see what it was that Christ did for us. But also that we take the time this week to really see what it is that Christ does for those around us. Are there people that we need to invite for Easter next week? Are there people that we need to share opportunities with where we can say, "We invite you into these spaces." For some people, just the aspect of coming into church may be too much and so you say, "Hey, we've got a photography display in our church. Come with me. Let's go see it together. Let me show you the works of people showing the works of God." Maybe there's other opportunities where you say, "You know what? We've got something coming at the end of April. Let me show you what people, who are Christians, have a good time doing." Maybe they're into sports. I'll give a plug for basketball camp this summer. By the way, registration opens up this week Tuesday. So if you need to find a spot...

But that's a place that you can invite them. Or to Sunday school. Or to Youth. Think of places where you can invite people to meet God. And to see the power of love that God extends through other believers. Then I guess we need to ask the same question. What's my mindset like? In **Philippians 2:5** it says, "... have the same mindset as Christ Jesus" and **Philippians 2:10-11**, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." God invites us this week to be part of that. To take on the mindset of Christ and say, "I am willing to weep for the hearts and the lives of my neighbor."

In **2 Peter 3:8-10** it says, "But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief." When Jesus wept for the people of Israel on that Palm Sunday, he said, "I wish that you knew your end was coming and that you could see that I could bring you peace." And for those people, it was less than 40 years. Jesus says the same to us today. "My heart's desire is that you see who I am and that you may receive peace in me." We don't know when Jesus will return. It could be 40 years. It could be 40 minutes. It could be 4000 years. But Jesus says, "Are you ready? Are you ready to accept the love that I give you on Friday? Are you ready to put your cloak down and submit totally to me as Risen Lord and King next Sunday? Jesus says, "I invite you to that place. I invite you to be with me this Palm Sunday."

And as you wave that branch in celebration and victory the King, I invite you to hold that branch. Don't let it go. And stay in that place of honoring Christ. Because it's so easy as we see on Friday for people to one day say, "I'm all in Jesus." And for a few days later, to be part of a crowd that doesn't follow Christ's way. This morning, Jesus comes to us and he says, "I invite you to be with me."

And then in **Luke 19:38**, the crowd sang ""Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" When you give your life to Christ, there is not only peace on earth that we read about in Luke 2, but you are also guaranteed peace in heaven. And the angels sing around you and they give glory to God.

Let's pray. Dear Lord, we thank you for who you are. Lord, we thank you for your great love for us. Lord, we thank you that you made a decision, that you made a commitment to take that journey to Jerusalem to die for those whom you knew would put you to death. Lord, we pray that you will work in each of our hearts today. That we too may be in that same mindset of your love. Making a decision not only just for our own lives, Lord, but also willing to go to those hard places for those who don't know you. Willing to suffer whatever it is so that they too may know the gospel.

Lord, we pray that this week you will give us courage to speak to those that you are laying on our hearts to talk to. Invite them here, Lord, next week that they too may be drawn in by your Spirit to see you as the King of kings and Lord of lords. Amen. Transcribed by: *Liza Perry*