

**PALM SUNDAY –**  
**THE TIME WHEN OUR LORD LAST CAME INTO JERUSALEM**  
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Palm Sunday--the time when our Lord came last into Jerusalem. Always before, He came to worship. This time, He came to die. Earlier our Lord had been anointed with the tears and with the spikenard of Mary at Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper. The supper there was probably in honor of Lazarus as well as Jesus. Jesus' great miracle of the healing of Lazarus was so well documented and witnessed by so many that the authorities had decided to kill both Jesus and Lazarus. Now, Jesus is in Jerusalem. He has come there to die – not that He has done any crime, not that he has reached the age when one normally dies, not that He really wants to die – He came to Jerusalem that Sunday morning on His way to death for you and me.

As a background summary, He came to Bethany on a Friday afternoon, staying with His friends through Friday and Saturday; now He comes to Jerusalem, and will journey from Bethany to Jerusalem on Monday and Tuesday, stay in Bethany on Wednesday, and enter Jerusalem for the last time on Thursday, celebrating with His disciples the Lord's Supper, praying in the Garden, betrayed with a kiss, captured, tried several times, and Crucified at 9:00 am on Friday morning, and remaining 6 hours on His cross, hung between two thieves. He was taken down from the cross before Sabbath began at 6 pm Friday evening, buried in Joseph of Arimathea's new tomb attended by Joseph and Nicodemus, and left there until Sunday morning when He arose from the dead.

**P-A-L-M:** If we look at the meaning of Palm Sunday, it can be done with acrostics, or taking the letters of PALM. Let us first look at the P in Palm. For this occasion, P should stand for POPULARITY.

**POPULARITY:** No one was more popular at this time than Jesus; and no one was more hated by the authorities. They believed that the popularity of Jesus would cause the Romans to enter Jerusalem and take away all the privileges and all the small freedoms they had been given. The Sadducees were the ruling party, and the chief members of the highest court of the land, the Sanhedrin Court. The high priest, and the former high priest, Annas and Caiphas, were the most powerful Jewish leaders of that time. In fact, Caiphas had already said, "It is needful that one die for the nation," not realizing he had prophesied as high priest what would soon happen.

The popularity of Jesus was so great that wherever He went He drew great crowds, and the people followed Him with anticipation, knowing that they would see a miracle performed, and knowing that from Jesus' compassion, they would be fed. They believed He was the King spoken of in their Holy Scripture; they believed He would defeat their enemies; they believed He would soon set up the good Kingdom of Peace and Prosperity. Now the King was in Jerusalem. Now the time was near. Now the climax of His Presence offered them hope and excitement the likes of which they had not seen before.

Palm Sunday--what a time of celebration and jubilation! A group of disciples from Galilee were there and had witnessed His miracle working power and His authority. These Galileans were joined by the Judeans who had witnessed the healing of Bartimaeus, the salvation of Zaccheus, and the raising of Lazarus. These two excited groups were there together celebrating because Jesus was entering Jerusalem as King. Always before He had rejected entering Jerusalem as the expected King and Messiah, but, now He makes it obvious that He is King of the Jews and promised Messiah by riding into Jerusalem upon a donkey as prophesied by the Old Testament, in Zechariah 9:9 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass;" and they were singing the great Hallel or praise God psalm, Psalms 118:26 "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord ..." They were rejoicing greatly because the King had come as Zechariah had said He would, and they believed He would set up His Kingdom there, during the Passover Festival.

Can you imagine the anger, the consternation, the jealousy, the hatred, that such a scene must have caused the authorities and religious leaders of Jerusalem? Listen to the words of John 12:17: "The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.<sup>18</sup> For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle.<sup>19</sup> The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after him." Now you have both Sadducee and Pharisee so angry that they are ready to kill him.

But there are Gentiles there, Greeks, who seeing the great popularity of Jesus, have a kinder, more benign, response: John 12:20: And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast:<sup>21</sup> The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.<sup>22</sup> Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.<sup>23</sup> And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.<sup>24</sup> Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.<sup>25</sup> He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

The Gentiles, too, would be granted salvation just like the Jews; but salvation could only come in one way. It was not a popularity contest. Though immeasurably popular in the eyes of the people, Jesus had to die before Jew or Greek could be saved.

So Jesus is saying to us and to the disciples: "The only conditions for His life and His Diciples' lives is the A in Palm:

## **ABSOLUTE SACRIFICE**

"Look at the great popularity of our Lord; look at His great miracles of Jesus; look at this King who change change one loaf of bread for enough to feed multitudes." That must have been the thought of these excited followers. We all are attracted to 'the latest new thin' but Jesus never cared for and never really wanted popularity. As He listened to the Heavenly Father, He knew that Absolute Sacrifice was required of Him. What the Father required, He required of Himself, and He requires that of all His disciples. Listen again:<sup>24</sup> Verily, verily, I say unto you,

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

Jesus chose a common and well known illustration to show them what His Life was about, and what their lives should be about. He used the idea of the seed that has to be covered by dirt like a dead corpse, and, in dying, brought about new life.. That means that we should live with a holy disregard to the world's values, recognizing that the Divine Values are truly the only values that matter anyhow, and that these values are found in His Word, in His Commandments, and that we must be fully committed to the keeping of them. Deut. 11:1, tells us that, "Therefore thou shalt love the LORD thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway." To follow this command in Deuteronomy requires a radical lifestyle. We are to keep His charge, to keep His statutes, to keep his judgments, and to keep His commandments. How often are we to do this? Twice a week? Or only on Sunday? One cynical writer said this about Christians:

They go to church on Sunday;  
They'll be alright on Monday:  
It's just a little habit they've acquired.

