

Praise Him! (Palm Sunday 2021)

John 12:12-16. (Ushers) John 12 is one of *several* passages we're going to look at this morning, and this message is the first of a 3 part mini-series. A mini-series focused on Passion Week. The week preceding Jesus' death and resurrection; the week of his suffering. That's what passion means. It starts with Palm Sunday and ends with Easter, with Good Friday in between.

And my hope, is that this mini-series will help you put it all together, and put it in proper perspective. So that you praise him, mourn him, and worship him appropriately. **(Intro)**

➤ Starting with praise. Today. Palm Sunday. The triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, 5 days before his arrest and crucifixion on Good Friday. And it's called *Palm Sunday*, because those who *welcomed* Jesus waved palm *branches*, and laid them on the road as he entered. Part of a tradition going back 15 centuries to Lev 23 and God's instruction for one of Israel's feasts; or celebrations. Like this one.

Look at how the Apostle John recorded it starting in v12.

[12] *The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast [the Passover feast] heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem [added bonus]. [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. (ESV)*

➤ They remembered. V16b. They remembered that these things had been written about him. Great. High five. Bible Trivia here we come. Is that the point of their recall? No.

The point was praise. The unashamed expression of exaltation, honor, and joy. They remembered what he did in the past, to praise him in the present. Surely that's the implication.

Because praise was the purpose of Palm Sunday in the *first* place. That's why they *met* Jesus. That's why they waved palms. That's why they shouted.

So praise must be the point of their *remembrance*. And the point now; of our remembrance. It was joyful exaltation then, and it's joyful exaltation now. Praise for who Jesus is and what he did. Praise with our lives and with our mouths. Praise with our posture and our voice. That's the point of Palm Sunday. That we would *praise* him, today and *every* day.

And the reasons we should do so are the same as the reasons then. First . . .

Because he fulfilled the Scriptures (Mt 21:4-5)

We ought to *praise* Jesus for simply fulfilling the prophetic word about him. If he didn't, we'd still be waiting.

It's found in **Mt 21:4-5**. Where right in the middle of his account of Palm Sunday, after Jesus tells the disciples to get the donkey, Matthew interrupts it and says . . .

[4] *This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet [the prophet Zechariah], saying, [5] "Say to the daughter of Zion [the people of God], 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"*

Matthew interrupts the narrative to point out that the entrance of Jesus on Palm Sunday *fulfilled* the Scriptures. A prophecy from Zech 9:9 written 500 years earlier. He fulfilled it. And that's praiseworthy, because he *could* and he *did*.

➤ Think about that for a minute. Jesus is worthy of praise because **he could** fulfill the Scriptures.

You say, "What the big deal about that? Anybody can ride a donkey." True. But that's only part of the prophecy.

Zech 9:9 says – *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you;* [That raises the bar. Any Joe-schmoe can ride a donkey, but very few are kings.]

And if that's not enough, Zechariah says – *righteous and having salvation is he*, [which eliminates *every* Joe-schmoe. He needs to be a *righteous* deliverer. Possessing the power to *save*. And on top of that, he needs to be *humble and mounted on a donkey*.*****

The fact that Jesus *could* fulfill that, that he *was* in fact a righteous, humble king who could save his people from sin and death, makes him worthy of praise.

➤ And even more so because **he did**. He not only *could* fulfill the Scriptures, he *did*. When he didn't *have* to. He didn't. He's God in the flesh. He could have done whatever he wanted; blazed a new trail; changed the plan altogether. But he didn't. He fulfilled the *Father's* plan. He fulfilled the Word; the Scriptures. The very book we hold in our hands.

And for that we ought to praise him. Because if he didn't, we'd still be waiting. Suffering disappointment after disappointment, and lacking *cause* praise.

➤ It's the very thing that happened in England after the **Battle of Waterloo** on the continent. The year was 1815, and a series of semaphore messages were allegedly sent from one station to the next, all the way back to England. I say allegedly, because the story is disputed.

But as it goes, English forces, under the command of The Duke of Wellington, were fighting the French, under Napoleon. And Napoleon was on a roll. *So* much so, that if Wellington lost, England itself would be at risk.

