

## **Digging Deeper: Palm Sunday, April 2, 2023**

Matthew 21:1-17; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-44; John 12:1-19

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### **Day One: Palm Sunday Background**

As we begin this edition of Digging Deeper some explanation needs to be given for the differences in the Gospel accounts of Palm Sunday. Each writer had an audience in mind for their writing. It is generally accepted that Mark's gospel was the first gospel put in writing, followed by Matthew and Luke with John writing last.

Matthew's intended readers were Jewish, and he is most concerned with pointing out that Jesus is the Messiah of Jewish hope. Luke, being a gentile doctor, is writing to address the Gnostic (a Greek word for knowledge focusing on salvation through the discovery and fostering of secret inner knowledge) and philosophical misconceptions concerning the Person of Christ. John, the last writer pictures Christ as the Eternal Logos who became flesh and thus revealed the Father to men.

One reason this is important for us to observe is that the Gospel message should take into account who it is being presented to, as that indicates how we should share that message. This doesn't mean we change the gospel, rather it means we need to be sure the message speaks to the person in their context. We need to be attentive to who we are presenting the gospel and be sure to answer their objections or hindrances they would have to it. Answering objections to the gospel is imperative when we share the good news. If we ignore these objections or hindrances we inadvertently shut the door.

A plan for us to take in this endeavor is to prepare ourselves to share the Gospel. Do you have a plan for presenting the gospel? Here is a suggestion for using your Bible to share the good news. Underline or highlight verses you need to share the good news. If you are using the Roman Road (a simple, yet often used plan), highlight the verses and then be sure to put the next verse reference in the margin so you can quickly move to it. Here are the verses in the order many have used:

- All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God ( Romans 3:23 )
- The wages of sin is [eternal] death ( Romans 6:23 ).
- The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord ( Romans 6:23 b).
- Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead ( Romans 10:9 ).
- Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved(Romans 10:13)
- The results of salvation (Romans 5:1)

Another plan that could be used is called the Four Spiritual Laws ([What are the four spiritual laws? | GotQuestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org/What-are-the-four-spiritual-laws/)). Take the time to go the web and review this plan. It will help flesh out your presentation of the Gospel. Don't be afraid to develop your own plan being sure to include these important earmarks of the Gospel.

### **Day Two: Mark's Account Mark 11:1-11**

Read Mark's account of the events of Palm Sunday. Mark is an apparent eyewitness of what took place on this momentous day. His account reads like a historian reporting the facts without commentary. One observation we can make about his account is the Holy Spirit directed him to write with his observations. This is a characteristic of Mark's gospel throughout. Some have called Mark's gospel "The postcard presentation of the life of Christ."

As you read Mark's account what moved you most? Certainly, this was an enormous moment in the lives of the disciples as well as the people who lived in Jerusalem. This was something that could not be ignored by the people but even more pointedly, the religious leaders in Jerusalem. This moment in time had to lead to a great concern for these leaders. What will be their reactions in the coming days in the life of this city?

While you read was your heart warmed by the adoration given to Jesus? What does it mean to you to hear people say, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!" (Mk 11:9-10). How can you show your adoration of Jesus during this holy season?

### **Day Three: Luke's Account Luke 19:29-44**

Read Luke's account of the events of Palm Sunday. One thing stood out to me as I read this account was the importance of the role of the disciples in this momentous day. They were an example of obedience to Jesus' instruction. They were also leaders in the exaltation of Jesus. Reread verses 36 – 38. They wanted people to know what Jesus had done and who he was. They began the chorus of praise for the person of Jesus.

Read John 14:15-31. These words spoken by Jesus were days after Palm Sunday, yet the disciples knew that obedience to Jesus was integral to relationship with him and they desired that relationship immensely. Let's ask ourselves the question: Do we desire our relationship with Jesus enough that obedience to his command is done without question?

The disciples were questioned when they began to untie the colt. Were they in jeopardy of people thinking they were stealing the colt? Even if they were, they upheld their allegiance to Jesus. Jesus needed the colt and then told those questioning them, they would return the colt. There was no need for them to fear the disciples stealing a valuable possession, Jesus had already told the disciples the colt was to be returned. This would be a valuable witness to others. The colt's return would testify to the disciples' obedience.

Have you thought about what obedience in your life shows to those around you? How does your family and friends rate your obedience? Dare you ask those closest to you their observations about your obedience? What changes would you need to make in your life to be a model of obedience to others?

#### **Day Four: Matthew's Account Matthew 21:1-17**

Read Matthew's account of the events of Palm Sunday. As was mentioned previously, Matthew is writing to his Jewish audience and notice he quotes the prophet Zechariah (see Zechariah 9:9) as well as the prophet Isaiah (see Isaiah 62:11). This subtle reminder of the salvation of the Jewish people is front and center in Matthew's account of Christ's entry to Jerusalem. Martin Luther commenting on Christ's entry writes, "He is presented as sheer grace, humility, and goodness, and whoever believes that of him is blessed. Look at him! He rides no stallion, which is a war animal, and he comes not with fearful pomp and power, but sits on a donkey, which is no war animal but which is ready for burdens of work that will help human beings." Another commentator (Frederick Dale Bruner) writes, Matthew "combines exactly the two great realities always required for a right understanding of Jesus according to Matthew: Jesus is *"king,"* royal, from God ("he comes to you") and in all these *high* senses, "Messiah." At the same time, he is the *"humble"* king, unpretentious ("riding on a donkey"), and only in these *lower* senses a properly understood Messiah." (Matthew: A Commentary, The ChurchBook) Matthew is presenting a humble Jesus in contrast to the reactions of those around him.

Why would this be of value to us today? Jesus was and is worthy of all of the praise men could give him. In fact, Matthew reminds us the whole city was stirred by Jesus coming into the city. The conversation was "Who is this man?" The answer? The prophet from Nazareth. They missed who he was, and Matthew is reminding them He is their king, coming on a donkey bringing salvation to them and all mankind.

Looking back at this day we can appreciate the celebration of Christ coming to their city. We have the benefit of experiencing what Christ wanted to bring to them – salvation! Why don't you take the time today to praise him for who he is, and what he has done in your life. Instead of coming with your petitions today, come to him with your praise.

#### **Day Five: John's Account John 12:1-19**

Read John's account of the events of Palm Sunday.

In addition, read John's introduction to his gospel message (John 1:1-5). With utmost clarity he presents Jesus as divine – the Word being made flesh to live among us for the purpose of bringing life to us.

John tells us of the entry to the city but then adds some curious comments. "The disciples did not understand these things at first, then they remembered..." They remembered what had been written about him. And then John adds even more commentary to this historical day. "The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign." (John 12:18). The sign was the raising of

Lazarus from the dead! It is no wonder the Pharisees would respond by saying we are wasting our time opposing Jesus – “the world has gone after him.” (John 12:19)

What a startlingly comment from the Pharisees – the world has gone after him. This same crowd would in a few days call for his crucifixion. How quickly their hearts have changed from adoration to contempt, from praise to derision.

Why the change? It appears they quickly forgot what Jesus had done. If we are to avoid such change within ourselves, we need to constantly remind ourselves of what Jesus had done in our life. Here’s a action step for us to take: tell someone daily what Jesus has done in our life! To help you do that take the time to start a list (which you can add to regularly) of what Jesus had done. A list like this can not only be a reminder of what you can say but refresh your heart about what Jesus has done and continues to do today.