

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message

March 29, 2026. *"What do you want? questions that question us". "Why are you crying? Who are you looking for?"*

I Intro.

It's Palm Sunday. The remembrance of Jesus entering Jerusalem for the final time. And the beginning of Passion Week. The last week in the life of Jesus. Today's message will prepare us for Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday. We're glad you've chosen to use this resource. You'll want to keep up with everything that's happening at NCC. Stay connected through our social media to keep up with everything that's going on. Welcome to our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey. We don't want you to miss out on anything. We consider you part of our community. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are fully committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know.

II Sunday.

Let's do an exercise in missing the point.

Have you ever completely misread a situation or an event?

What caused you to misread that situation?

Usually it's unrealistic or misaligned expectations. You thought you had things figured out. Had SOME information, connected SOME dots. But it didn't make the picture you thought it was going to be. This is why we often misread a situation. We would rather hold onto false beliefs, expectations, than try to find new ones. This is from a podcast with Trevor Noah and Eugen Khoza, and Arthur C. Brooks.

We want to know why things happen. (coherence)

We want our life to matter to someone. (significance)

We want our life to work to be towards something that makes the things we do important. Why am I doing the things I'm doing? (purpose)

When we can answer these three questions in a way that realigns our expectations with the heart and work of God, we can discover peace. And put this Palm Sunday story into its proper perspective.

Not being able to satisfy these questions is often why we find ourselves disappointed with our faith.

Can I say that out loud? Our faith being our understanding of who God is, and what life looks like as a follower of Jesus. And that's because we tend to backfill our theology (post hoc- after the fact). We find and use scripture to support our desires, already held beliefs, rather than letting scripture be the starting point of where our beliefs begin. We'll just have to admit we all do this.

Today is Palm Sunday. It's the story of Jesus entering Jerusalem. And the misreading, misinterpreting of this event by the people of that day. Based on their unrealistic, misaligned expectations of who Jesus was supposed to be. And we have to honestly face the tendency to do this

ourselves. This story is a gift revealing the heart of who God is, and the purpose of the life of Jesus. Palm Sunday calls us to lay all of our beliefs out on the table to make sure our expectations, wants hopes around the person of Jesus, starts with a serious approach to scripture, and then builds our expectations around that.

There is a duality to the triumphal entry. A people who wanted to celebrate what they passionately believed was about to happen. And then there is the humble work of Jesus that was reframing what the people wanted to happen into how Jesus was reworking what he was doing.

And— we're going to weave a truth from each one of our children's books as we talk about Jesus entering into the city. This will explain our following of Jesus that fits more closely with what Jesus was teaching. Realigning our expectations of Jesus, with why he really came. This will set us up for our Good Friday service and Easter next week.

II Scripture.

We're going to read the classic scripture about this event. This scripture demands we face our tendency to miss the point. But we want to also try to give it some historical context, and then dig into what it says to us today. And it will set us up to go through this upcoming Passion Week towards Good Friday. We'll talk about resurrection Sunday later.

Matthew 21:1-11. *As Jesus and the disciples approached Jerusalem, they came to the town of Bethphage on the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent two of them on ahead. "Go into the village over there," he said. "As soon as you enter it, you will see a donkey tied there, with its colt beside it. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone asks what you are doing, just say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will immediately let you take them." This took place to fulfill the prophecy that said, "Tell the people of Jerusalem, 'Look, your King is coming to you. He is humble, riding on a donkey— riding on a donkey's colt."*^[b]

The two disciples did as Jesus commanded. They brought the donkey and the colt to him and threw their garments over the colt, and he sat on it. Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road ahead of him, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Jesus was in the center of the procession, and the people all around him were shouting, "Praise God^[d] for the Son of David! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the LORD! Praise God in highest heaven!"

The entire city of Jerusalem was in an uproar as he entered. "Who is this?" they asked. And the crowds replied, "It's Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

[b] Zech 9:9. This was a long established understanding of who the Messiah would be.

[d] "save now, please deliver us". Such an important point. People were saying and expecting one thing. Jesus was doing something else. We HAVE TO come face to face with this disconnect.

Reframing the story of the triumphal entry. Again, we need to think about how each of these are both universally held practices. To impose our own desires over an event. And very particular to unrealistic (unspiritual) misaligned expectations. The struggle between what Jesus was actually trying to do, and what we want him to do. And we're going back to each one of our children's books for this.

1. The people wanted a powerful king to reestablish their religion for everyone, rather than personally follow the way of Jesus. This is a constant battle through all of history. And obviously something we see in our society today. The Israelites were very out in the open about this in 1 Samuel 18. They wanted a powerful king to rule their country. To give them legitimacy. No

condemnation for those of us who are looking to our earthly leaders to bring about the world we want. We see the way the world is. God seems to be moving really slowly to establish his Kingdom. So let's 'help' God by taking control, pushing through what God said he was doing— but with early means. But wanted to plow through others to get their way. What they got was a servant who was coming in humbly. **A Nyasha not a Manyara.** Power is such a powerful temptation and draw.

How did the people so profoundly miss what Jesus was saying?

Last week in the story of the two on the road to Emmaus, Jesus called them foolish because everything was out in the open. They just didn't put it together. People back then missed it, because they let their own expectations and desires interpret scripture, rather than let the words of Jesus be their starting point. And we have to see ourselves in this story, and realize we do it all the time too.

So— on this Palm Sunday. What are your expectations for your beliefs for change? Will your faith on Palm Sunday be dependent on earthly leaders to carry out your wishes, or will it depend on YOUR daily practice of humble servanthood.

2. The people wanted a sword. Jesus would give them a cross. The way a king, an earthly leader, gets things done, is by threats, coercion, force, power. Admit it— we are a violent people. I don't mean only physical violence. Violence is the desire to build, acquire, take over something from another person, that gives us leverage to impose our will. If we can just win the... take over the... have more of us than them then... We see it all the time. When people get a weapon, to acquire this power, then there's no need to talk anymore. A sword, power, might, removes the desire or need to accommodate and listen. We can bully our way into the world.

But the people who waved their palm branches saying "*save us...please deliver us*", got a cross rather than a sword. **Love given away freely. A Charlotte in her relationship with Wilbur.**

Paul tells us that our battles aren't about flesh and blood. And we ALL live in the fight against flesh and blood. People are our enemies. And if we can defeat them, we can put our understanding of a world in place.

So— on this Palm Sunday. What are your expectations for your beliefs for change? Will your faith on Palm Sunday be carried out through a sword, or by the cross.

3. The people wanted instant results. An outcome, rather than a process. We want to overthrow what we don't like...at any cost or with any effort. But the people got a painful process of becoming real through difficulties. **Pinocchio learning to become real. Not through chasing all sorts of things trying to find meaning and purpose, but through struggle.** Sadly, we are drawn towards a magic genie Jesus. "*Jesus save us, deliver us from*", rather than "*be with us through*".

So— on this Palm Sunday. What are your expectations for your beliefs for change?

Will your faith on Palm Sunday be the impatient push for what you want to happen, or the long work of allowing God's plan to work out... in God's timeline through you.

4. The people wanted a big show. The spectacular. Rather than the sacred. Jesus wanted to come into the city quietly, humbly. Vs 5. "*Humbly riding on a donkey*". This was a sacred humble movement of Jesus. The people wanted to make Jesus entering into Jerusalem to be THE public announcement that things were going to change. But instead they got a quiet walk in the snow. No big show, no royal announcement. No battalion of troops. No conquering army. They tried to make a big spectacle about Jesus coming into Jerusalem. "*NOW what are you going to do?!*" Here is the

showdown. He's finally going to let those heathens have it. The people wanted this big showdown, confrontation. Jesus was coming into Jerusalem, as a sacred act of humble obedience to his father.

So— on this Palm Sunday. What are your expectations for your beliefs for change?

Will your faith on Palm Sunday reject the spectacular and more towards the sacred.

B. Passion Week. (In the Matthew account there is a lot that happened after this) Jesus addresses economic injustice by turning over the tables in the synagogue. He withers a poor fig tree, because it had leaves like it was going to produce something, but had no fruit. Tells lots of parables, (stories like children's books), about people outside of the church. People we judge and condemn will be better received than the religious people. He says those who follow him will be welcome to the wedding feast. And we get the famous passage that all of our rules, laws, regulations, and religious expectations can be condensed to just two. LOVE GOD. LOVE OTHERS. That's it.

III Challenge.

Okay, we have lots of info now. **So, what do we do with this week?** This is how we live out our faith. And this is how we enter into this week. This is the Jesus we come every week to worship. In our ***“Prepping for the Trip”*** series, the first Sunday was choosing your destination. Before you could do all the things you need to do in taking a trip, the first thing we talked about was choosing where you wanted to go. And EVERYTHING you did after that was totally dependent on where you were going. And we read this passage.

Luke 9:51-53 When the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him; but the people would not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem.

Palm Sunday, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, is where his journey was always headed towards. In the early days of the journey of Jesus, people had a difficult time wrapping their minds around what Jesus was about. And it seems that in the end they still did. And we have to admit we wrestle with who we want Jesus to be. We have to come to terms with our misaligned expectations..We want a Chuck Norris Jesus. We want police officer Jesus. We want flashy, showy, President/King Jesus to eradicate all the people we don't like, and put all of our preferred laws into place.

But as our children's books teach us, Jesus is showing us the little simple things he taught, and still is teaching us. We get humble, servant, humbly entering Jerusalem... headed to the cross. What Palm Sunday pushes us to do is recognize; we have to approach this holy week understanding that it's through pain, struggle, sacred humility, we find Jesus. We are; **Nyasha. Charlotte. Pinocchio. Peter.** Palm Sunday is a big deal. This is really important. All the questions we asked at the beginning about life are answered in this story. For your life to grow and cultivate a faith that will bring such an alignment with God, so that your life will have understanding, significance, meaning, and purpose.

So...how will you journey through this upcoming holy week?