

Introduction

One of the things that has been lost in our day is the art of storytelling. For some, the loss of storytelling might not seem to be such a tragic loss. How many times have you sat through your uncle's stories about his glory days playing high school football?

But despite the presence of bad storytellers in our lives, the telling of stories serves an incredibly important role in creating and nurturing enduring communities.

Mothers and fathers tell their children the story of how they met. Families develop stories over time and the story begins to take on new shape and meaning as the family grows and new generations are born.

Stories of the past give shape to the present. Indeed, stories of the past *shape* how we engage *with* the present.

Depending on the story you tell about the history of the United States will shape how you engage with certain places and events in American life. The fact that one of my grandfathers is buried in Arlington National Cemetery shapes how I engage with such a place. That story from my families life impacts my life now.

Stories are important. That has always been true. And it is especially true to understanding the Bible. Indeed, it is Israel's *story* that makes the events of Palm Sunday so meaningful. The Gospels do not stand alone or in isolation from the rest of the Bible. In fact, it is probably best to describe the Gospels as the final chapters in a story that began long before.

When Jesus comes riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, he does so at the climax of a story that began in the garden. Characters in this story include the likes of

Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Miriam, Joshua, Jael, Samson, Ruth, Samuel, David, Elijah, and many others.

Jesus was greeted the way he was on Palm Sunday because the crowds knew Israel's story. The crowds had an idea of how the story was supposed to end and they saw it happening before their very eyes.

When Jesus rides into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, his actions are a declaration. A declaration that the promises of God to visit his people like he visited them in Egypt and bring them salvation like he did in the Exodus are coming to pass at last.

This means that for us to properly consider Palm Sunday. We must also consider Israel's story and how God made promises to Israel and how he kept those promises in Christ. As we do this, we too will be compelled to join the chorus and sing, "Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD."

Isaiah: the Fifth Gospel

In Matthew's account of Palm Sunday, one of the prophecies alluded to is [Isaiah 62](#). To understand the significance of this quotation you need to understand a little about the book of Isaiah as a whole.

Isaiah prophesied against the wicked leaders in Jerusalem and said that God is going to bring judgement in the future for their wickedness. Isaiah proved to be a true prophet because his prophecies came true.

But in Isaiah, God's judgement is not the final word. In Isaiah, God's judgement serves as step in God doing a new thing. Yes, God will bring Israel and Jerusalem under his judgement at the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians. But, he will do so in order to raise them up on the other side. It is a story of death and resurrection.

The first half of this story is told in the first half of Isaiah's prophecy. [Isaiah 1-39](#) is largely prophecies about God's coming judgement. But [Isaiah 40-66](#) look far into the future to tell of God's promised salvation. In these chapters, Isaiah is given a glimpse of what God will do **after** the judgement of exile.

Isaiah speaks about a time in the future where God is going to restore the fortunes of his people. God will visit them once again like he did in Egypt and he is going to raise a king who will act as a servant to lead his people.

In [Isaiah 62:10-12](#), three aspects of this restoration and salvation are present:

v. 10 - The salvation is for all the peoples

v. 11 - The salvation is a reward and a work of the messiah

v. 12 - The salvation transforms the people

The Salvation is for all the Peoples

[Isaiah 62:10](#) “Go through, go through the gates, Clear the way for the people; Build up, build up the highway, Remove the stones, raise up a standard over the peoples.”

One of the prominent themes throughout Isaiah is the fact that when God brings his salvation it will be a salvation for all the peoples. This theme is not new to Isaiah’s prophecy, Indeed, it is quite clear that Isaiah’s prophecies are working with the presence of this theme from previous portions of Scripture.

When God made his covenant with Abraham, he promised Abraham that his seed would be a blessing to the nations.

When God made his covenant with David and blessed David, it is clear that David became a blessing to the nations around him.

Israel had lost sight of this aspect of their calling as a people. They had forgotten that they were to be a blessing to the nations and instead they became like the nations around them by worshiping their gods.

But in [Isaiah 62](#), the way is cleared, the highways are prepared and a standard is raised up to call all the peoples of the earth to come through the gates of Zion and rejoice in the salvation of God.

When Jesus rides into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, he enters in as a representative Israelite who has come to do God’s will and bring salvation. But he is also the second Adam who represents the entire human race. And as

salvation comes to Israel, it means salvation to all peoples who submit to worship Israel's God who has visited them in Christ!

- › The application of course is that we should give humble thanks to God for including us gentiles in his salvation. But beyond that, we should also seek to extend God's salvation to those who are not yet in the fold. And just like it was difficult in the first century, it will probably be difficult for us to. But the difficulty is worth it!

The Reward and Work of the Messiah

[Isaiah 62:11](#) “Behold, Yahweh has announced to the end of the earth, Say to the daughter of Zion, “Behold, your salvation comes; Behold, His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him.””

As Jesus enters into Jerusalem, Isaiah tells us that the salvation of Zion has come. Isaiah also tells us that “His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him.” The imagery here is that of a king entering into a city victorious with his people in parade behind him.

But what does it mean that “His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him.”?

[Hebrews 12:2](#) states that “for the joy set before Him [Jesus] endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” There was a reward that Jesus gained for going through the trial of the cross. A part of that reward is a redeemed people that he purchased with His own blood. So in some way, the reward that Jesus was to gain was with him even before it was granted to Him after His resurrection.

The word recompense essentially means “work” in this context. The work that was before Jesus as he entered Jerusalem was the work he would perform on the cross.

But here in Isaiah, the reward is with Jesus even before his work on the cross had been carried out. How are we to understand this?

The answer, from Isaiah's perspective, is that *the reward is certain*. The work of the coming messiah is a perfect work. There is no question about his ability to accomplish his work.

So even as Jesus' work on the cross is still before him, His reward is with him. This is symbolically represented by the presence of his disciples being with Him. As Jesus enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, all of His followers, from all ages, should be seen in his train!

We can gain confidence from these verses in Isaiah, that Jesus' work is accomplished, and he has gained his reward!

The Salvation Restores the People

[Isaiah 62:12](#) “And they will call them, “The holy people, The redeemed of Yahweh”; And you will be called, “Sought out, a city not forsaken.””

The last thing we see is that the work of the promised messiah creates a change in the people. The people are given new titles. They are a “holy people”, “redeemed of Yahweh”, “Sought out”, and “a city not forsaken”.

Last week, as I preached on [Lamentations 5](#), I noted how Lamentations ends with something of an open-ended question: will God leave His people “utterly forsaken”?

Isaiah's prophecy looks ahead to a time after the fall of Jerusalem and gives us the answer to that question. Jerusalem, though they received judgement from God, was not utterly forsaken. God came to them again in the person of Christ.

And now that Christ has done his work on the Cross you must consider what all this means for you. This is because, in some sense, every Sunday is Palm Sunday. Every Sunday, Jesus enters in again through the gates and is received by the praises of “Hosanna” from his faithful followers.

But just as Jesus was betrayed and put to death only days later, so too is their a point of testing each Lord's Day. Jesus has entered in, now how will he be received? Jerusalem ultimately did not receive him. That was necessary so that he could accomplish his recompense, his work. But his work is effective work and he has his reward. You are a part of that reward and this means that you can receive your king and be counted among those who receive new names. The names of a holy people, a redeemed people, a people sought out, and a people who are not forsaken!

So receive your king as he comes through the gates this morning. Receive Him even as he receives you now to his table!

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit!