

PALM SUNDAY: KNOWING YOUR MISSION

DEVOTIONAL AND STUDY GUIDE

In this sermon, Pastor Josh emphasizes the importance of staying true to one's mission in serving Jesus, undistracted by the fleeting approval of others, through the lens of Jesus' Triumphal Entry and the contrasting reactions of those around Him.

Primary Bible Passage:

- **Psalm 118:24-26 (ESV)**

Study Questions:

Section 1: Embracing the Mission Beyond the Applause:

Pastor Josh navigates through Palm Sunday, a day that celebrated Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem—a moment marked by praise yet overshadowed by the impending shift from worship and acclaim to rejection. It invites us to think about our faithfulness in our spiritual mission (even when the compliments, praises, or good times cease) by looking closely at how Jesus, his disciples, and the onlookers responded to this event.

READ:

- **Philippians 2:5-11:** This passage, often referred to as the Kenosis hymn, offers insight into Jesus' humility and obedience to God's will, even to the point of death on a cross, which serves as a model for our own mission-focused lives.
- **John 12:12-19:** Here, John provides a vivid narrative of Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, contrasting the joyful shouts of "Hosanna!" with the Pharisees' growing concern over Jesus' popularity. This passage prompts us to reflect on our own perceptions of Jesus and His mission. Do we recognize and embrace the full scope of His kingdom work, or are we confined to our expectations of who He should be and what He should do for us?

Reflect on a time when external approval influenced your decisions. How does this compare to staying true to a mission despite others' expectations?

Consider the concept of "Hosanna" as a plea for salvation. How do you apply this cry in the context of your own life and spiritual journey?

Digging Deeper: The Word "Hosanna"

"Hosanna" is derived from the Hebrew phrase הוֹשִׁיעַ נָא (Hoshia-na) found in Psalm 118:25, which translates to "Save us, please." Initially a cry for help, it became a shout of hope and praise. During the Triumphal Entry, the crowd's use of "Hosanna" reflects their expectation for Jesus as a deliverer, though in a more worldly sense.

Section 2: The Triumphal Entry: A Test of True Kingship:

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the crowd's actions – spreading cloaks and branches on the road – symbolized their recognition of Him as king, echoing the Messianic expectations knitted throughout Scripture. Yet, the nature of Jesus' kingship was greatly different from worldly expectations, focused not on overthrowing Roman rule but on conquering sin and death through humility and sacrifice.

READ:

- **Zechariah 9:9:** Foretells the coming of Zion's king, humble and riding on a donkey, which Matthew cites as being fulfilled in Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.
- **Isaiah 53:** This prophetic passage highlights the suffering servant aspect of the Messiah, offering a contrast to the triumphant king expected by many in Israel.

How does Jesus' approach to His kingship challenge our understanding of power and leadership?

In what ways can we embody humility and service in our own lives, mirroring Jesus' example?

Digging Deeper: The Symbolism of the Donkey

In ancient Near Eastern cultures, kings riding donkeys during times of peace was symbolic, contrasting with the horse's association of war (1 Kings 1:33-34). Jesus' choice of a donkey, specifically a colt, as prophesied in Zechariah 9:9, highlights His mission to bring peace and salvation, not as a political revolutionary, but as the Prince of Peace inaugurating a spiritual kingdom. This act was a deliberate fulfillment of prophecy, demonstrating Jesus' messianic role as a bringer of peace, not through warfare but through the establishment of God's kingdom.

- 1. How does Jesus' choice of the donkey, a symbol of peace, challenge conventional expectations of leadership and power?**
- 2. Reflecting on Zechariah 9:9, what significance does the symbol of peace hold for you in understanding Jesus' kingship?**

Jesus faced ultimate rejection for a higher purpose. How can we find courage in our lives to face rejection for what we believe is right?

Digging Deeper: The Messianic Expectations

The Jewish people of the first century had developed specific expectations for the Messiah, heavily influenced by their circumstances under Roman rule and their interpretation of prophetic texts. They anticipated a political and military leader who would restore Israel's national sovereignty and elevate it above its oppressors, as suggested by passages like Isaiah 9:6-7 and Daniel 7:13-14. However, Jesus' mission was significantly different from these expectations. He focused on spiritual salvation, the reconciliation between God and humanity, and the establishment of a kingdom not defined by geopolitical borders, but by faith and allegiance to God. This divergence led to misunderstanding and rejection, as His mission did not align with the worldly liberation that many had hoped for.

- 1. How do our personal expectations of Jesus' role in our lives compare to the first-century expectations of the Messiah?**

How does the hymn "Blessed Assurance" speak to your experience of faith and commitment to following Jesus?

Digging Deeper: The Cornerstone Metaphor

The metaphor of the cornerstone is deeply embedded in biblical tradition, signifying the foundational role of Jesus in the church and in our lives as believers. In ancient architecture, the cornerstone was the first stone laid, determining the position and alignment of the entire structure. Similarly, Ephesians 2:19-22 describes Jesus as the cornerstone of the church, through whom the whole building, joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. This imagery underscores the importance of Christ's teachings, death, and resurrection as the basis for Christian faith and community. The rejection of Jesus by the religious leaders of His time, as prophesied in Psalm 118:22 and reiterated in Matthew 21:42-43, ironically affirmed His role as the essential foundation of God's Kingdom.

- 1. Reflect on Ephesians 2:19-22 and the concept of Jesus as the cornerstone. How does this image influence your understanding of the structure and unity of the church?**
- 2. Considering the cornerstone's critical role in construction, how can we ensure that our lives and our church are aligned with Jesus, our cornerstone?**

Next Steps

1. **Dedicate Time for Bible Study:** Schedule regular times for personal Bible study centered around the narratives of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, His mission, and His path to the cross, as depicted in the Gospels. Aim to understand the depth of Jesus' commitment to His mission and the temporary nature of human approval, reflecting on how these truths apply to your own life.
2. **Pray for Strength and Clarity:** Dedicate time each day to pray for the strength to remain unwavering in your commitment to God's mission for your life. Ask for clarity in recognizing the difference between worldly approval and the lasting approval that comes from living in accordance with God's will.
3. **Journal on Mission & Identity:** Begin (or continue) a journaling practice focused on exploring your personal mission and identity in Christ. Contemplate how at times the expectations that we face from society may influence your own actions and decisions, and how you can more closely align your life with the example set by Jesus, prioritizing spiritual over worldly validation.
4. **Share the Message:** Share any insights or things you learned from the sermon with friends, family, or on social media. Spreading awareness about the importance of Israel from a biblical perspective is so important, especially in our society today.
5. **Explore Further Sermon Themes:** Make a plan to dive deeper into the themes presented in Pastor Josh's sermon, using additional resources like books, podcasts, or articles that expand on the concept of living a mission-driven life amidst a changing world.