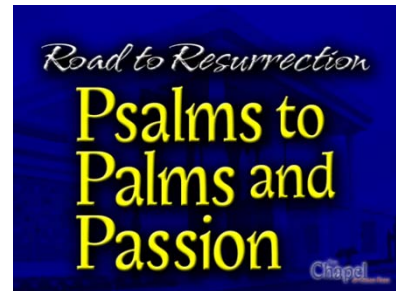


Psalms to Palms and Passion

We've been walking together, as friends in *this* Church, and with the *Church universal* (around the world and throughout the ages) on this **road to resurrection**.



Today is the sixth Sunday of Lent, Palm Sunday.

- Spiritual disciplines
- Blog articles
- Sermons leading us to *Resurrection Sunday*

Today, we can see Easter Sunday *just over the horizon*. Palm Sunday is the beginning of this most significant week in the Christian calendar. We can sense it in the songs we sing and hear. We hear it in the words we pray and read from Scripture. We can even begin to feel it today as Spring *breaks in* on us.

We are celebrating the *Triumphal Entry* of this week.

Today begins a special week.



Each of the four Gospels, the four accounts of the life of Jesus, is unique

- Written for unique purposes
- Directed toward different audiences
- Emphasis and inclusion of different content (the Gospel of John, for example, has no record of the birth of Christ... there is no Christmas in the Gospel of John)

But each of the Gospels, of course, records **this** event. They all have Palm Sunday... and they each, of course, have Good Friday and Easter.

Kari recited, from memory, the account from the Gospel of Mark in chapter 11.

If your Bible has section titles, like the NIV that I use has, then this section is probably titled **The Triumphal Entry**. It describes the scene of Jesus entering the City of Peace – Jerusalem.

- Sung by The Chapel Singers and all of us
- Painted on the wall

Today I want to ask, and begin to answer, a fairly simple question. What is the Triumphal Entry? What is going on here? What is really happening?

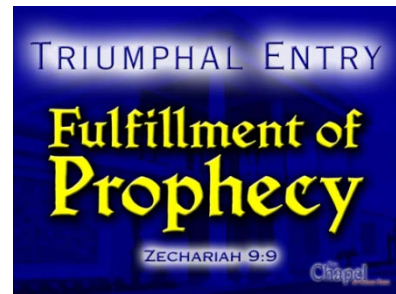
There are limitless *ways* to look at this; not to overly complicate this scene.... But in order to get a fuller picture, today I have 11 drawn perspectives from a synopsis of all the Gospel accounts:

1. Fulfillment of Prophecy
2. Obedience
3. Spectacle
4. Climax
5. Revolution
6. Provocation
7. Paradox
8. Prophecy (Rev. 7:9)
9. Occasion for Tears
10. Scene of Confusion
11. Irony

First, each Gospel account makes specific reference that the **Triumphal Entry** of Jesus into Jerusalem that day was fulfillment of prophecy.

Matthew's Gospel quotes the Prophet Zechariah announcing:

⁹Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!
Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!
See, your king comes to you,
righteous and having salvation,
lowly and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.¹



All four Gospels quote Psalm 118, the passage that Kari read earlier, demonstrating the prophetic (messianic) understanding of the Psalm:

²⁵LORD, save us!
LORD, grant us success!
²⁶Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.
From the house of the LORD we bless you.
²⁷The LORD is God,
and he has made his light shine on us.
With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession
up to the horns of the altar.²

¹ *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Zec 9:9.

² *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Ps 118:25-27.

Lord, save us! Hosanna! This was the Messianic Psalm of victory being sung by the crowd.

It isn't only that **we** can see this as a fulfillment of prophecy... we can assume that the participants understood that this was the fulfillment of prophecy

- The crowds (*forced?*)
- The Pharisees (fear?)
- The Disciples (finally?)
- Jesus (leading us to the next point...)

This scene demonstrates the obedience of Jesus.

²⁶Did not the Messiah *have* to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"³

Even after his resurrection from the dead, on the Road to Emmaus, Jesus had to explain that the week of His Passion was, above everything else, a supreme act of obedience to God the Father.



Jesus understood what was in store for Him as He rode into Jerusalem on that donkey. It would only be a matter of hours until He would spell it out for His friends (John 12):

²⁷“Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify your name!”⁴

Riding through the gate, on the donkey, in obedience to the Father, Jesus began this most significant week... in a spectacular way.

It seems that this was the first time that Jesus willingly entered into a **spectacle**. Although His miracles and teaching certainly earned acclaim, Jesus, more often than not, specifically avoided attention. But **now** He allowed the spectacle.



We can understand how crowds would gather. The night before the ride into Jerusalem, Jesus had a meal with Lazarus (according to John 12).

