

**Palm Sunday – March 20, 2016**  
**Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church**

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**Luke 19:28-40**

After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 29) As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 30) "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31) If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.'" 32) Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. 33) As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" 34) They replied, "The Lord needs it." 35) They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. 36) As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. 37) When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: 38) "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" 39) **Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" 40) "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."**

Dear Friends of Christ Jesus;

As you may know Luke wrote his Gospel account of the life of Jesus to his dear friend Theopolis. He made a careful investigation of everything that the eyewitnesses of these events had reported and guided by the Holy Spirit decided that he would write down an orderly account of those things to share with him to help him grow in his faith and understanding of Christ and the Christian church. The Holy Spirit inspired and preserved this account so that we too may grow in our faith and understanding of Christ.

The time for Jesus to offer his life as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world was drawing ever closer. Jesus had already been trying to prepare his disciples so that they would not be taken by surprise at what was going to happen to him when he went to Jerusalem. In spite of those efforts they did not fully understand or accept what he was telling them.

But one thing they must have understood is that there was a growing animosity toward Jesus. Something else was also clear – there were also a number of people who wanted Jesus to be their king. The end of his public ministry was near. Soon he would establish his kingdom – but it wouldn't be an earthly one as some many hoped. Just before Jesus headed to Jerusalem he told a parable in which he encouraged those who heard him to be faithful with the blessings they had been given. That parable also included a severe warning to those who would become unfaithful managers of the Lord's blessings. Now the time has come for Jesus to head to Jerusalem. And as he does so he is welcomed by crowds of people who sang his praises.

Today we to have come together to Sing Praises to our Savior King

- 1) He comes in humility
- 2) He comes in majesty
- 3) He comes to bring peace with God

When Jesus entered Jerusalem both his humility and his majesty were quite apparent as we see from Luke's account.

**As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 30) "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31) If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.'" 32) Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them.**

Jesus' humility displayed itself as he used a simple beast of burden – a working animal – to proceed into Jerusalem where he knew that he was going to offer his life as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. That humility becomes more apparent to us when we call to mind that Jesus was in very nature true God as we were reminded in our Epistle Lesson for today.

Jesus was approaching Jerusalem from the east. He was near the Mount of Olives – where the garden of Gethsemane was located. Bethphage and Bethany were located on the slopes of this hill that rose some 300 feet above the city of Jerusalem. It was in Bethany where Jesus had recently raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus was well known in these parts.

And, Jesus knew all about these parts – in a demonstration of his divine nature Jesus sent two of his disciples into the village of Bethpage and explains that there they will find a colt – one that had never been ridden before. This would be his transportation into Jerusalem in fulfillment of the prophecy from Zechariah that proclaimed: (Zechariah 9:9) **Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.** In spite of his humility, there were a number of individuals who praised Jesus – both with their songs of praise and with actions that offered him praise.

The two disciples praised Jesus by following his directions: Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. When we believe his Word – even those difficult promises concerning our futures and respond to them by following his directions we are numbered among those who praise him.

Jesus' promises to us will move us to sing his praises not just with music but also with our actions. Consider one of the promises that our all-knowing Lord gives us as Luke recorded it in his Gospel for us: (Luke 12:29-31) [Jesus said] **do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. 30) For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31) But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.**

Jesus promised blessings to those who put their spiritual needs first in their lives. With this promise Jesus encourages us to place our trust in him. He's also teaching a lesson in priorities – what's more important? Is it your life in this world or life in the world to come? If we answer, "life in the world to come," then we will become engaged in a struggle to resist setting our hearts on the things of this world because they may lead us away from Christ and eternal life.

So how do we make the Lord's kingdom our first priority? Here's some thoughts. We will gladly share our worldly possessions as offerings for the Lord's work in the church so that the Word and Sacrament may be available to us and others just as the owner of the colt willingly shared his possession with Jesus. He provides us a wonderful example of Christian stewardship. He recognized that all he had came from the Lord and he was more than happy to let the Lord make use of his colt. **As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" 34) They replied, "The Lord needs it." 35) They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it.**

We are numbered among those who praise the Lord whenever we are willing to say about our money, our time, our abilities or anything else the Lord has entrusted to us: "The Lord needs it. And he can have it! We'll gladly look for ways to add more souls to the Lord's kingdom so that they can enjoy the peace of forgiveness that belongs to those who are part of the kingdom.

The Lord promises his blessings to those who hear and obey his word. Since Jesus is our all-wise Savior whose heart is filled with love for us, all his directions for our life are aimed only at our lasting good. Therefore, we will resist the temptation to quibble about his will in various areas saying: "But doing that might cost me

money, or it might make me less popular, or I won't have as much fun." Instead we'll put down our sinful flesh by asking, "Who am I to lord it over my gracious Master's word and will because of my foolish fears and doubts?"

