

# **A Reason For Palm Sunday**

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**John 12:12-19**

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Do you ever find yourself asking yourself this question? Not so much what you believe, but why do you believe it? Do you ever have anybody come? Do you say, "Well, why do you believe that stuff about Jesus Christ?" You know it's important because faith is not just faith and faith. It's not, "Well, I just trust faith. I believe it because I'm a believer." No, no, Peter. When Peter wrote his first letter, it was to Christians living at a time that guess who the president was? Nero. Tough time to be a Christian. He's killing all kinds of Christians. Peter in 1 Peter 3:15, he writes this. He says, "Now always be ready to give an answer when you're asked." Always be ready to give an answer. The word is apologia, a defense, a reason for the hope that lies within you, but always with the spirit of reverence and respect.

That's why Paul in Colossians 1 when he writes to the Christians, and Colossians says, "When I pray for you guys, I pray for two things, that you would increase in your knowledge and your understanding." It's not just that, "Well, I have my faith in Jesus Christ," but why? As you grow in your knowledge and as you grow in your understanding, that's when you begin to walk worthy of the great calling in which we've been called to.

So open your Bibles, if you will, to John 12. I know our Pastor John is going through John, but this is Chapter 12. He won't get there for five years. So being that, this is Palm Sunday, so why don't we talk about Palm Sunday? So while you do that, I want to tell you a story. John 12.

It says here that when the Nordic people ruled the known world and the Vikings ruled the seas, there arose a great leader. He was wise, strong, just, cared for his people. Early in his reign, it became evident that someone was stealing from the treasury. The king made a decree throughout the land that the person caught stealing would receive 10 public lashes. Well, no one was caught. So the king put forth a second decree for 20 lashes and again, no one confessed. Surprise, surprise, nor was anyone apprehended.

Finally, the king put forth a decree of 50 lashes for the person responsible for these thefts. Now 50 lashes would be the harshest punishment ever given in that land. With such punishment it was questioned whether or not anyone could really survive it. Well, finally, the guilty person was found and to the horror of the king, it was his own blood. It was his mother. Now the king, loved his mother, and was deeply grieved over the mother's actions. However, he was also a just king knowing that evil must be punished.

The king was faced with an apparent unsolvable situation. Would his love allow his mother to live or would his justice allow the lashes to take her life? Well, the people of the land came to see what the king would do. The king ordered his mother tied to a stake in front of everybody and he

ordered the lashes given. But just before the first lash fell, the king stepped forward, removed his shirt and with his own body, covered his mother's and he received the lashes meant for her. It was said that love was demonstrated that day by protecting her from the punishment she deserved. Yet justice was accomplished by taking upon himself the punishment of another.

Here's my question. Why do you think Jesus did that for you? Why do you think Jesus did that for you? Let me give you from this account of Palm Sunday why this day is so significant because it gives you two real good reasons, not just what you believe about Jesus Christ, but why you believe it and why you believe Jesus wrapped his body all over yours and took the lashes of the wrath of God when He was on the cross.

Well, the first begins with promises called prophecies. It's like open your eyes to history. Look at verses 12 and 13. He says on the next day, the great multitude who had come to the feast, Passover feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, well, they took branches of the palm trees and went out to meet him and began to cry out, "Hosanna. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," even the king of Israel.

Now this is the next day, the morning after Mary, the sister of Lazarus, had anointed his body with oil, with perfume. Remember Judas was ticked. He said, "That could have been used to feed the poor for a year." Yet Jesus basically called him off and said, "She is anointing my body for death." Well, that was a little bit confusing to them. At that time there was this huge crowd of people in Jerusalem because it was Passover, biggest feast in the year of our Jewish friends.

It's estimated at that time some two and a half million people filled that little city for the Passover observance. Now some hear that Jesus is coming. Now why would that be such a surprise? Well, the last verse of the last chapter tells us this.

Now the chief and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should report it, that they might seize him. So Jesus is an outlaw and he is got to be out there hiding, but he is not hiding. He's not even sneaking into the city. He's going through the pickin front door. So here comes Jesus and he knows this is not the greatest thing for his health. Matthew 26:4 tells us all this did was intensify the hatred of the Jewish leaders against Jesus. They wanted him dead. Now, the other Gospels fill in some of the details of what happened that morning.

Jesus leaves Bethany approaching the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, that's between Bethany and Jerusalem. He sends two of his disciples into a small village to find a donkey with her cult tied to a post. He rides not the donkey, the cult, into the city. Now, people apparently had cut branches from long row of palm trees that lined the road from the Mount of Olives to the entrance, the golden gate of Jerusalem.

Now, why would they do that? Why are they having these palm leaves and waving them? Well, that goes all the way back to Moses. Matter of fact, through Moses in Leviticus, we were told that that's how they would celebrate. For example, Leviticus 23:40, God says through Moses, "Now on the first day, you shall take for yourself foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and

boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days. You shall thus celebrate it as a feast to the Lord."

Because they were used to whenever they wanted to celebrate, they would take palms in different leaves and they would wave them. Here they are waving them and they're rejoicing. But what are they celebrating? Well, they're crying out, "Hosanna, Hosanna." Now you understand that does not mean hip, hip hooray, hip hip hooray. It's actually the verb in Hebrew for save. They're actually praying, saying, "Save now. Save now." Well save from what?

Well deliver us from the Roman oppression as God did through the brutality of the Egyptians. Remember, this is Passover and as Passover what's on the mind of every Jew in Jerusalem, they're remembering what? How God through Moses had delivered their fathers from the brutality of the Egyptian slavery. So they're expecting as Moses came and delivered us from that, maybe that's what this Jesus is going to do.

As a matter of fact, they're looking for a warlord. Jesus the Messiah is coming. He's going to be the warlord. He's going to lead a revolution and we're going to kick those Romans out and establish a new Jewish kingdom. They're singing part of the Hallel, which is from Psalm 118:26. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel. But what's interesting here is they skip verse 22 of that same Psalm because verse 22 of the same Psalm, speaks of the stone that would be rejected, rejected and yet would be the cornerstone to the kingdom. So here, even in Hallel, previous the verse says that there's going to be rejection here. Boy is there rejection because some of these folks that were saying, "Save now, save now. Be warlords. Start a revolution." Some of these folks are the same people at the end of the week, what are they crying then? Crucify him. Crucify him.

If you're not going to be the warlord that we want to destroy Rome, we don't want you. Then he's rejected because he's not the warlord. We do the same thing. God created us in his own image and we've been returning the favor ever since because we want to create God in our image. I only try to hear people say, "Wow, I only worship a God that I want. If God's going to have to be like this, he's going to have to be like that." Yet the fact is this is what they were doing. If you don't know what we want, then we don't want you. See, when a king came bent for war, well he would ride a powerful white steed. But when he comes bent on peace, this one rides the colt of a donkey. Look at verses 14 and 15. And Jesus finding a young donkey sat on it as it is written. If you're not daughter of Zion, behold your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt.

Now we've got to go back 500 years. We've got to go back 500 years before Jesus was ever born to a prophet named Zachariah. Zachariah actually, because here in their declaration they quote him. In Zachariah 9:9, it says, "Rejoice greatly, oh daughter of Zion. Shout and triumph oh, daughter of Jerusalem. Behold your king is coming." Great. He's going to come and beat the spit out of the Romans. Wait, "behold, your king is coming to you. He is just and endowed with salvation." He's going to deliver you from something. "Humble and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

Now, that's 500 years before Jesus ever came because God knew that these people were not in bondage to Rome. They were in bondage to their own sinfulness and didn't even know it. So they did not need a political revolution. They needed what? They needed, a spiritual revolution to their bondage, to their own sin.

So this king came to provide peace with God. You see, God's our creator and that makes us creatures. God's got lots of creatures, dogs, cats, worms, pigs, dogs, you. But in Genesis 127, it says that when God created us, he created us in his own image. There's nowhere else in the scripture says that God created anything else in his own image, not even angels. To be bearing in the image of God means that unique from everything else in creation, we can actually manifest the very person of our creator what he's like. It's like God had a different view of the kind of relationship he was going to have with us.

He wasn't going to settle for a relationship of creator creature. So we creatures fear the creator. Let's carve religions and rituals, find a virgin, throw in the volcano. Somehow, we go to appease the wrath of the creator. But God wanted a relationship more like a father to a son, a father to a daughter. That's why 2 Corinthians 6:18 says, God says, "I'll be a father to you and you'll be sons and daughters to me." Why do you think John 1:12 says, "But as many as believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, to them God gave the authority to become children of God." Romans 8:16, "Don't you know the spirit of God in you bears witness that you are a child of God?" That's the relationship we have. Who am I? I'm a child with a heavenly Father, one who is engaged in every detail of my life.

So here this king comes to provide peace, this relationship to be adopted into the family of God, back to what we were created to be in the very beginning in his own image manifesting like a son or a daughter would manifest the beauty of their father. But here there's a prophecy, actually hundreds of years before Zachariah. Matter of fact on this one you've got to go back to the eighth century BC. That's like 750 years before Jesus ever came.