The author of this little Poem is saying that we are just acting good because we're supposed to act good on the Lord's Day. After that, after playing church, we become our same old selves.

But what does the verse in Deuteronomy say, "Therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep His charge, and His statutes, and His judgments, and His commandments, ALWAYS." That ALWAYS MEANS ALWAYS.

Jesus explains what it means to be His disciple by adding these verses: John 12:25-26  
<sup>25</sup> He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. <sup>26</sup> If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

Clearly Jesus reminds us in no uncertain terms that if we are His disciples that to serve Him is to follow Him, and that wherever He is, there His servant shall also be. Then He adds that if we serve Him, God will honor our lives. Christian, do you say that you are serving Jesus? Then follow Him! Wherever He leads you, follow Him! Wherever He commands you to go, be as faithful as faithful Abraham, and Go! Don't come up with excuses that you label reasons not to do what Jesus commands. Palm Sunday meant for Jesus ABSOLUTE OBEDIENCE; it means ABSOLUTE OBEDIENCE for His disciples too!

The P in PALM means Popularity; the A in PALM means Absolute Obedience; and the meaning of the L in PALM means LOVE:

**LOVE**

I want to start out by quoting the Old Testament and then the New Testament. First the Old:

Leviticus 19:18 "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord. Deuteronomy 6:5 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

Now the New Testament:

Matt. 22:37 "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. <sup>38</sup>This is the first and great commandment. <sup>39</sup>And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. <sup>40</sup>On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

In all of this Scripture there are but two real commandments to keep, and these two were present in the life of Jesus on that Palm Sunday: Those two commandments were, Love God and Love Humanity. But those loves were of a particular kind. To Love God is to keep His commandments; but it is to keep the commandments because you Love God as Your Father. That is impossible unless God is your Father. And God is not your Father unless you are born of His Spirit. Jesus clearly taught that truth to Nicodemus, and Nicodemus must have been born again because He is there in Jesus' hour of death, helping Joseph bury His Lord. You see, the Love of God is bound up in the act of Jesus on Calvary:

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. <sup>17</sup>For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

Had Christ not died for our sins we would not, could not, be saved, for as the hymn writer said, "Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow."

John put it well when he said,

1 John 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. <sup>17</sup>Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. <sup>18</sup>There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

What is the **Bible** telling us? It is telling us clearly that Love is the reality of Palm Sunday, and that Love should be the reality of the rest of the days of our lives. We are to Love God. We are to Love Him With Our Sacrifice and with all that we have and are. But we must also love Humanity. Now that is not humanity in general, but humanity in particular. We are to Love our Neighbor as ourself. We are our Brother's keeper. We must love Him. We might detest our neighbor's ways, but love him we must, and we must be good to him, and serve him. The L in PALM stands for LOVE.

Last of All, the M in PALM stands for MISSION:

## MISSION TO MANKIND

It was not accidental that the Greeks were there, or that they wanted to SEE JESUS! The great expositor Maclaren reminds us of Jesus' strange statement at being told the Greeks wanted to see Him.

John 12:20 And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: <sup>21</sup> The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. <sup>22</sup> Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. <sup>23</sup> And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.

John 12:27 Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. <sup>28</sup> Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. <sup>29</sup> The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. <sup>30</sup> Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. <sup>31</sup> Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

Maclaren reminds us that Jesus saw in this trivial incident the broad spectrum of what His death, burial and resurrection was all about – He was dying for all mankind. Moreover this message of His sacrifice and His death, and His resurrection afterward *must be told to all the world*. You see, whenever we bring the message of the Gospel to the world, the prince of this world is cast out. The blood of Jesus Christ is a sight he cannot tolerate. Therefore when the disciples preach Christ and His passion, men are saved, for satan cannot stay where the Gospel is preached.

When Jesus was told of the Greeks, He knew that His hour had come. He knew that the plan of His Father was being brought to finality. He would die that mankind might be born again, might live again, might reign over death, hell and satan, that satan would be cast out wherever the Gospel was preached. One thinks of Francis Xavier coming ashore in China and saying in effect, “What a great miracle that I, small as I am, can come to this great land, and cast”out satan and bring down his kingdom.”

That same thing is true wherever missionaries go; they go to cast out satan; they go to chase him out of the lives of addicted human beings, who are so busy destroying themselves and others that they become his weapons in a dark world. But when the Light of God appears, the darkness flees! That must have been in Jesus' mind whenever the Greeks were brought to Him. He knew that His Gospel would be compelling Good News for all the world.

"The trivial request was a narrow window through which Jesus' yearning spirit saw a great expanse – nothing less than the coming to Him of myriad Gentiles, the 'much fruit' of which he immediately speaks, the 'other sheep' whom He 'must bring.' Maclaren.

For Jesus, the meaning of Palm Sunday was more, infinitely more, than any of His disciples could possibly have imagined. Jesus saw that terrible, wonderful, time, as the transition period between a 'fallen' world and a 'world redeemed.' He was the second Adam who died to redeem this fallen world, made up of Jew and Greek, bond and free, male and female – made up of you and me!

John 12:19 “The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after him.”

The world is still going after Him! Hallelujah! Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord!