

A Sermon Preached by Pastor Justin Johnson  
Our Saviour's Lutheran Church Bellingham, WA  
Palm Sunday March 28, 2010  
Text: Luke 19:28-40

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Grace to you and peace from God the Father and from Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Here we are at the beginning of Holy week, a time when we remember with great detail the days surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection. Holy week begins today with Palm Sunday, a day when we remember Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. There was great anticipation for what would happen at Jerusalem. We can see that by how Jesus is greeted on the way there. We are told by Luke that a multitude of disciples who had gathered along the way that Jesus was coming shouted "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" Yes, the people had great expectations for Jesus. They had high hopes for what was going to happen with Jesus coming to Jerusalem. They were hoping that a coup would take place and that Jesus would be in power, that Jesus would be the ruler of the land, that Jesus would be the King. The people were ready to make Jesus king, and the religious leaders knew it. We can see their nervousness as they want Jesus to order his disciples to be quiet. But Jesus' response is, "IF THESE WERE SILENT, THE STONES WOULD SHOUT OUT."

Yes, it is clear that something is happening. There is great energy surrounding this entry into Jerusalem as Jesus shows himself to be a prophet by telling the two disciples what they will find and encounter as they are told to go get a colt for Jesus. Jesus' words are found to be true. There is great energy in the crowd that gathers and lays their cloaks on the road that lies before Jesus.

Yet there is something peculiar about this entry into Jerusalem. It is not really quite fitting for a king. Would a king take a chance riding a colt that had never been ridden before? Would a king ride a colt? Yet as we follow Jesus and the events of Holy Week we see that Jesus is no ordinary King.

For the night before his death, on the day we remember as Maundy Thursday, Jesus took off his outer robe and washed the feet of his disciples in an act of service and then told his disciples that this is how they ought to love one another. What kind of king is this that serves others by washing

their feet? Later on in the evening while they are at table--including the one who was about to betray Jesus--Jesus takes the bread, blesses it and breaks it and gives it to his disciples to eat saying, this is my body, eat this, do this in remembrance of me. And then again after supper, he took the cup of wine, gave thanks and gave it to his disciples saying this is my blood, drink this, do this in remembrance of me.

Then later that evening while they are praying in the Garden, Judas comes with a guard and with a kiss betrays Jesus in to the hands of those who want to put him to death. Jesus then heads to trial.

On Good Friday, we remember the events of Jesus' trial, suffering, crucifixion, and burial as we hear the passion story, as we hear the story of God's deep, abiding love for us in Jesus Christ. The one who could have easily been an earthly king, but rather, he emptied himself, he took the form of a slave. Though he was God, he did not regard himself equal with God. He was born in human likeness of the Virgin Mary, and he humbled himself, and became obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross.  
(Philippians 2)

Yes, this is a sign of God's love for us. Paul tells us in Romans 5:8, "but God proves his love for us in that while we were sinners Christ died for us." Yes, this week we remember the events around Jesus death on the cross, but we remember them with hope of Easter. For we know that death was not the end for Jesus, that he was raised from the dead on Easter morning. We will celebrate that next Sunday, but first we remember today, on Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday the story and events leading up to the resurrection.

Yes, this time of year is a powerful time as we remember the heart of the story of God's son Jesus Christ. It is a story that creates faith. It is a story that brings forth new life. It is a story that brings healing and wholeness. It is a story creates clean hearts and minds as we hear once again the suffering of death for our sake, so that our sins are forgiven and we hear the account of death being defeated.

It is a powerful story, it is a story that is true. It is a story that is full of hope and promise for you and for me. And it is the story into which we are joined in the waters of baptism. Yes, in the waters of baptism we are joined to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And in the waters of baptism, with

the word of God, our sinful selves are put to death and we are raised new creations.

As we are washed in the waters of baptism, we are named as children of God and we are made a part of God's family. And baptism is a sacrament, which means that there are three parts to it. First, it is commanded by God in Matthew 28 "GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT."

Second, there is an earthly element involved in baptism; it is water. Third, it contains a promise. That promise is that in baptism God forgives sin, delivers from death and the devil and gives salvation to all who believe what he has promised.

And so in baptism, we have a promise and this promise comes to us in Jesus Christ. A promise that is true, a promise that reminds us of God's deep abiding love for us. It is a promise that we can hold on to through all of life's ups and downs. How do we use this promise? When the world says that you are no good, you can remember your baptism and God's promise that you are good enough. When the world says that you are no good, you can come to the waters, remember your baptism and the promise that God's love is for you. When death knocks at your door, when death comes to have its say in your life, you can remember the waters of your baptism and you can say to death, "I am not afraid, for in my baptism I was joined to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and while you may have your say in my life, I know that Jesus Christ has the last word." And today we rejoice, for this day four young people will be joined to Christ. Four people will be joined to the life-giving waters of baptism. Thanks be to God. Amen.