The crowds of people who placed their coats on the path for Jesus had that kind of an unselfish attitude: **As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.** A colt is a beast of burden. It wasn't an animal fit for a king that's for sure. But Jesus' disciples and many in the crowd did what they could to honor Jesus. They gave him royal treatment by letting him ride across their garments – that was quite a sacrifice for them to make.

Those people also praised the Lord with their voices publicly proclaiming their faith in him. When they saw him riding the donkey, they saw him fulfilling the OT prophecy of Zechariah. The fulfilment of that prophecy was what Jesus had in mind when he said the Lord has need of it. Those who knew and remembered this prophecy regarded Jesus as their Savior-King. So they sang and shouted his praises. **When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"**

You know those praises remind me of the praises the angels sang at Jesus' birth. You remember that from the first part of Luke's Gospel, don't you? They herald him as the Savior of the world. Today as we sing our praises and hosannas we are numbered among those who praise him. But that's not always the case is it? Aren't there those times when we become guilty of misusing the Lord's name? Perhaps the most obvious misuse of his name is when we use the Lord's name to curse or swear. But what about those times we fail to call upon the Lord in prayer or when we are embarrassed to proclaim him as the Savior to others. It is sins like that and our many other sins which made it necessary for Jesus to continue riding on to Jerusalem all the way to the cross. Today we praise him for the forgiveness he won for us! That forgiveness means peace with God in heaven. Because of Jesus our sins no longer separate us from God. We are no longer under his wrath and anger. Jesus has removed our fears and brought us into the family of God. We are at peace with him. It's no wonder some people call Jesus the Prince of Peace!

Not all who watched as Jesus entered Jerusalem were interested in the forgiveness of their sins or in praising Jesus. Some despised him. **Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"** I wonder, "What made the Pharisees think they had a right to demand that Jesus silence his disciples? Hadn't they seen some of his miracles and admitted that he had done them? Hadn't they felt the power of his teaching as they debated him. Hadn't they heard that many regarded Jesus as the Messiah because he taught as one having authority?"

Luke's careful investigation proved they had but in their stubborn unbelief they were blind to these things. And so they believed they not only had the right but the duty to silence the crowd since they felt that by giving Jesus honor as the Messiah they were guilty of blasphemy. So the Pharisees asked Jesus to rebuke his disciples – it's clear that they are concerned about all the attention and praise which Jesus is receiving. Most likely they were jealous of Jesus because his teachings were undermining their authority. They had other reasons for want the crowds to be quite too. Jesus wasn't willing to sing their praises. He wasn't impressed by their outwardly pious appearing actions. Why he even told them they needed to repent! You see, he could look into their hearts and knew that they were only interested in themselves. Often Jesus used his parables to expose their need for forgiveness but they refused to listen. In their pride they failed to see their need for Jesus.

We've got to be a bit careful here, don't we? We're not immune from sins of pride and jealousy, either, are we? Such sins can stand in the way of the Lord's forgiveness when we let them grow and fester.

When the crowds began to speak of Jesus in terms which showed they were regarding him as the Messiah it was more than the Pharisees could stand. They asked Jesus to rebuke his disciples. They didn't recognize his majesty and they apparently weren't interested in the peace he came to offer them. Do you know what Jesus said? **"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."**

This entire demonstration was intended by God to give evidence that Jesus was the promised Messiah and that the time would come when all tongues would confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Before that could happen of course he would suffer and die – but following the completion of his humiliation he would be exalted. The work he was going to perform in Jerusalem was worthy of praise and if men would not offer that praise then surely creation – the rocks and stones would! If the rocks and stones would have been willing to sing the praises of the one who would liberate creation from sin; surely we have every reason to sing his praises.

Luke has told us about Jesus as he entered Jerusalem – we've also seen ourselves in the crowd, haven't we. We've noticed that there are times when we are numbered among those who praise the Lord but that sadly we are also numbered among those who have despised the Lord. During this coming week you will have the opportunity to behold Jesus in the upper room where you'll be reminded again that Christ shed his blood for the forgiveness of our sins. You'll behold him offering his life on the cross – suffering the punishment of hell that we deserved. You'll see his humility all right. But you'll also be reminded that through his death you are at peace with God. And when you see that empty tomb – well you'll really have reason to praise him.

You know, it is often speculated that many who praised the Lord on Palm Sunday ended up crying out for his crucifixion later that week. I guess in a way that's true. You see it was our sins that drove Jesus to the cross. There he took away our sin and guilt so that we can gladly receive the peace he came to bring. May you enjoy the comfort and the assurance his death and resurrection provides for us as you gather for worship this holy week. God bless you as you sing his praises. Amen.