⁹Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead.⁵

³ *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Lk 24:26.

⁴ *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Jn 12:27-28.

⁵ *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Jn 12:9.

What an opportunity... to see the resurrected one and the **resurrector** Himself!

Resurrection wasn't only the culmination of the Passion Week (we know the end of the story; we know that Easter Sunday is on the way)... resurrection was crucial for calling the crowd together. It was the resurrection of Lazarus that gave credibility to the claims that Jesus was the Messiah.

Many hoped that this would be the **climax** of God's dealing with His people... and more specifically the climax of dealing with His people's **enemies**.



Would this one

- who can feed thousands,
- heal the deaf, dumb, and diseased
- and raise men from the dead

Would this one deliver God's people from tyranny? Would He put down foes? Would He rescue? Would He save? Would He usher in a new Kingdom... a Kingdom of God?

¹³They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting,
"Hosanna!"
"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"
"Blessed is the king of Israel!"⁶

These were shouts of desperation... shouts calling for deliverance... the climax of the Kingdom.

It was clear that the religious leaders feared revolution (Mark 14).



Now the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him. ²"But not during the Festival," they said, "or the people may riot."⁷

At Passover, the city was packed with celebrants. The crowds could easily be worked into a frenzy... they were **looking** for a Messiah. There was too much to lose and the religious leaders plotted carefully.

⁶ *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Jn 12:13.

⁷ *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Mk 14:1-2.

We could surmise that this was an intentional **provocation**. How could the Pharisees stand this? Palm branches, shouts of Hosanna, riding on a donkey as the prophecy dictated, in the days leading-up to Passover.

In today's vernacular it was as if Jesus, His disciples, and the crowds were saying to the religious leaders "in your face."

¹⁹So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"⁸

We wouldn't want to miss the various displays of **paradox** in this scene.

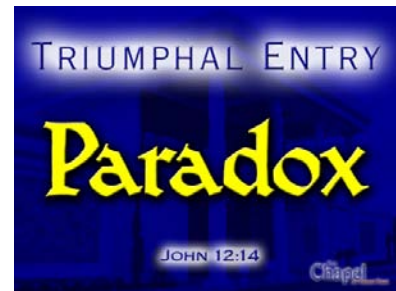
The Pharisees were clearly threatened, but the Roman officials and military would have had to be thinking: give me a break! We refer to this as the Triumphal Entry... but to a Roman, this would be considered a joke.

Whenever a Roman general was victorious on foreign soil, killing at least 5,000 of the enemy, and gaining new territory, he was given a "Roman triumph" when he returned to the city. It was the Roman equivalent of the American "ticker-tape parade," only with much more splendor. The victor would be permitted to display the trophies he had won and the enemy leaders he had captured. The parade ended at the arena where some of the captives entertained the people by fighting wild beasts. Compared to a "Roman triumph," our Lord's entry into Jerusalem was nothing.⁹

- A donkey – rather than a powerful war horse
- A donkey – Kings rode on wheels... chariots and carriages
- No captives
- No loot or trophies

Of course history teaches us that Christ did indeed triumph over Rome.

Not only was this a fulfillment of prophecy... we could note the prophetic element of the scene; it was prophecy. Note the similarities of the scene portrayed in Revelation 7.



⁸ *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Jn 12:19.

⁹Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, c1989). *The Bible exposition commentary*. "An exposition of the New Testament comprising the entire 'BE' series"--Jkt. (Jn 12:12). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

⁹After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”¹⁰

Similar in that they held palm branches in their hands, and cried out salvation.

But distinct

- A great multitude
- Every nation
- Lamb (not an earthly, warrior king)
- White robes (righteous)

This scene that day in Jerusalem was merely a glimpse of what eternity holds, when those whom the Lamb has redeemed will stand and praise our Savior forever.

Although the scene is marked by celebration, there are also tears... as it ushers in a week that will be washed in tears (Luke 19).

⁴¹As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it ⁴²and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.”¹¹



The City and Temple would fall. And the people whom God loved would suffer. And even though Jesus had the perspective of eternity, knowing the end... just as He knew that His friend would live when He stood with His friends at the tomb of Lazarus... even though Jesus was fulfilling prophecy and obeying the Father... He wept.

And **His** tears would be followed by the tears of His friends, and His family as He walked through the torture of the week that lies ahead.

We've alluded to this already; the Scripture makes it clear that there was a great deal of **confusion**.

¹⁶At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.¹²



¹⁰ *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Re 7:9-10.

¹¹ *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Lk 19:41-42.

¹² *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Jn 12:16.

