

The Surprising Kingdom

Palm Sunday

Facebook Intro:

The Kingdom of God is full of surprises and we should be willing to receive it as such. We see this truth clearly in the traditional Palm Sunday gospel narrative where Jesus shows up in an unexpected way in the final week of His earthly life.

We must be willing to receive His Kingdom in surprising ways and open to the various ways He may be at work in our lives.

Scripture: Luke 19:28-44, Matthew 5-7

Introduction

So, what's important about today?

Today is Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week, or Passion Week, which historically marks the moment that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey to proclaim His kingship.

Called Palm Sunday because as Jesus was riding into Jerusalem, people were waving palms and cheering.

Palm branches were regarded as tokens of joy and triumph and were customarily used on festive occasions (Leviticus 23:40, Nehemiah 8:15).

Kings and conquerors were welcomed with palm branches being strewn before them and waved in the air.

And today, we are going to look at Palm Sunday, the triumphal entry of Jesus, to talk about the Kingdom of God. And more specifically, the surprising nature of the Kingdom.

Who here likes surprises?

- I'm at a point in life where I don't really like surprises, and I'm really not very good at them either... Honestly, I'd much prefer a detailed itinerary and a perfectly ordered Google calendar.
- But, there are some surprises I like... Like those teasers at the end of the Marvel movies... The of Avengers.
- I also really like a surprising PLOT TWIST in a story.
- And today we get to spend time looking at one of the greatest PLOT TWISTS to have ever happened.

Today, we're going to explore together how, The Kingdom of God is FULL of surprises.

Who here today has been surprised, even shocked by your own life's journey?

Who has been shocked and surprised at how God has used you, the events in your life, your suffering and your success?

When's the last time you were really, genuinely SURPRISED by God? Like you had to take a step back, and maybe audibly say, "Wow, I did not see that coming."

That's a little bit of how I feel about Palm Sunday - So let's get into our text for the morning, Read Luke 19:28

"After Jesus had said this, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem."

You'll notice He went "up to", which was symbolic of the City of God. The word Jerusalem means, **"They will see "The Wholeness" or "They will feel the awe of The Completeness"'**

These are important pieces of the story, and they lead us to this bigger question;

****So, why was Jesus heading to Jerusalem in the first place?***

The answer is this: He was going to celebrate Passover.

Passover is the largest Jewish holiday/festival. It's a celebration and remembrance of the Exodus story, when God freed the Jews from slavery in Egypt.

Passover dinner, the Last Supper, was Jesus' last meal with His disciples. (Traditionally recognized on Maundy Thursday of Holy Week)

Here's where it gets interesting... Jesus not only arrived in Jerusalem as the rightful King, but He also came as the sacrificial lamb...

John 1:35 says, "**The next day John was there again with 2 of his disciples.**"

When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, 'Look! The Lamb of God!' Here are a couple of surprising facts about Jesus in Jerusalem during Holy Week.

- "The Passover lamb (Jesus) was to be chosen and set apart on the 10th day of the first month of Nissan.
 - Fulfillment: On the 10th day of Nissan, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey and was hailed as the King of the Jews.
- The lamb was to be inspected for four days until the 14th day of the month for any spot or blemish that might disqualify it as the sacrificial lamb.
 - Fulfillment: Jesus openly taught in the Holy Temple and synagogues until the 14th day of the month and no fault could be found in Him.
- At the appointed time, the Passover lambs were slain by the whole congregation of Israel.
 - Fulfillment: Jesus, Lamb of God, was delivered and publicly killed on a Roman execution stake as the Passover lambs were being slaughtered.^{2"}

Read 19:29-36

²⁸ And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

²⁹ When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰ saying, “Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat.

Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ you shall say this: ‘The Lord has need of it.’”

³² So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. ³³ And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, “Why are you untying the colt?”

³⁴ And they said, “The Lord has need of it.” ³⁵ And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶ And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road.

19:29-30 - As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, 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. Untie it and bring it here.”

- No one had ever ridden it - The King's donkey was exclusively for the King alone and no one else.

19:31-32 - If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ Tell him, ‘The Lord needs it.’” Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them.

19:33-34 - **As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” They replied, “The Lord needs it.”**

- A colt IS a donkey. It’s a young donkey.
- Jesus rides the donkey now, as a humble sign of peace. He comes later riding a white horse (Revelation 19)

19:35 - **They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it.**

19:36 - **As He went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.**

- The cloak throwing was an honor paid to a King.

19:37-38 - **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:**

- This group of traveling disciples and pilgrims rightly identifies Jesus for the miracle working messiah that He is.
- This group could see Jesus as the Messiah - King He was.

