

Palm Sunday

Text: John 12:1-15

Title: God's Perfect Timing

My wife and I had a good laugh about "perfect timing" this week...

Palm Sunday is all about God's perfect timing as this day, this event ushers in the last week of Jesus earthly life. Its known as the "Triumphal Entry"

Palm Sunday serves as a great reminder of that God is in control and that His timing is absolutely perfect in human history.

Galatians 4:4, **"But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law."**

Romans 5:6, **"When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners."**

God's perfect timing does two things for us that

we want to keep in mind as we study His Word today:

1. It grows our faith as we learn to wait on the Lord and to trust in Him
2. That God can be trusted. If God says it, that settles it. You can bank on it.

Psalm 31:15 reminds us, **“My future is in your hands.”**

Today, we celebrate Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter when Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, presenting Himself openly as the King of the Jews.

Palm Sunday is the beginning of the last week of Jesus first coming as He completes His mission, to live a perfect sinless life then go to the Cross in our place securing eternal life for all who come to Him by faith.

The last week of Jesus life is known as the Passion week as it deals with Jesus suffering. All that He endured so that you and I might

have eternal life.

In John 20:31 John wrote the reason why he penned his gospel account, **“But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name”**

As you study John’s Gospel, 1/2 of the Gospel of John is dedicated to the last week of Jesus life.

All the Gospel writers placed great emphasis on the last week of Jesus life... We should too.

89 chapters all together in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

4 chapters cover the first 30 years of Jesus life

85 chapters cover the last 3 1/2 of Jesus life

29 chapters cover the last week of Jesus life

All 4 Gospels cover the last week of Jesus life so that makes it important for us to study it too.

The backstory of Palm Sunday takes us back some 2000 years in Jerusalem, where the city would be overflowing with people, some historians tell us as many as 2 million gathered there to commemorate Passover, an event that had taken place 1500 years before...at the time of the Exodus.

You remember the story in the book of Exodus that while God's people were being held captive, the hardness of Pharaoh's heart caused God to send a series of plagues upon Egypt, the tenth plague being the death of the firstborn in every home. The only way a family could escape death was to slaughter a lamb and mark the top, sides, and bottom of their door posts with its blood, thereby painting a prophetic picture of the Cross that would one day save all mankind from the curse of sin and death.

John 12:1-16

Verse 1: **“Six days before the Passover**

**celebration began, Jesus arrived in Bethany, the home of Lazarus—the man he had raised from the dead.”**

6 days before would make this a Saturday... Bethany was a little town just over the hill about 2 miles from Jerusalem and is where Lazarus house was.

Its the 10th day of Nissan and on this day Jewish families would pick a lamb on the 10th day that on the 14th day they would sacrifice for the Passover. For 3 days, they would examine the lamb.

Keep in mind the date, April 6, 32 A.D.

I would have loved to be there at this dinner party wouldn't you? Imagine what was happening there... smelling touching, imitating Lazarus as he came forth from the dead...

Verse 2: **“A dinner was prepared in Jesus’ honor. Martha served, and Lazarus was**

**among those who ate with him.”**

Once you have had a death or near death experience where Jesus saves your life you stay pretty close after that... Lazarus was also being celebrated too. He was an honored guest. After all, Lazarus was living proof Jesus could raise the dead!

**Verse 3: “Then Mary took a twelve-ounce jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard, and she anointed Jesus’ feet with it, wiping his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance**

It was customary for someone, a servant to wash the feet of the guests upon entering a home but what took place here was special, it was worship.

Don’t you love watching people who are free in their worship of Jesus. I don’t mean people who are trying to draw attention to themselves during worship but who are seeking to draw attention to Jesus. That is what true worship is.

Worshipping Jesus regardless of what others might think.

Trust me, everyone has an opinion about everything... Mary doesn't care.

Mary doesn't hold anything back and I want to encourage you this Easter week.