Even those who had been with Him the most, and were the beneficiaries of His teaching, didn't understand what was unfolding before their eyes. The only one in the picture who could see clearly was Jesus himself... not the crowds, nor the religious leaders, not the political leaders, nor even His closest friends.

And finally, notice the *irony*.

The Pharisees, frustrated, angry, and threatened, in exasperation proclaim:

“See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!”¹³

The *whole world* has gone after him? Granted, there were huge crowds, and this was a pretty big deal... but the *whole world*? That seems like a bit of an overstatement; the irony, of course, is that the Pharisees were unknowingly speaking prophetically.

Because it would have been more accurate for the Pharisees to say: The whole world *will* go after him!

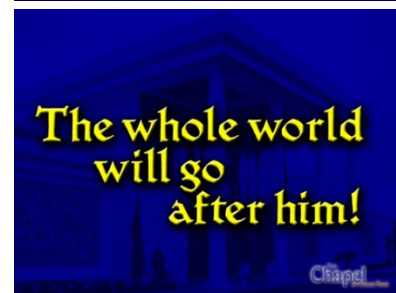
From our perspective, we can see that this was indeed the beginning of the most significant week in history. Even the most godless atheist historian would have a difficult time denying that Jesus, and specifically the events of this week, entirely changed the course of history.

But even that statement doesn't give us the whole picture. Palm Sunday *didn't stick*... the party ended. Those eager to claim Jesus as King would soon consider Him a criminal.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus was acclaimed by the crowds; on Good Friday He died alone.

On Palm Sunday, the crowds went after Him; but on Easter Sunday, He will go after the whole world!

On Palm Sunday the crowds reached for Jesus... but their grasp was loose; they couldn't hold on.



¹³ *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Jn 12:19.

On Easter Sunday the resurrected Jesus grabs hold of His people with all the power of God. The world cannot manage to hold on to Him... but because of the

- effect of His sacrifice
- conquering of death by resurrection
- power of the Holy Spirit

He takes hold of us.

Listen to what Jesus says in John 15

¹³Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because servants do not know their master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last¹⁴

What about our Palm Sunday, this Palm Sunday, today?

What can we take away from this?

What can we share with others?

How will this Palm Sunday change us for the better?

Today we have a fortunate *collision of calendars*.

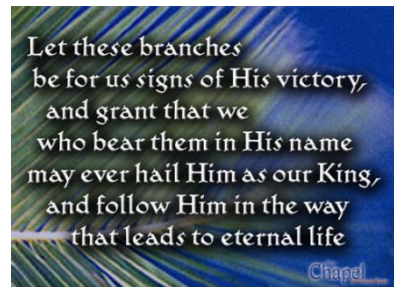
It is the sixth Sunday of Lent, Palm Sunday that ushers in Passion Week.

It is also the first Sunday of the month, our traditional day for Communion, the celebration of the Lord's Table.

Today we carry the palm in one hand, and the bread and cup in the other.

In one hand we have a symbol of praise, worship, and loyalty to our triumphant King. In the other we carry the symbols of Christ's sacrifice.

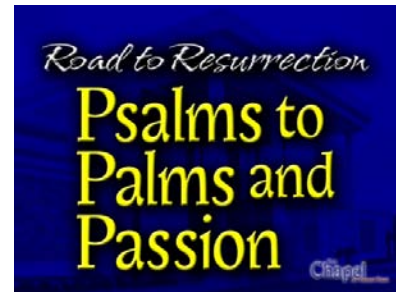
With the palm we wave vigorously under *our* own power; with the bread and cup we may only receive. We may receive... and we *must* receive. These are both Christ's command. In regard to the waving of the palm, Jesus says that if we don't "the stones will cry out" (Luke 19:37-40). In regard to the bread and the cup, Jesus says "this is my body and my blood, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).



¹⁴The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). Jn 15:12-16.

With the palm we confess that we understand God's plan as best we can, and we whole-heartedly subscribe to His plan; with the bread and cup we are called to receive God's plan, even if it is difficult... even if it is not precisely what we anticipated.

These are the symbols of the Kingdom: victory and suffering, acclaim and scorn, power and pain, life and death and resurrected life leading to eternal life.



This morning, allow these both to draw you to God. Understanding God's plan, as best as you can today, acknowledge Him as King (Hosanna!). But along with the waving of the palm, we also turn our palms (the palms of our hands) to Him realizing that our efforts are meaningless unless we receive all He has for us.

Looking to Resurrection Sunday, we hold the Palm Sunday branches in our hands and Jesus invites us to join Him for the Thursday evening meal.

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.¹⁵

¹⁵ *The Holy Bible: Today's New International Version*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). 1 Co 11:23-26.