19:38 - **“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”
“Peace in heaven and glory on the highest!”**

- From Psalm 118
- Hosanna! Hosanna!

19:39 - **Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”**

- The people of God are praising God with their lips, and the religious leaders want to shut it all down with theirs. This seems to be “on brand” for the religious leaders in the time of Christ.

19:40 - **"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."**

- I take this as a powerful way to say, you cannot stop this... And even if you try to, the very rocks themselves would cry out... That's how evident it is that the rightful King has come to Jerusalem. That's how many of the signs and prophecies are all pointing to Jesus, entering Jerusalem, as a King.

19:41-42 - **As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, He wept over it 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."**

- In the Greek language, Know - ginōskō – properly, to know, especially through personal experience (first-hand acquaintance). The Pharisees couldn't perceive who Jesus was. They hadn't experienced Him... In contrast to all the disciples with Jesus who rightly recognized exactly who He was. They knew Him.

19:43-44 - **"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, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."**

- The Romans did come and destroy Jerusalem in AD 70
- Recognize - Same word used before in verse 42... The painful truth is that the Pharisees and other religious leaders couldn't see - they couldn't perceive that their Messiah was there in front of them. This point is an important one as we consider the surprising nature of the Kingdom together.

Now, on the one hand, as I recollect this story this morning, I just find it shocking that they couldn't SEE Jesus.

For all their study and understanding of the scripture, Jesus came riding into the City on a donkey, just like Zechariah 9:9 said He would.

Jesus had healed the sick, restored the sight of the blind, made the deaf speak and the lame walk, just as they knew the Messiah would...

In fact, just a couple of miles outside of Jerusalem, Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead!

Jesus did all these things, and they couldn't see Him... He wasn't who they expected Him to be.

On the other hand, I realize that I'm not so different. I wonder how many times Jesus has been working through some situation, or offering provision in my own life, and I just couldn't see that it was Him. I couldn't see Him right in front of me.

Maybe you can relate? Maybe you have felt a similar tension in your faith?

And as we look back on Palm Sunday, we're able to understand what was going on.

We can recognize and perceive Jesus through the events of Holy Week, Good Friday, and even Easter morning.

In hindsight we can clearly see that God was working all along, He's always been faithful and true.

I know there are people here today who are in the midst of painful suffering, confusing circumstances, grief, loss, fear, and doubt.

There are others who are blinded by their own success and achievement. Be careful not to be too sure of yourself. Be careful...

Don't get bitter. Don't harden your heart towards God.
Keep your hands open and willing to receive the Surprising Kingdom of God.

Be willing to have God show up in ways you didn't expect, looking like someone or something you couldn't perceive or imagine.

He might not show up like you expected Him to, or asked Him to, but He's there and He's always working for the good.

Be careful that you don't get too bitter or frustrated.
Be careful that you don't get too prideful and sure of yourself.
Be willing to receive the surprising Kingdom of God.

Conclusion

As we wrap up our time today I want to give you a few specific ways I see the surprising Kingdom of God at work... with the encouragement to keep your hands open to the Kingdom and open to receiving it as such.

The People

- Review Matthew 5:3-12
- The surprising thing about this is that the people Jesus identifies as being "blessed" are not the usual suspects of worldly blessing. However, if the kingdom of God is an "upside-down" one, it would make sense that blessing looks

different too. We've got to be willing to be surprised by the various kinds of people God will bring into our lives and maybe even the types of people God has formed us into...

The Process

- Review Matthew 5:21-7:6
- The surprising thing about the process that Jesus shares in the Sermon on the Mount is that He reforms and reframes much of the Jewish teaching. He focuses on the heart as opposed to the end result. We've got to be willing to accept deep, divine healing as God works on our hearts.

The Plan

- Matthew 7:24-27
- Many of us have plans and designs for how our lives are to be structured and run. At some point, we all learn that our best laid plans and purposes are nothing compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ and living wholly for Him. If we build our lives on anything else, we will falter and possibly fail. Christ is the solid foundation we all need and we must be willing to humble ourselves and relinquish our plans to His plan. You may be surprised by the ways in which God leads your life.

With that in mind, here's my final exhortation for you...

Lamentations 3:23-24 says,

"The faithful love of the LORD never ends!

His mercies never cease.

Great is his faithfulness;

his mercies begin afresh each morning."

Every morning sunrise brings new mercy, fresh grace, and the daily reminder of God's unfailing love for all of His creation.

Are you willing to be surprised by God this week?

Let's pray together.