There's an interesting prophecy in Isaiah 53. Matter of fact, what's interesting about it is that the early Jewish believers, they didn't have the rest of the New Testament yet. So guess what they used to share with their Jewish friends, the credibility, the truth about Jesus being the Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah. They would use this text because this text in Isaiah 53 was always about the coming Messiah, the suffering servant that would come from heaven to deliver the children of Israel.

That was until 70. In 70 Titus of Rome came destroyed the temple, destroyed the Jews and some of the leadership, they escaped up to Northern Palestine. There they started another school and there they changed the historical interpretation of this text that they're saying this is not talking about the Messiah, the suffering servant. This is talking about us, the Jewish nation. We would be a light to the nation, we'll suffer for the nation and bring salvation to the world. The only trouble, that's not what the text says.

Like in Isaiah 53:4, "Surely our griefs, he himself bore. Our sorrows, he carried. We ourselves esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." Well, I know pronouns are a little bit controversial now, but that's not the point here. The point is the text is who's the our sorrows and our griefs and who are ourselves? That's the Jewish people. That's Israel. Isaiah makes that clear. Well then if they are them, then they cannot be him. Are you following?

So very clearly, here was the prophecy. Surely our griefs, he himself bore, our sorrows he carried, yet we ourselves esteem him stricken, smitten of God, afflicted by God. But he was pierced through for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The chastening of our well-being fell on him and by his scourging we are healed.

I'm a little confused. When I look at the Old Testament and I see the sacrificial system and they'd take a lamb, an innocent lamb and they would sacrifice the lamb. What I did not see, they did not nail the little lamb on little crosses. They didn't beat the spit out of them. They didn't torture them. They just cut their throat and let them die. But why when Jesus that night and he says, "Here's what I want you to remember."

He could have just taken the cup and said, "This is the new covenant, which is my life, my blood. I'm going to put my life. I'm going to wrap my body around yours and receive the lashes of God's and Holy wrath." But before he brought the cup out, he took what? The bread. What did he say about the bread?

"When you remember me, remember the bread and the cup for the bread is my body, which is broken for you." Why did Jesus, if John the Baptist said he's the lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world, why didn't he simply cut his throat, let him bleed to death and be a lamb sacrifice? But oh no, we've got to torture him. We've got to beat him. We've got to crush his spirit even out of his prophesied. Why? It's because if you're going to be forgiven of sin, you better understand what sin looks like.

The fact is, we had a chance of, we humanity did that to a perfectly innocent, lovely, Godly man. We saw when they crucified and the way they treated him, beloved, that was humanity. That's in us. That's the raw evil ugliness of sin.

If you're going to know you're going to be forgiven of something, you better understand what the something was you're forgiven of. So he not only died, he suffered, but it was prophesied here all along that his body would be broken so we could get a real good look of ultimately what sin is and what sin can do out of any one of us and then maybe we would own up and tell the truth. I'm a sinner. I don't want to be that way. God, I need to be forgiven. He would provide that. You see these words of prophecy give us a good reason to believe. In John 5, Jesus is going back and back with the Pharisees and he says, "You search the scriptures to find salvation." He says in verse 39, "Don't you realize the scripture speak of me?" Jesus go, "Hey, they speak of me."

They're over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament predicting the coming of Messiah of the Christ, and they're all fulfilled in the New Testament by Jesus alone. Yeah, but you got to understand, I am an educated person. So how do I know these weren't arranged by Jesus? I mean

just to fool all of you, how do we know he just didn't take out his scroll and kind of say, "All right, Messiah's supposed to do these things. All right, I'll do that Tuesday about 4 o'clock Wednesday," and then everybody's going to think I'm him. The whole thing was to put on. Well, according to Matthew 26:56, Jesus said, "That's exactly what I did. I arranged all of them to happen." Really.

Well, for example, he arranged to be born in Bethlehem. I'll let that settle for a moment. He arranged to be born in Bethlehem as the prophet Micah foretold 700 years before. This is a real humdinger. He set it up for his mother to be a virgin. I'm waiting. As spoken by the prophet Isaiah 7. He arranged to be crucified with his hands pierced as Zachariah promised centuries before Rome even introduced crucifixion into Palestine.

Nobody ever heard of piercing. He talked two thieves into dying with him as told by Isaiah. You may have some friends, but could you talk them into being crucified with you. He arranged his own betrayal for 30 pieces of silver with the money used to buy a burial field for strangers as spoken by Zachariah 500 years before. He then convinced the Roman soldiers not to break his legs. You got to understand to be crucified, you would have these nails put through your wrists and through your feet and you basically would have to pull or push up just to breathe. But what would happen is when it was time for them to die, the soldiers would break their legs, take a wrought iron, and they did.

