

PALM SUNDAY

April 5, 2020

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

AMEN.

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

HOSANNA TO THE SON OF DAVID!

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 118:22-26

The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.

This is the Lord's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Save us, we pray, O Lord!

O Lord, we pray, give us success!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

We bless you from the house of the Lord.

COLLECT

Let us pray. Most merciful God, as the people of Jerusalem, with palms in their hands, gathered to greet Your dearly beloved Son when He came into His Holy City, grant that we may ever hail Him as our King and, when He comes again, go forth to meet Him with trusting and steadfast hearts and, even now, follow Him in the way that leads to eternal life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

[Holy Gospel for the Procession of Palms]

P: Let us hear the Holy Gospel according to St. John, the twelfth chapter (**John 12:12-19**):

“The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 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!’ And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

‘Fear not, daughter of Zion;
behold, your king is coming,
sitting on a donkey's colt!’

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. The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.”

April 5, 2020 – Palm Sunday

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

PRAISE TO YOU, O CHRIST.

Let us go forth in peace,

IN THE NAME OF THE LORD. AMEN.

COLLECT

Let us pray: Almighty and everlasting God, You sent Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take upon Himself our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross. Mercifully grant that we may follow the example of His great humility and patience and be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, **AMEN.**

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST!

HOMILY – PALM SUNDAY MEDITATION ON THE WORD

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

“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.”

As we meditate on the events of Palm Sunday, let us first hear what had been written about these events, several centuries beforehand, by the prophet Zechariah:

[Zechariah 9:9–12] Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double.

God’s people had had many kings who fought many wars. Now a king was coming who was declaring peace – an end to their warfare. The chariot and the warhorse and the battle bow will be cut off – and this king will speak peace to the nations.

What did this mean? Did this mean the war to end all wars? Did this mean peace through dominance over other nations? Jesus, riding into Jerusalem, was certainly a king. But of what sort?

The palm branches being waved by the crowds signified victory over God’s enemies. But the donkey on which the King rode signified peace, not war. Peace, victory, with no war horse to win it. How would it be won?

How will your peace be won? What is your concern? What makes you anxious? What is the topic on your mind or on your tongue all week? What are you waiting to

hear more about on the news? For what headlines – or for what memes – do you scroll through Facebook or Twitter feed?

The crowds who gathered to see Jesus – walking before Him and following after Him – on Palm Sunday, as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the donkey, had perhaps a better understanding of why Jesus came than what we often give them credit for.

Were they looking to make Jesus an earthly king? Were they thinking in terms of earthly-national victory? Some of them, sure. But our Palm Sunday text from John 12 says these crowds gathered to see Jesus because they had heard about what event? What miracle?

These crowds had heard about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead: **“The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he (Jesus) had done this sign.”**

That crowd gathered with palms on Palm Sunday because they heard Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. Now, for twenty centuries, the Church has gathered, sometimes even with palms, because we have heard that Jesus raised Himself from the dead – and that His death was a death for us.

Those crowds back then gathered with victory palms and shouted, *“Hosanna! Hosanna!”* – which means, *“Save us, please! Save us, now!”*

“Hosanna” is a plea of desperation – “Save us, please”. But with Jesus, whose very name means “God saves” (Jesus/Yeshua – “Yahweh Saves”), this plea had become a shout of victory.

This Jesus, riding in as a king of peace, had shown He even has power over death. He was able to save. He had power relevant to that innermost fear – that I am a sinner who is due to die.

The conscience knows this, and this is the inner source of all my outward desperation. I am a sinner. I am due to die. I will face God. This is a frightful thing.

But Zechariah told us to rejoice. **“Rejoice greatly...Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation.”**

Rejoice. The warfare of my sinful heart against God is being ended. The King of Peace is making peace with the guilty, with us who are worthy of death.

How? Why? Because of the blood of His covenant: **“As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free.”**

Jesus, the only righteous one, who had the power over death, was riding into Jerusalem to die. Not to die in glorious battle in the Holy City, but to die in shame for the shameful outside the city walls – outside the camp where the unclean dwelled.

The death Jesus rode in to die was a death of atonement. A death in your place. A death that paid all you owed and made up for the death you were due to die. By His death, the prisoner of death is freed to live.

Jesus died for man's sin so that by His shed blood man's sin is forgiven. This is the covenant, the agreement, that God makes with sinful man – "My Son will die in your place." And now He has.

Rejoice greatly, O children of God. The one who has power over death has taken care of you. He has made peace between you and God by His death on the cross. Now, having been raised, death no longer has dominion over Him or over His – and you are His by your baptism.

What is there now to fear? Nothing. Your "hosanna" cries have been transformed into shouts of victory. Let your anxieties, therefore, be turned into thanksgiving - thanking Christ for what He has done.

When we can finally gather together again, brothers and sisters, as one crowd – whenever that day will be – we will rejoice together all the more in this peace that Christ has given. Amen.

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST!

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keeps your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; The forgiveness of sins; The resurrection of the body; And the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Almighty and Everlasting God, Gracious Father, the hope of mankind, we, your people, are scattered and cannot gather as one as we desire. Give us strength and patience to endure. Our palm branches are dry and our cries of victory feel empty. Things are not the way they should be. Help us to accept the circumstances of these times as your will and fatherly discipline. Examine us and help us to examine ourselves. Give us repentance from our many sins for which we need this time of discipline. Help us to trust Your promise that You discipline every son whom You love [**Hebrews 12:6**] so that we are not shaken by bad times but instead can receive both the good and bad of life with thanksgiving for your good, gracious, and fatherly care. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We thank You, O Lord, that by Your Son's willing death You have conquered death for us and for all who believe in You. Give us peace. Calm our fear of death each day. Help us to treat life as sacred by taking precautions for ourselves and for our neighbor's

sake. At the same time, help us to avoid paranoia or irrational behavior fueled by a fear of death. Let health guidelines and mandates become our good works and joyful service to You at this time. By our peace and calm, and through our witness, bring others to a knowledge of the One who died and rose for them. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Father in heaven, your Son Jesus has become like us in every way, except sin, and therefore can sympathize with our weaknesses. Now we, O Lord, have become like shut-ins and like our homebound members, some of whom haven't been able to gather for years. As we have become like them, let us remember that the pain we feel now is their constant pain. And when we can gather more freely again, let us not forget our shut-in and homebound members, but remember them, sympathize with their situation, and serve them with our presence and fellowship in every way possible. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Father in heaven, keep all the members of St. Matthew safe during this time. We ask that You spare all our members from any sickness or injury that requires hospitalization so that none of us are totally cut off. If it's your will to isolate any of us, grant us the presence of Your Son and make His presence known. Spare the sick and elderly from death until we can gather around them more freely. Have mercy. Heal our loved ones who were already suffering. Spare them. Grant health and peace to our bodies. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who taught us to pray...

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever, Amen.

BENEDICTION

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.
Amen.