Do you ever feel as if you are holding back in worship? Ever feel like you have so much more to give Jesus? Our problem is we are so concerned about what others think and what they say. We are easily offended because we have too high of an elevation of self and not a high enough elevation of Jesus. Oh to be like Mary...

Get in the word, let the Word get into you. Read again what Jesus went through for you on the Cross. Ask the Lord to give you understanding of just how wretched and poor you really were without Jesus and what a difference resurrection power can make in your own life.

Here is a great question to ask ourselves this morning as we head into an Easter week.

Question: Are you living a life of gratitude? Is your gratitude expressed in your worship of Jesus. It was for Mary.

Tragedy is not seeing Jesus in your life...  
Triumph is seeing Jesus and meeting with Him everywhere.

Mary took this costly oil of spikenard which was worth a years wage of the average worker and she spent it all on Jesus! She gave Him her all.

Verses 4-9: **“4 But Judas Iscariot, the disciple who would soon betray him, said, 5 “That perfume was worth a year’s wages. It should have been sold and the money given to the poor.” 6 Not that he cared for the poor—he was a thief, and since he was in charge of the disciples’ money, he often stole some for himself. 7 Jesus replied, “Leave her alone. She did this in preparation**

**for my burial. 8 You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.”**

**9 When all the people heard of Jesus’ arrival, they flocked to see him and also to see Lazarus, the man Jesus had raised from the dead.”**

Lazarus was causing quite a stir... He who was dead and stinketh was now alive and well.

**Verse 10: “Then the leading priests decided to kill Lazarus, too”**

All Lazarus did was get sick and die and Jesus brings him back to life and the religious Jews want to kill him again to destroy the evidence of what they know to be true. People had seen this happened.

Isn't it true today too. People whose lives that openly testify of Jesus and point to the resurrection are often sought out to silence. The good news is the gospel can't be silenced.

Hide the evidence! Or in this case kill it.

Verse 11: **“for it was because of him that many of the people had deserted them and believed in Jesus.”**

They blamed Lazarus for people getting saved... The guy won't shut up about being dead and Jesus bringing him to life...

Imagine the reenactment of the events...

I was sick, and I felt this cold... Next thing I am hearing my name... I hear Jesus calling me and then this warm light envelopes me and like a rabbit I start hoping out of this tomb because the burial cloth is so tight... I smell really good... all Lazarus was doing was testifying of Jesus.

What has Jesus done for you?

Living a resurrected life and being open to saying something about it to others can have an amazing effect on other people's lives too. We

are called to be “Fisher’s of Men” and the best bait is always live bait.

### **Point 3: The fulfillment**

In John 12, Jesus enters Jerusalem on what many scholars believe was April 6, AD 32, presented as King.

The timing is not accidental; it is the fulfillment of prophecy.

Verses 12-13: **“12 The next day, the news that Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem swept through the city. A large crowd of Passover visitors 13 took palm branches and went down the road to meet him. They shouted, “Praise God! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the LORD! Hail to the King of Israel!”**

3 mandatory feasts were required.

1. Passover
2. Pentecost
3. Tabernacles

Though the people were in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover it's obvious that Jesus is more appealing than religion as a great multitude came to see Him and honor Him.

They took palm branches... and cried out, in some translations it says, "Hosanna" "Praise God! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the LORD! Hail to the King of Israel!"

Hosanna...means, "Save Now" or "Oh Lord save us"

The palm tree is an important symbol of victory for Israel after God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

After Israel got out of Egypt, the Lord commanded that they celebrate a feast in honor of the freedom they had from the hands of their captors who enslaved them for hundreds of

years. From then on, the people of Israel celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles which took place for seven days. (Throughout this period, the Israelites dwell in booths made of palm branches, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; Leviticus 23: 40-43).

What was happening that brought the people to come and meet Jesus and honor Him as the one who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel?

The news of Jesus miracles and the people seeing for themselves the transformation of human lives.

Jesus had just days earlier healed two blind men...one of them Bartimaeus and then Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. Imagine watching the people who follow Jesus. One changed life after another...

