**Palm Sunday – Lift Up Jesus**

4-13-25

As we enter Holy Week, where we celebrate the events of Jesus’ final days here on earth. We look into His word, particularly the gospels where we see glimpses of those final moments, what He said and how that impacted the world forever and is very important for us today.

As we read through the gospels, we watch him come from relative obscurity to an instantly famous teacher, healer and miracle worker throughout Israel. He collected 12 Apostles and is being followed by massive crowds. The Pharisees however, feared Him and were intimidated by His power and influence and plotted on how they can capture him and put him to death.

All along the way, from the time He was born, along with his teaching and miracle-working, Jesus had been accomplishing an important mission; fulfilling the Messianic prophecies that were written of Him since ancient times.

He also prophesied about Himself *three times*, that he would; go to Jerusalem, be arrested, suffer, be crucified and rise again. The apostles do not seem to understand the ramifications of His death and resurrection, each time they answered with less--than-appropriate responses .

**Mark 8:31“**He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.”

**Mark 9:30-32**  **“**They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.”

**Mark 10:33-34** “We are going up to Jerusalem,” he said, “and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.”

This week it is about to happen. Jesus and his apostles arrive in Jerusalem for one final week, before the crucifixion.

The *way* He enters Jerusalem is very significant. It was no ordinary entry and was in fulfillment of an ancient prophecy having to do with the Messiah;

This prophecy was from Zechariah 9, and the entry is called “The Triumphal Entry”

**Zech. 9:9** “Say to Daughter Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

This prophecy in Zechariah 9:9 was different than other Messianic prophecies, not just because it involved a donkey. The prophecy required him to make a public proclamation of himself as “King and Messiah”, and would definitely set off a chain of events that would rapidly lead to His arrest, torture and crucifixion.

Jesus knew that when he fulfilled this one, that the end would come quickly. As much as it was a huge celebration of Worship of Him in Jerusalem, it was in effect, the *beginning of His death-march* because He knew what would happen soon after.…

**John 12:12-16“**The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. **13**So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out;

*“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!”*

**14**And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

**15**“Fear not, daughter of Zion;
behold, your king is coming,
    sitting on a donkey's colt!”

**16**His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.”

This was a PUBLIC statement*. It wasn’t just a pleasant pony-ride into town : )*

He knew that the Pharisees were aware of the prophecy, and would react harshly, and he was right.

*By Him doing this: He was either extremely audacious OR He is the Messiah!*

They could all hear the crowds shouting;

 *“Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”*

*What did those words and phrases mean?*

***HOSANNA*** *– (“SAVE US”) – Is not so much a name, or even a praise, but a cry for help to a king or to God.*

The Hebrew words *Yasha* (“deliver, save”) and *anna* (“beg, beseech”) combine to form the word that, in English, is “hosanna.” Literally, *hosanna* means “I beg you to save!” or “please deliver us!”

*It’s followed by the words, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord”*

It was being shouted by huge crowds of people!

They are quoting a very famous Psalm;

 **Psalm 118:25,26**

“*25* Lord, save us! Lord, grant us success!

*26**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*

*“Baruch HaBa Beshem Adonai!*

This is very much a “praise-phrase”,

It was a worship event like no other that ever been!

This is the most fantastic Worship Celebration that Jerusalem has ever experienced because Jesus was being worshiped right there in Jerusalem. (Much like 2 Samuel 6 when David came up to Jerusalem with the Ark of the Covenant – dancing with all his might unto the Lord.)

*PHARISEES RESPONSE:*

**Luke 19:39-40** *“Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!” “I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”*

*Jesus once again demonstrated that He had all authority over even the natural world. Including the wind and the waves, the laws of gravity & flotation, sickness, disease and even mortality. IF the crowds did not worship him in this divine moment, then God would have allowed even the* ***stones*** *to become animated and cry out in praise and worship.*

*[I wish that would’ve happened] : )*

This is not just worship, it is also a *cry for help* to the Lord,

A recognition, welcome and appeal to the Messiah.

Jesus received it from the adoring crowds as he traveled down the Mount of Olives, through the Kidron Valley and into the Eastern Gate, even though He knew that they were waiting for a “King-Messiah” to free them from the tyranny of Rome and restore Israel to the Powerful place it held under King David.

Even as these crowds praised him out loud in public, He knew that they would soon be shouting “Crucify Him” after He was arrested and held by the Romans.

He would also soon find himself rejected at the temple by their leaders and Priests.

In fact if you look at this rejection, you see in Matt 22 that he wept and spoke forth another prophecy, using *the very same words* that were proclaimed to him in praise…

**Matt 22:37-39**

**37**“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. **38**Look, your house is left to you desolate. **39**For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say,

‘*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”*

*“…you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” ( Baruch Ha Ba Beshem Adonai)*

As we saw in Mark 8, 9, and 10 Jesus’ words about His own suffering in Jerusalem were rejected or misinterpreted by the Apostles.

Here in His Triumphal Entry, his actions in fulfilling this ancient prophecy, as much as they were a Holy celebration of “Jesus the Messiah”, were misinterpreted by some in the crowds as well, this time in Jerusalem.

