

What Do You Cry Out – Palm Sunday: Mach 18, 2018

Good morning – welcome to Connections Vineyard Church and a Blessed Palm Sunday to you.

How many of you knew that today was Palm Sunday? How many of you know what Palm Sunday is and why we celebrate it as a special day in the Church?

Well hopefully after today all of us can answer yes to that question. I want to start off on our journey towards that goal with a video clip that I think does a good job of setting the basis for our study today.

Show video clip: Palm Sunday

The clip we just watched depicts what is often referred to as the Triumphal Entry. It was the event the Jews saw as the fulfillment of Scripture as set forth in Zechariah 9:9-10

Zechariah 9:9-10 (NASB)

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
He is just and endowed with salvation,
Humble, and mounted on a donkey,
Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
And the horse from Jerusalem;
And the bow of war will be cut off
And He will speak peace to the nations;
And His dominion will be from sea to sea,
And from the River to the ends of the earth.

The Triumphal Entry is the day Jesus allowed Himself to be proclaimed as King. Up until that point, Jesus would always hide away or stop the masses when they tried to proclaim Him as King. He would stop them and tell them that His time had not yet come. We see this in many places in scripture, one such place is the wedding in Cana:

John 2: 1-4 (NIV)

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied, "My time has not yet come."

But on this day Jesus not only allowed Himself to be called King, He orchestrated it.

Luke 19:29-40 (NIV)

As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.'" Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They replied, "The Lord needs it." They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

Don't you just wish that for that moment the crowd would have been silent? I would have loved to see what happened if the very stones would have gotten up and proclaimed who Jesus was.

Anyway, back to the Triumphal Entry; --- this event was important enough that it is recorded in all 4 Gospels and it is this event that we celebrate today, it is the celebration of this event we call Palm Sunday. It is called Palm Sunday because of the Palms the people laid at Jesus' feet lining His entrance into Jerusalem.

This is a significant point, because it let's us know what was on the people's mind, what they were expecting from Jesus.

SIGNIFANCE OF THE PALMS: Palm branches are traditionally used by all nations as an emblem of joy in their military victory over their enemies.

Zechariah had foretold of the arrival of the Messianic King in Jerusalem via the humble conveyance of a colt. Here the crowd hailed Jesus as "the son of David", a loaded name used at a loaded time. The priestly establishment was understandably disturbed, as the palm was the national emblem of an independent Palestine. These were Jewish flags. What if Jesus should claim to be the heir of King David? (Recent archeological excavations have turned up Roman coins, which have the head of Tiberius over-stamped with a palm.)

The masses were expecting a revolt, they were expecting a military coo, a leader who would cast off the shackles of Roman rule and lead Israel back into freedom. They were celebrating the day that had been foretold, the day they had waited so long for.

As we saw in the video clip, it was a time of great joy. The crowds were cheering Jesus with great enthusiasm. **But did you every wonder why the cheering stopped. Why in the short span of 5 – 7 days, the voices from the crowd went from cheers ushering in their King to cries for Him to be crucified?**

The same people who were quick to shout "Hosanna!" on Palm Sunday were just as quick to shout, "Crucify Him!" on Good Friday; when He didn't fit into their notions of what a respectable Messiah should look and act like.

Before the week was out, Jesus would be plotted against, arrested, tried, whipped, humiliated, spat upon, cursed at, crucified and buried. But the Good News is and will always be ----- **He Rose Again.** --- But that is next weeks talk ☺

Some years ago a book was written by a noted American historian entitled ***"When The Cheering Stopped."*** It was the story of President Woodrow Wilson and the events leading up to and following WWI.

When that war was over Wilson was an international hero. There was a great spirit of optimism abroad, and people believed that the last war had been fought and the world had been made safe for democracy.

On his first visit to Paris after the war, Wilson was greeted by the cheering masses. The same thing was true in England and Italy.

The cheering lasted about a year. Then it gradually began to stop. It turned out that after the war the political leaders in Europe were more concerned with their own agendas than they were a lasting peace. At home Woodrow Wilson ran into opposition in the United States Senate and his League of Nations was not ratified. Under the strain of it all the President's health began to break. He suffered a stroke and in the next election his party was defeated. So, it was that Woodrow Wilson, a man who barely a year earlier had been heralded as the new world Messiah, came to the end of his days a broken and defeated man.

It's a sad story, but one that is not altogether unfamiliar. The ultimate reward for someone who tries to translate ideals into reality is apt to be frustration and defeat. There are some exceptions, of course, but not too many.

It happened that way for Jesus. When He emerged on the public scene He was an overnight sensation. He would try to go off to be alone and the people would still follow Him. The masses lined the streets as He came into town. On Palm Sunday leafy palm branches were spread before Him and there were shouts of Hosanna.