There are 42 miracles listed in the Gospels... Imagine watching this parade come into town.

1. There you have the water pot Jesus turned water into wine...
2. There's the Roman official's son who was healed
3. There's the net that caught all the fish
4. I think that's Peter's mother-in-law who was healed.
5. Look at all the people set free from demons and oppression
6. There's the guy who was a leper until Jesus touched him.
7. People raised from the dead, given sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf

Just one miracle after another...

Scripture is more reliable than opinion.  
Whatever God says will come to pass.

When the Israelites waited for the coming of their King carried by a donkey, they also looked forward to the fulfillment of the prophecies. The Jews looking unto Jesus were also seeking the hope set before them.

Many knew what the word of the Lord said.

The King comes on schedule.

On the day Jesus made his Triumphal Entry, Jesus publicly presented himself as the promised King, fulfilling the expectation of Zechariah 9:9 and the time line in Daniel 9. He didn't want people to miss it.

Psalm 118,

A direct quote from the Bible...

**Psalm 118:24-26 “This is the day the LORD has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it. 25 Please, LORD, please save us. Please, LORD, please give us success. 26 Bless the one who comes in the name of the LORD. We bless you from the house of the LORD.”**

Psalm 118:24: this is the day... we sing that verse in church as if it means, this is the day, like today, its nice outside and we sing a happy song... In reality this is a prophetic Word about

a very specific day in human history, the day Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey.

John 12: 14-15: **“Jesus found a young donkey and rode on it, fulfilling the prophecy that said: 15 “Don’t be afraid, people of Jerusalem. Look, your King is coming, riding on a donkey’s colt.”**

Sitting on a donkey... these things were written about in the Bible in advance of their happening.

Zechariah 9:9, **“9 Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey— riding on a donkey’s colt.”**

What the Bible says Jesus is, is more reliable than what people think He is

When the king comes..

When Kings would go into battle it was on a war horse, a black horse and the Roman Kings would be followed by thousands of soldiers marching in unison with swords and shields.

Kings only rode donkeys in times of peace not in times of war. Picture riding a donkey into battle... Adds new meaning to “it was a long war”... Most of the time was spent waiting for the general to arrive on his donkey...

Revelation 19, in times of war a king comes on a horse. Jesus will be coming back one day on a white horse, on “**Airhorse 1**” our King will return in battle.

Palm Sunday is one of the few events all 4 Gospels record so we know its important.

Careful reading of all four gospels indicates that this was a planned demonstration, orchestrated

by none other than Jesus himself! He was the one who was timing events according to his schedule.

The other gospels indicate Jesus had made arrangements weeks in advance for a donkey to be available to him, he even told the disciples they would find a donkey with its colt tied beside it.

In Matthew 21:2 **"Untie them and bring them to me."** , and in Matthew 21:3 Jesus told them. **"If anybody asks you what you are doing, tell them, "The Lord needs them,"** This is exactly what happened. It is clear that some weeks earlier, during a quick visit to Jerusalem, Jesus had made these arrangements. During that visit he also arranged to rent a room in which he and his disciples would celebrate the Passover together.

Proof you can trust not only your present moments to Jesus but your future too. (**I don't know what tomorrow holds but I know who holds tomorrow**).

Everything Jesus did He did according to plan... There are no accidents with God, no coincidences with God. His timing is absolutely perfect.

How did Jesus know that? He knew that the prophet Zechariah had predicted that Messiah would come, riding into the city on a colt which no man had ever ridden.

That is a remarkable feat in itself. What would happen if you tried to ride a colt no one had ever ridden before? I imagine that Tim McGraw song with the words "I went for 2.7 seconds on a bull named fu-man-chu".

Imagine Jesus going through town... But so complete was our Lord's control that this unridden colt behaved as if he was broken and ridden often. (Who is this that even the wind and seas and wild donkeys obey Him?)

John records the event... Luke records what the

people said...

Pick up the story in Luke 19

Jesus is weeping... one of only two times in the Bible where we read of Jesus crying.