So you can imagine the disappointment and panic when messengers at the top of Winchester Cathedral in England, read the semaphore from a ship in the harbor, that said "**W-e-l-l-i-n-g-t-o-n** – one letter at a time, painfully slow – **D-e-f-e-a-t-e-d**." that was the message

And as they passed it along, fear mounted and hope waned. What would *happen* to England. Why didn't Wellington win? What was wrong with him? (Hughes, *Acts*, 253)

Except Wellington *did* win. The messengers just missed the last part because fog rolled in. And it wasn't until several hours later that they received the *whole* message. "Wellington, defeated, the enemy." At which point praise broke out. Praise for Wellington especially. Because they knew he *could*, and he *did*.*****

As you remember *Jesus* this Palm Sunday, make sure you praise him. Because he defeated a *far* greater enemy. Exceeding our expectations, and fulfilling the Scriptures. He could and he did.

Second, praise him . . .

Because he's the Messiah (Jn 12:13)

As in, the Christ. The one promised and anointed by *God* to fulfill the Scriptures and bring salvation. That's what *Messiah* means – the anointed one of God. The one he chose and empowered to do his work.

It's a Hebrew word, even used a couple of times in the *New* Testament, written in Greek. But mostly, it's translated *Christos*, and from there, Christ.

Whatever the case – Christ, Christos, or Messiah – they all mean the same thing and refer to the same person: **the anointed one of God**. The one who would be like Adam, having dominion over all the earth (Ps 72:8). And like Moses, leading and teaching his people (Dt 18:15,18). And like David, ruling a kingdom (2 Sam 7). From the very *beginning* of the Bible, and *throughout* the Bible, a Messiah is promised.

Like in Genesis, where God says someone from the seed of Eve would crush *Satan* (Gen 3:15). Or how about Isaiah, who said he would be both a suffering servant (Is 53) and a victorious conqueror (Is 56-61)? Or Daniel, who described him as a son of man, but coming from heaven (Dan 7:9-14)? An anointed Prince who would forgive sin, instill righteousness, and judge the world (Dan 9:24-27)? A promised Messiah is all *over* the Bible.

➤ And in the *New* Testament, we find out it's Jesus. He fits all the descriptions to a "T". With the crowd on Palm Sunday even *alluding* to it. John 12:13b. "*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord . . .!*" they shout. Or praise you, that's the idea of *blessed*; praise you, because we see you as coming from God; *in the name of the Lord*; representing him. The very *essence* of the Messiah.

He would come from God, with all of his power and glory, to accomplish all the amazing things that were promised. Bottom line? They recognized greatness when they saw it, and praised him. And they didn't even have the *rest* of the story. They hadn't seen his resurrection. His glorified body. His ascension to heaven. His promised Holy Spirit.

But the Apostles did; later on. *They* saw it. And when they remembered what the crowd *alluded* to, and what was written about him in the *Old* Testament, they confirmed his messiahship. So much so, that they made it part of his name.

Instead of referring to him as Jesus *the* Christ, *the* Messiah, using it as a title; they dropped the article altogether and just called him Christ. **Jesus Christ**. Jesus Messiah. Making it part of his name, and offering the *ultimate* praise.

➤ How about you? Do you praise him like that? Do you name the name? Do you express it like the crowd with honor and exaltation? Joyful and unashamed? I hope so.

If someone is anointed by God; if someone is chosen and empowered to do his work; if someone builds a kingdom that can't be stopped; and defeats Satan by rising from the dead; and reigns victorious; and forgives your sin; and gives you life – don't you think he's worthy of praise?

Withhold it no longer. Subdue it no more. Praise him with all you have. From the mountain tops *and* the valleys. On Palm Sunday and every day. He's the Messiah.

Third, praise him . . .

Because he's our Savior (Ps 118:25-26)

It's the very thing the crowd *shouted*. "*Hosanna!*" That all-familiar Palm Sunday word that means little to nothing to most of us. But for them, it meant everything. Because it's *loaded* with meaning.

Hosanna is yet *another* Hebrew word, that originally meant "save us." That's how it was used. And over time, it came to mean "the one who saves." Or Savior. So as Jesus rode down the Mt of Olives and into Jerusalem, the crowd was proclaiming him and praising him as their *Savior*.