The term Hosanna comes from Psalm 118:25 and is an outcry for help an outcry for God to personally come down from Heaven and save His people – specifically the Jewish people.

It comes from the roots:

Hosea = Salvation

Yeshua = the Jewish translation of Jesus = Savior or Saved

In shouting “Hosanna” they were in effect saying: ***“Save us now” Jesus.***

Crowds gathered on this day to proclaim their King and to call for Him to save them, for Him to save them now. This was the apex, but also the beginning of the end. The cheering did not last for long. There came a point when the tide began to turn against Him. Oh, you didn’t notice it so much at first. People still came to see Him, but the old excitement was missing, and the crowds were not as large as they had been. His critics now began to publicly attack Him. That was something new. Earlier they had been afraid to speak out for fear of the masses, but they began to perceive that the fickle public was turning on Him. Soon the opposition began to snowball. When they discovered that they could not discredit His moral character, they began to take more desperate measures. Before it was all over a tidal wave welled up that brought Jesus to His knees under the weight of a cross.

Why did the masses so radically turn against Him? How did the shouts of Hosanna on Sunday transform into the shouts of crucify Him on Friday? I am not just talking about the immediate events that may have brought it about, but the deeper root causes. What were the underlying issues? In five days it all fell apart. Why? That is the issue that I would like for us to concentrate on this morning. **Why did the cheering stop?**

First: I think one reason the cheering stopped is that Jesus began to talk more and more about commitment. During the last week of Jesus’ life, a very interesting scene occurred, and even more significantly, it occurred in full view of the people: **we see it in Matthew 19: 13-26.**

In this passage, a rich young ruler came enthusiastically to Jesus asking Him what he needed to do to be saved. Jesus tells him to keep the commandments and when the rich young ruler says that he already did that, Jesus astonishes the crowd by telling the rich young ruler to go and sell all that you he had and give it to the poor and then come follow Him. The rich young ruler went away dejected and the masses were stunned. They were troubled first for a theological reason. They had been raised to believe that God had especially blessed rich men. Yet, here is Jesus turning the big money away. I wonder how many churches would do that today. We think that people who are wealthy and prominent are individuals who need to be recruited and cultivated. We think their success in the world will lead to our success in the church; it was no different back then and it bothered them to see Jesus turn away a rich man, to see Jesus turn away someone, who to them, was the best of the best. If he wasn’t good enough, how could they be?

They were also bothered for a second reason. ---- Prior to this Jesus’ message had largely been one of grace. When the 5,000 were hungry He feed them. When they brought their sick to Him, He healed them. When a woman was caught in adultery and was about to be stoned, it was Jesus who came to her rescue, it was Jesus who saved her both physically and spiritually.

Up to this point the message of His ministry was one of grace upon grace.

But now, the tone started to change. With His words to the rich young ruler He seemed to be saying, ***“The time for miracles is over. The time for commitment is now.”***

It is interesting to me that in all four Gospels after Jesus enters Jerusalem to the shouts of Hosanna and palm branches there is not another miracle recorded.

There are some events we might count as miracles, such as Jesus putting the ear back on the soldier when Peter cut it off in the garden when they came to arrest Jesus, but there are no more miracles for the masses, done for those who were among His followers.

On the face of it this may not seem significant but when you consider that nearly one half of the Gospels are devoted to the last seven days of Jesus' life, you then understand the significance.

Don't take my word for it, open your Bibles and read it for yourself.

But guess what: While there are no miracles recorded in these chapters what you will find is a persistent call to commitment. A persistent teaching of what the Kingdom is about.

Hungry one morning Jesus stops by a fig tree and finds no figs. He withers the tree because it is producing no fruit. Jesus demands fruitful committed lives.

A Parable is told: Who is more committed? The son who says, “I will work” and then does not or the son who says, “I will not work,” repents, and gets the work done? Answer -- It is the son who repents and does the work.

It is during this time that Jesus casts out the money changers from the Temple and it is during this time the greatest commandment is given:

Mark 12:29-31 (NIV)

"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one, Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

A call to commitment – a call to seek something beyond ourselves.

After the triumphal entry everywhere Jesus goes, every action He takes, every word He speaks is proclaiming that the Kingdom of God is one that asks for commitment and devotion from the people; ***the response the people give Him is heard in their cries for His crucifixion.***

Kenneth Carder – A prominent Methodist Preacher; tells of a story that occurred one day when he was on the campus of Nebraska Wesleyan talking to a group of students who had expressed an interest in the ministry. When he asked how many of them were committed to going into ministry, only one young lady raised her hand. Instead of raising it in an affirmative response to his question, she raised it inject a comment. Her comment was this and I quote: “I have a problem with your use of the word commitment. That sounds very binding and restricting.”