They broke the legs of both thieves on either side so they no longer could push you up and breathe and they would die by suffocation. But when it came to Jesus, Jesus was already gone. Remember? So they pierced him through and the eyewitness of John himself was water and blood came out. The pericardium was pierced along with the heart, the blood and the serum was seen. But what was very, very interesting is the fact that the sacrificial lambs in the Old Testament, it was a law that no bone was to be broken on a sacrificial lamb.

So somehow, he convinced them not to break his legs and to go ahead and gamble for his clothing just like David predicted in Psalms 22. I mean, Jesus was pretty busy that week, don't you think? Then here in our text, somehow, he arranges for all these people to show up to sing praises to him as he rides into the city on a colt of a donkey as was articulated by Zechariah 500 years before.

Now this finally came together for the disciples only after his death and resurrection. Verse 16. These things his disciples did not understand at first. But when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of him and that they had done these things to him. This is a pretty good reason. Why do you believe? Why do you believe this stuff? What answer is this? History. Just open your eyes at history and all the many prophecies, over 300, they're all fulfilled, but only by one person, Jesus the Christ. But there's even a more powerful second reason why we believe all this stuff and it's the works of his power.

Look at verses 17 to 19. "So the multitude who were with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead were bearing him witness". He raised a guy from the dead.

"For this cause, also the multitude went and met him because they heard that he had performed this sign. But the Pharisees therefore said to one another, you see that you're not doing any good. Look, the world has gone after him." What was happening?

Word's gotten out that Jesus raised a man from the dead. Now, little context, and there were context given us in John 11, but again, Pastor John probably won't get there for three years. So I'm going to give it to you right now just a little hint. But in John 11, you have basically the friend of Jesus, Lazarus. He's down in Bethany in his home. Jesus is up north. Jesus hears that his friend Lazarus is sick. So you expect Jesus to go down and heal him like he healed a bunch of other people. Jesus doesn't go. Matter of fact, he doesn't go until he hears that Lazarus is dead, then he takes four days to get down to Bethany. The body's been in the tomb for four days. You kind of wonder, why did Jesus wait? Well, part of that is because the rabbis taught that when a man died, his soul would hover around the body for three days and only after three days would then leave.

So Jesus wanted to make sure because he knew what he was going to do, that there would be no question this man was dead. Jesus shows up four days later. Now, Lazarus had two sisters. The younger sister, Mary kind of quiet sweet little lady, and she was following the tradition of welcoming the mourners. But then the older sister, Martha, what did we say about Martha? About 250 pounds, six foot four, I don't know. But this lady was some kind of lady and she's ticked at Jesus. So when she hears Jesus is coming, she goes out to the edge of the city and she's going to just chew him out and she does.

Where were you when my brother died? What kind of friend are you? It was in that intense context. Jesus says, "Martha, Martha, I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me shall live even if he dies, for whoever believes in me shall never die." Interesting. Didn't Jesus walk and then what did he do about 20 minutes later? After weeping, seeing everybody weep, he goes up to the tomb and what does he do? He raises Lazarus from the dead.

Philip Schaff, a great historian, helps us understand this here, what we have in Jesus here in history. He says it so well, I wish I could talk this way. "This Jesus of Nazareth without money in arms conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Muhammad and Napoleon. Without science and learning, he shed more light on matters, human and divine than all philosophers and scholars combined. Without the eloquence of schools, he spoke such words of life and were ever spoken before or since, and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of the orator or the poet without writing a single line." He set more pens in motion, furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art and songs of praise than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern." That's history folks. Open your eyes to history.

So are you saying we believe because Jesus had a power to change lives, even raise people from the death? Absolutely. But once again, I'm very intelligent person. How do I know those changes in people's lives it's nothing more than psychological changes.

So over the last 2000 years, people from all around the globe, different races, different backgrounds, but they all had the same psychological illusion. Psychologically they all made the same decision about Jesus. Let me ask you a question. If some fella walked through that door right now and he had a fried egg over his left ear and he is just glowing with happiness and wants to share. "Pastor, may I share with the people about my fried egg over my left ear?" Come.

He shares with all of us. "Oh, this egg has given me joy and peace and purpose in life, forgiveness of sin and the strength for living." What'd you do? I start looking for an egg. But I think before I looked for the egg, I would ask him this question. Has anyone else experienced the same with a fried egg over their left ear?

So then I ask you, has anyone else experienced a changed life because of Jesus Christ? Oh, my. How about hundreds of thousands upon thousands? Let's start with the 12. If you add the Apostle Paul to 12 Apostles eyewitnesses to the resurrected Jesus Christ. You do know that any one of them could have bailed out and saved their backside.