And they got the idea straight from Scripture. Hosanna is a messianic expression, right out of **Ps 118:25-26**. Where it says:

Save us, we pray, O LORD! [Or in Hebrew – Hosanna, we pray, O LORD!] *O LORD, we pray, give us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!*

Far from making up *new* expressions of praise, they drew on the Bible.

➤ And they didn't have to go searching. It was in the forefront of their mind and on the tip of their tongue. Because Ps 118 is a passage that God-fearing Jews *sang*, as they made their way to Jerusalem each time for the various feasts. Like this one.

So here they were, applying it to the situation at hand. To Jesus. Essentially saying, "You're the one we've been singing about; the one we've been longing for. You're the one who saves. *Our* Savior."*****

Don't you love it when God does that? When he connects a Scripture you read in the morning, with a situation in your day? Or a comment that's made. So that you can't miss the application? I love that.

➤ Now, does that mean the crowd applied Ps 118 *completely* right? Thinking of Jesus as they should? Probably not. They were probably thinking he was an *earthly* savior; an earthly deliverer. One who would restore the *nation*-state of Israel, not establish a completely *new* Israel; spiritual Israel. They were probably thinking of him as a military savior. Or a governing savior. Yearning for a return to the good old days of David and Solomon.

But Jesus had other things in mind, didn't he? Greater things. He had the salvation of our *souls* in mind. He had the restoration of the *earth* in mind. He had eternal *life* in mind. He had salvation from the consequences of our *sin* in mind. He had *heaven* in mind. He had

the *world* in mind. He had *us* in mind. Us. To be *our* Savior. My Savior. Your Savior. And for that we should praise him.

➤ When's the last time you praised him for saving you from the *consequences* of your sin? (**From sin**) Eternal torment in the throes of hell. When's the last time you praised him for saving you from the *power* of sin? It's power to hold you in bondage and plague you with misery. When's the last time you praised him for saving you forever? Giving you *eternal* life? Not to mention life to the full.

If you're not inspired by that, if you can't wait for me to stop talking so you can start praising, something's wrong. You either don't understand the depths of depravity from which you've been *rescued*, and the terrible *consequences* you faced; or you're not saved.

Either way, open the eyes of your heart. Ask God to do a work of grace. To see *yourself* rightly and *Jesus* rightly. And then, praise him like you should; as *your* Hosanna. *Your* Savior.

And last, praise him . . .

Because he's Lord (Lk 19:38)

Lord, as in master, leader, ruler, authority. Or as Luke records it, *King*. Luke 19:38 – "*Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!* In other words, praise the one who *rules* with God's authority. That's the idea of kingship. He rules our *lives*. He leads our heart. He's *Lord*. Same idea. Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords. And we ought to praise him for it.

You say, "I don't know. I just think of Jesus as my Savior. I'm not even sure if I can honestly *say* he's my Lord."

➤ If you've put your faith in Jesus to save you, then you've put your faith in Jesus to lead you. The two go hand in hand. If you're a child of God, by grace through faith, Jesus is your Savior *and* Lord. Like Peter said at Pentecost 2 months *after* Palm Sunday. *God has made him both Lord and Christ* [Lord and Savior], *this Jesus whom you crucified*. (Acts 2:36)

The idea that you can trust Jesus as your Savior but not your Lord, is not biblical. That's fire insurance. Praying a prayer just in case, but living however you want.

Jesus didn't die for that. He didn't die so you could live like the devil but avoid hell. (**Band**) **Rom 10:9** says – *If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved*. Your salvation and his Lordship go hand in hand. To follow him all the days of your life. And live for him. And praise him.*****

And why wouldn't you? Because with his Lordship comes his guidance. With his Lordship comes his protection. With his Lordship comes his provision. And blessing. And victory. (**Music**) (**Summary**) Praise the Lord. Let's stand and get at it.

Praise him because he fulfilled the Scriptures. Praise him because he's the promised Messiah. Praise him because he's our Savior. And praise him because he's Lord. Put your hands together and lift up your voice.