Kenneth Carder went on to write about this exchange with these words:

“The church of today has become an institution in which even belief in God is optional or peripheral. Marketing techniques for a multiple option institution have replaced response to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the means of membership enlistment. The basic appeal is to self-defined needs rather than a call to radical discipleship. The church’s mission all too often is to meet its members perceived needs rather than to serve God’s need for a redeemed, reconciled, and healed world.”

Our concept of consumerism has crept into the church. To recruit persons and to be marketable we think that we need to be able to say: “Look what our church can offer you.” **In this atmosphere true discipleship is muted.** Discipleship means knowing who Jesus The Christ is and following the revelation made known to us in His teaching, death, resurrection, and presence.

Commitment means after the shouts of Hosanna we pick up our cross and walk to Golgotha with Him and when our neighbor stumbles from the weight, we along with Jesus reach down, pick up that cross and carry it too.

I would suggest to you that when the rich young ruler walked away sorrowfully that day, he was not the only one. I think that it is safe to assume that a host of uncommitted people also walked away. Jesus was no longer talking about only grace. He was now speaking about the other side of the coin—commitment and with commitment comes responsibility. He began to talk about the responsibility that rests with a person who has accepted God’s Grace. **The cheering began to stop when Jesus began to speak of commitment.**

Secondly, I think that the cheering began to stop when Jesus dared to suggest that all people are worth loving. Now look what happens on this Palm Sunday. Jesus goes to the temple and drives the money-changers out. After the temple has been emptied, however, he then invites in the lame, the poor, the sick, the outcasts of society. He dares to bring into the church those whom we would refer to today as the homeless and the drug addicts.

By bringing in these people it was His way of saying all people have access to God. It was His way of saying that this is what the Kingdom of God is going to be like.

I cannot help but notice the chain of events as Jesus comes to Jerusalem. The ones who are recognize the truth of Jesus’ Messiahship are the disenfranchised of society. On the way to

the capital city a poor blind beggar cries out: "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." And what was the response of the crowd? They rebuked him and told him to shut up. Time and again it is the ones who have the least that see the true salvation Jesus offers; and time and again it is the voices of the crowd that tell them to be quit; be quit because it is not what the masses want to hear, they want to hear their own voices proclaiming the type of salvation they want. And when it doesn't go their way, they turn like the fickle, self centered souls they are and turn their cries of Hosanna into Cries of Crucify Him. The words aren't what we want to hear, so we want to stop the one who is speaking them, because if we listen, then we have to do something with what we hear. We have to make a choice and when we don't like the options, we would rather not listen.

Have you ever watched the Special Olympics? It always touches my heart. Time and time again you will see the same scenario play out. Nine children will line up for the 100-yard dash. The gun will sound and the race is off ---- but only a few yards into the race, one of the children will fall and contrary to the competitive nature that is in most of us, the other eight do not take advantage of their fallen friend and speed past him to seek victory, no the other nine will in-mass stop and go back for their fallen comrade and they will lift him up and wipe off the dirt and kiss his wounds and together they will all cross the finish line.

For that fleeting moment these children show us what the Kingdom of God is about. Because at that moment, there is not one winner, there is nine. In the race that we're in, in Christ's Kingdom everyone matters. Even those who have fallen and are on the outside; particularly those who have fallen and are on the outside.

Finally, I would suggest to you that the cheering stopped because Jesus began to talk more and more about a cross. In the early part of his ministry Jesus talked about the Kingdom of God. This they wanted to hear about, especially since they misunderstood this kingdom to be a restoration of Israel to the days of King David's glory. But increasingly Jesus began to talk about sacrifice --- even about giving up your own life for another.

Dr. Dobson tells the story of a pee-wee baseball game and he says, when the young boy got up to the plate he looked over to the coach, and he saw him give the signal to sacrifice bunt. He then promptly proceeded to take three big swings and strike out. The coach ran up to him and said: Didn't you see me give you the signal to sacrifice? Yes, the boy replied. But I didn't really think you meant it.

Isn't that what we so often say to God? Yes, Lord, I heard you talk about sacrifice, but I didn't really think that you meant it; at least not for me. The cross says emphatically that He did mean it. He meant it for each and everyone of us; He meant it for me and He meant it for you.

I began this sermon with the question, "Why did the cheering stop?" It stopped because Jesus more and more began to talk about commitment; it stopped because Jesus opened up the doors of the church and invited everyone to come inside, even those most of us don't want to get close to, let alone sit next to in church and it stopped because Jesus began to

talk about the cross. Not only the cross of Calvary, but the cross He expected us to pick up and carry each day.

Mark 8:34 (NASB)

And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

I want to close out the Service today with the song "Different" by Micah Tyler – and as we listen to and pounder the words of the song – I leave you with this question – do the actions of your life shout "Hosanna – Lord of Lords and King of Kings" or do they shout "Crucify Him" – There is no middle ground where Jesus is concerned?