They had expectations of a King-Messiah who would kick out the Roman Empire, get rid of Herod and *“…reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom” (Isa. 9:7)*

They were projecting their own *personal aspirations* onto Jesus, even though throughout the journey He promised them only of “The Kingdom of God”.

You can imagine the great disappointment of the crowds when a week later *their King-Messiah Hero* was being arrested, flogged, beaten, tortured and sentenced to death by the Romans.

Their “*hopeful enthusiasm”* turned into “*hateful disdain”* as they shouted later that week, “Crucify Him”. *Probably because of their extreme disappointment in His NOT living up to their expectations.*

*What happened?*

*“They did not get it.” and “They did not GET Him!”*

**They allowed their own personal aspirations and understanding to dictate their expectations and understanding of Jesus and the kingdom of God**. *(repeat)*

*They’ve created what could be called; “Their own personal Jesus”*

*[Depeche Mode song title]*

This does not mean that it’s a mistake to desire to have a *personal relationship with Jesus*, in fact that is the beauty of our faith in Him.

He does tell us to; “*come to Him when we are weary and heavy-laden and He will give us rest”*, AND that He says, *“I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

The mistake is when we develop our own *personal idea* of who we think Jesus ought to be, what He should be like, what His mission and message to the world are, and how He should be portrayed to society, that is not based on the whole of scripture, only parts of it mixed with our own machinations. *The Apostles made this mistake often.*

At times, they did not “Get it”, and did not “Get Him”.

*In Fact It’s just as important that we get Him, than it is that; “He Gets Us.”*

This is why the Apostles harshly rejected the idea of Jesus going to Jerusalem, suffering, being killed, and rising again. When they did this, particularly Peter, Jesus had some harsh words for them;

**Matt 16:21“**From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. **22**Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!” **23**Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely *human concerns*.”

What were the “*Human Concerns”* that Peter had in mind?

Peter was hoping that King Jesus would be the King Messiah that would replace the Roman Empire with and bring about changes in society. His concerns probably weren’t bad, in fact, I would argue that they were probably very good causes, like;

* Loosening the grip of evil oppression from both the Romans and the Chief Priests, and replacing them with a Holy Kingdom.
* Freeing captives and slaves that were being held or persecuted throughout the Roman empire.
* Redistributing wealth in society so that the poor would find relief and provision, and the rich would be forced to relinquish their wealth.
* Other Ideas and concerns?

These “Human Concerns” are clearly *not* why Jesus came. If they were, He would have accomplished all of them at miraculous levels, and empowered His disciples to do the same after He ascended. The fact is that the poor, and enslaved stayed that way during Jesus’ time on earth and after.

Jesus was by far the most compassionate, kind, loving, and sacrificial person who ever lived, but His purpose was not “random acts of kindness”, it was far greater; to *live, die, rise again and reconcile us to God by sacrificing His life for the sins of mankind.*

Jesus’ mission of the Kingdom of God is very clear in scripture, in all four gospels, the New Testament writings that followed, and even the Hebrew Scriptures that went before.

* Jesus was very clear all along, that His journey would lead to the cross,
* He told them clearly that He *“did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*
* His message was no different to the Apostles than it was to Pilate when He said *“My Kingdom is not of this world"*

Do we ever make the same mistake?

Do we ever project our own agendas and aspiration upon Jesus and Christianity.

Jesus told us His very reason for coming;

**Luke 19:10** “For the Son of Man came to *seek and to save the lost.”*

He instructed us to go out into all the world and make that come to pass, by;

1. ***Preaching the Gospel***

**Mark 16:15** “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

1. ***Being His Witnesses***

**Acts 1:8** “when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth"

1. ***Making Disciples***

**Matt. 28:19-20** “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20**and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

We need to seek God’s will above our own, and understand that His ways are higher and His thoughts are wiser, even as we approach this election year.

Lastly, The Donkey

I think about the donkey in the story of the Triumphal entry. He is sometimes overlooked, but is in reality the most significant donkey in the history of the universe.

All he did was *lift up Jesus* and carry him on his back to the place where people could experience Him. Whether it’s to cry to him for help *“Hosanna”* or to worship Him as Lord *“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord”*

That’s our job as well! Lift Him up in praise, and carry him to the people who desperately need him.

Jesus told the crowd after His Triumphal Entry:

**John 12:32** “if I be lifted up from the earth I will draw all people unto myself.”

People are in desperate need of hope, comfort, assurance, healing and salvation that can only be found in Jesus.

People NEED Jesus in their lives, whether they know it or not. YOU and I are given the job of bringing Him to them.

That’s what we are to do, as individuals, and as a church.

***What does that look like in your life?*** *(take the opportunity to reach out to people by text, email, chat or even phone call). Invite them to church. Make the most of every situation.*

In your homes, schools, towns, communities, neighborhoods, at your jobs etc.

the most important thing you can do, in fact the only thing you can do with eternal significance is to Lift up Jesus in all you do, through this season and beyond, till the day we go to Him, or He comes for us.

Lift up Jesus, and watch what happens…

He will draw people to himself, through you!