John was the only one permitted to live out his life, I believe, because John followed Jesus all the way to the cross. But the others, have you ever read how the martyrs, the eyewitness apostles to the resurrected Christ, how everyone's died? We're talking skin ripped off the body. We're talking about crucifixion. We're talking about one crucified upside down. We're talking about James the head and the brains bashed out. We're talking about beheading. We're talking about pierced through the body by Holberg. Horrible, horrible deaths and not one beloved, not one said that what they believe was not true what they saw.

They sealed their testimony with their own blood. Now, from there, the last 2000 years, people through different ages and 100, 200, 300, 2000 years, cultures, different races, languages. Some were kings, all the way to paupers. Some were poets and some were illiterate. Some who've had their lives changed were brilliant men and women and some who've had their lives changed, are very simple-minded men and women. Some who've had their lives changed, were powerful people and some very weak.

Some aged and other children. Lives changed. It wasn't a fried egg on the left ear. The power of one who entered the city to be crucified as a provision of forgiveness for our sin, that we might have peace with God to change a life, greatest reason to believe. As that Nordic King wrapped his body around his mother and took the lashes, so Jesus wrapped his body around us and took the holy wrath of God, justice so that he could demonstrate his mercy and his love. Why do you believe this stuff?

One, history. History. Jesus is the only one fulfilled all the prophetic promises in the Old Testament. Why do you believe this stuff? History. I've seen people's lives change. My life has changed. I used to be pretty much working hard to be a big deal. Didn't always feel like a big deal, but I needed to try to be a big deal. Then when I realized that I was a sinner, all that big deal thing, me, myself, and I, the best attorney, all that was arrogance. I didn't really care about anybody else, but all of a sudden, I owned up and told the truth, "God, I'm a sinner. What they



did to you on the cross, those are the same human beings that I am." That's how horrible horrifying my sin could be because I could do that.

When I asked God's forgiveness, that's when I realized not only did he forgive my sins, he put part of himself in me called the Holy Spirit and changed my heart that I had desires and never had before. I'm not interested in being a big deal. I'm interested in you being a big deal. The biggest thing is all fear is gone. I'm 75. Hey, I'm off the planet probably hopefully less than 10 years I'm gone and I don't fear it.

But also, I don't fear living. How many people are just driven by fear? I got to be better than you. I got to have more than you. Everything's a competition because we're so fearful we're going to lose. Yet when Christ came into my life, he changed my whole heart. I want you all to be the big deal and I just want to serve and I have this deep desire instead of fearing anything, I just have only one drive in my life as I want to honor my Heavenly Father. That's it. That's it.

My first church, this is about mid-seventies and a little church up in the Santa Cruz area, Northern California and Ralph Noll was really in trouble. Ralph was really into LSD and drugs had just burned his brain up and you could tell because he just acted strange. Well, Ralph came to Christ. After a few years of our relationship and spending time with him, we were down on the boardwalk in Santa Cruz and Ralph and I were together and we're sharing with this one guy and this guy, because I am seminary trained. The guy was just popping questions. Questions, question, questions, and huh, I was answering those questions and they were good answers, but I was getting nowhere. Finally, Ralph, I'll never forget it. Ralph goes, "Could I say something?"

Sure, Ralph. He says, "All I could tell you is I've damaged my brain with drugs, but Jesus has changed my life and he's healing me." The guy's attention went to Ralph, a little rude because I had all the answers and Ralph led him to Christ.

See, Jesus said in Acts 1:8, "You shall be my witnesses, not my defense attorney. You're not smart enough. I'm not either." All it is, is it's a changed life. One good reason Christian to keep growing and knowledge and wisdom is living out that change. So when people ask you, "Why do you believe that stuff?" Your answer's history. Jesus' the only guy who fulfilled all those promises of the Savior, and I know it's true because he's changed my life. You want to know something? That's hard for people to debate and it's the most powerful testimony you can have.

So my encouragement, Christian, you now know why you believe this stuff. Because this day Palm Sunday was a day that Jesus made it really clear He was the one that fulfilled the promises, and he's the one that has the power to change your life. If you don't know Jesus Christ, in just a few moments, Curtis is going to give you an opportunity to make that decision. But would you pray for me and with me?

Heavenly Father, thank you so much for this great privilege to speak to these good people. Lord, I pray that you would just open our hearts, our minds, the truth to history. Help us break out of the darkness. Just let our eyes see it. I pray for those who do not know Jesus Christ, you would

open their eyes and they would see it. This, I pray as we celebrate this day in the name of Jesus Christ and God's people said. Amen.