1. John 11 at the funeral of Lazarus

**“To weep silently”**... death was not part of God’s plan... The pain of death...

2. Here in Luke 19

Here over Jerusalem

**“To weep convulsively”**

It is inconsolable as Jesus weeps over Jerusalem as He knows what is going to take place with the destruction of Jerusalem and the eternal impact their decision will have on the nation and its people.

What has broken Jesus heart?

There is nothing triumphant going on in the heart of Jesus. Luke tells us that when Jesus comes into Jerusalem that he makes a proclamation that he is holding the nation accountable to know that day that had been predicted and they should have known.

Luke 19:41-44

**41 But as he came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city ahead, he began to weep.**

**42 “How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes. 43 Before long your enemies will build ramparts against your walls and encircle you and close in on you from every side. 44 They will crush you into the ground, and your children with you. Your enemies will not leave a single stone in place, because you did not recognize it when God visited you.”**

Jesus is saying, **“How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace”** Jesus came to save the people not to condemn the people.

Verse 44: **“...because you did not recognize it when God visited you.”**

The experts in biblical knowledge missed it...

How could they have known?

Daniel prophesied in advance...528 years before the event Daniel prophesied Palm Sunday would come

Palm Sunday is like I said earlier it is considered the Holy of Holies of Old Testament bible prophecy, as it is a time-sensitive prophecy... no one today could declare to be the Messiah in light of the prophecies of the Old Testament

If Jesus isn't the Messiah there is no Messiah,  
there is no Savior

If Jesus is not the one, no one is that one.

Common people believed Jesus and what was said about Him by the prophets. **“He came to His own and His own knew Him not”** John's gospel tells us.

When Jesus fed the 5,000 the people wanted to make Jesus their king for all the wrong reasons.

My time has not yet come... Jesus would not let the people raise Him up as their king as their reason for Jesus being king was not His reason for being king? The time had not yet come

Jesus wept because they did not know the time of their visitation... Jesus, the promised Messiah had come to them and they missed it. Instead of embracing Jesus with open arms they rejected their king and brought death and devastation on themselves and their loved

ones.

Jesus knew the consequences. Jesus knew in just 40 short years from this moment...

In 70 A.D. when the future Roman emperor, Titus would level the city of Jerusalem. **For the unbelieving Jews this day meant tragedy not triumph.** Being Jews they had the scriptures, God had spoken through the prophets and they should have known this day was coming.

### **Point 1: The prophecy**

God sets the calendar.

Daniel 9 does not speak vaguely; it gives a count from a decree to the arrival of Messiah. That means history is not random, and redemption is not improvised, it is planned, it is calculated.

In the book of Daniel we read of the time line of these events, in Daniel 9 we have an exact, a very precise time table of these events.

In Daniel 9:25-26, we read that from the going forth of the commandment will come 483 years... and then Messiah will be cut off, killed.

### Daniel 9:25-26

**“25 Now listen and understand! Seven sets of seven plus sixty-two sets of seven will pass from the time the command is given to rebuild Jerusalem until a ruler—the Anointed One—comes. Jerusalem will be rebuilt with streets and strong defenses, despite the perilous times. 26 “After this period of sixty-two sets of seven, the Anointed One will be killed, appearing to have accomplished nothing, and a ruler will arise whose armies will destroy the city and the Temple. The end will come with a flood, and war and its miseries are decreed from that time to the very end.”**

Daniel prophecies, Daniel 9:25, seven sevens ( or seven, seven year periods  $7 \times 7 = 49$  Jerusalem was rebuilt) and then there will be

62-7's, (62 seven year periods = 434 years). 49 years + 434 years = 483 years total.

From Daniels prophecy you would be able to count from the time the decree goes forth to the time Messiah presents Himself and is cut off.

A bible scholar by the name of Sir Robert Anderson who was the head investigator of Scotland Yard at the time who wrote a book titled, "The Coming Prince" based on his investigation of the dates in question using mathematical probability to reach his conclusions

## **Point 2: The decree**

The decree begins the countdown.

