

PALM SUNDAY 2020

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

PHIL. 2.5-11 St. MATT. 21.1-13

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Palm Sunday is about a parade...a parade around the church carrying palms and joyfully singing the words of the famous hymn by St. Theodulph, the 9th Century Bishop of Orleans (France):

“All glory, laud, and honor, to thee, Redeemer, King! To whom the lips of children, made sweet hosannas ring.”

The Palm Sunday Procession is the commencement of Holy Week. Because of the State mandate to continue sheltering in place until at least May 3rd...we will not be able to have the usual Procession. We are doing the responsible thing to help stop the spread of COVID-19...King Jesus wants us to be responsible people.

What we can do during this last week of Lent is bring the Palm Sunday Gospel and words of the great hymn into our hearts wherever we are today. Let's imagine we are there with the crowd watching Jesus ride into the city on a donkey.

600 years earlier the prophet Zechariah wrote,

“Rejoice, rejoice, people of Zion! Shout for joy, you people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you! He comes triumphant and victorious, but humble and riding on a donkey.”

Palm branches are thrown down on the road...a sign of honor and respect...as Jesus passes by. We shout,

“Praise to David's Son! God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord! Praise be to God!”

We have a distinct advantage over the rest of the crowd on the first Palm Sunday because we know how the story turns out. It's not what the crowd expected. If

we put ourselves in their place...it's not what we would have expected either.

Paul writes in his Letter to the Philippians the real reason Jesus came to us...he is God's Son...who came to us as a human being...and was obedient to his Father. His love for us was so strong that he was willing to give up his own life for us...so our sins could be forgiven once and for all time.

The crowd expected Jesus to be another King David who would lead a revolt against the Roman occupation and restore an earthly kingdom. Jesus was the promised Messiah. Jesus said his kingdom was not like any kingdom on earth. His kingdom was in heaven. Most of the crowd didn't want to hear that message. So they eventually turned against him. It's the message we want to hear.

We know everything Jesus said would happen to him came true. We know what's next: prayers in a garden, betrayal by a friend, arrest, torture, trial and execution. We know Good Friday was the darkest day in human history...but it was only the beginning of a story about life...not death.

It's been 2600 years since Zechariah's prophesy about King Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the back of a lowly pack animal...not what we expect from our King. But Jesus knew exactly what he was doing. He was announcing his arrival...saying, “Here I am”, in the humblest way.

King Jesus is here...and we have to decide what we think about him...and we shout what we know to be true...

“God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord!”

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