Nehemiah 2 ties the starting point to the rebuilding of Jerusalem, not merely the temple. That is why this passage is often used as the anchor for the 69 weeks of Daniel's prophecy.

Nehemiah 2:1-8. Emphasize that the starting

point is a real Persian decree in the month of Nisan. That decree opened the prophetic clock in Daniel 9.

On March 14, 445 B.C. King Artaxerxes gave the command to go back and rebuild Jerusalem.

In the fifth century B.C. a Hebrew named Nehemiah, then cup bearer to the Medo-Persian king Artaxerxes, wrote of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem:

**Nehemiah 2:1-2, "And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before. Therefore, the king said to me 'why is your face sad, since you are not sick.'"**

Nehemiah went on to explain that he was sad because he had heard reports that the city of his people, Jerusalem, was still desolate. Nehemiah, requested that he be allowed to go

back to Jerusalem and rebuild the city.

King Artaxerxes granted Nehemiah's wish on the spot and gave him official "letters" or documents for easy passage. This occurred, we are told in the month of Nisan, in the 20th year of Artaxerxes reign.

Artaxerxes ascended to the throne of the Medo-Persian empire in July 465 B.C.

The 20th year of his reign would have begun in July 446 B.C.

The decree occurred approximately 9 months later in the month of Nisan (March/April on our calendar). By Hebrew tradition when the day of the month is not specifically stated (as in Artaxerxes decree), it is given to be the first day of that month. Consequently, the very day of Artaxerxes' decree was the first day of the Hebrew month Nisan in 445 B.C.

The first day of Nisan in 445 B.C. corresponds to the 14th day of March.

So you can do the math... from Daniels prophecy you would be able to count from the time the decree goes forth to the time Messiah presents Himself and is cut off.

So if you take that date of 445 B.C. and go forward 483 years you should arrive at a specific date in human history.

Sir Robert Anderson points this out in his book. Go forward 483 years, in precise numbers. Not using the Julian calendar 365 1/3 days per year.

Using the old Babylonian/Jewish calendar which has 360 days, a lunar year not a solar calendar year. (A solar year — the time it takes Earth to orbit the sun — lasts around 365 days, while a lunar year, or 12 full cycles of the Moon, is roughly 360 days)

360 days in a year x 483 years = 173,880 days

173,880 days

So again, he took March 14, 445 B.C. and counted 173,880 days forward which brought him to April 6, 32 A.D. which is the 10th of Nissan, which is also the exact day that Jesus came to the Mount of Olives got on a colt that was waiting there for Him and rode into Jerusalem to present Himself as King of the Jews fulfilling the prophecy of both Daniel and Zachariah.

Tragic because the Jews should have known and rejoiced at this day!

Back to Luke 19...

Luke 19:44: “...**because you did not recognize it when God visited you.**”

What should have been a glorious event, a day of triumph was a day of tragedy for the nation of Israel who rejected her king.

**Prophecy is history told in advance...**

**History is His-story**

Question: This is important... Why did God tell us in advance?

God doesn't want anyone to miss it...

Christianity is not a blind faith but a sure faith...

Jesus wept over Jerusalem because He understood what their unbelief would bring upon them, the judgment upon their lives that could have been completely avoided.

What was true for the nation of Israel then is true for us today... Judgment can be avoided if only...

If only we would recognize Jesus for who He is...

They failed to recognize Jesus for who He is

Jesus does not want to judge us, He wants to save us

**2 Corinthians 6:1-2, “As God’s fellow workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain. 2 For he says, “In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.” I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.”**

Today is the only day we have... today is the only day we have....

We are not promised tomorrow

The good news is... today is all we need to be saved...

Don't put it off...

**The question Palm Sunday asks is not whether the King came, but whether we received him.**

You have this moment to be saved, this moment to be forgiven for our sins.

If we use today properly, we don't need another day!!!

All we need is right now...