

WELCOME, O PRINCE OF GLORY

Dr. Fred Fourie ~Palm Sunday, April 9, 2006

Psalm 118: 22-29



The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief 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 beseech you, O LORD! O LORD, we beseech you, give us success! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD. We bless you from the house of the LORD. The LORD is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, I will extol you. O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Mark 11: 1 – 11 When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you,

'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

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It was Palm Sunday and, because of a sore throat, seven-year-old Timothy stayed home from Church with a sitter. When the family returned home, they were carrying several palm branches. The boy wanted to know why. Dad tried to explain, "Well, Timothy, people waved them over Jesus' head as he walked by." "Wouldn't you know it," the little boy fumed, "[the one Sunday I don't go, he shows up!](#)"

Jesus and his disciples were now entering Jerusalem for the last time. They were part of the throngs of people moving in to Jerusalem for the Passover, singing Psalms and songs of joy!

Some of the people recognized Jesus, and spread their cloaks and palms on the road and cheered him with shouts like, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

All faces were now turned, and all feet underway to Jerusalem! The Jews were underway to the temple to celebrate their annual religious holiday – the Passover, celebrating the Exodus of their ancestors out of Slavery in Egypt. In real life, they were treated like slaves under the strict rule of Rome! They were hoping for, screaming for, yearning for real change. They wanted someone to lead them to a better life. Those who lined the streets had different reasons for waving those palms. Some were political activists; they had heard rumors that Jesus had special powers, and they wanted him to use it to free Israel from Roman rule. Others had loved ones who were sick or dying. They waved branches, hoping for physical healing. Some were onlookers, merely looking for something to do, while others were followers who hoped Jesus would establish himself as their earthly king and lead their resistance against the Roman Empire.

Sadly, their high hopes were also shortsighted. They saw the world only from their own perspective. Jesus' action was the direct opposite of what the people expected. Little did they understand the significance of the events taking place at that time in history! Jesus was riding a donkey, a symbol of peace, not a horse, a symbol of conquering. Jesus approached Jerusalem in peace as a humble servant and not a mighty warrior king. Jesus had a different understanding and different goals in sight. His kingdom was not from this world. The grain of wheat was about to be engulfed by darkness in order to germinate and to produce new life for countless millions to follow. Jerusalem and its people did not know it then – but they were actually welcoming the Prince of Peace who would influence the course of human history forever.

The people who originally welcomed the Prince of Peace would soon melt away in the bigger crowds and shortly afterwards join in shouts of “crucify him”! IT IS EASY TO SHOUT -- IT IS MUCH HARDER TO FOLLOW. You have seen those bumper stickers-- "Honk if you love Jesus." Let me suggest a different bumper sticker: "Follow if you love Jesus. Anyone can honk." Sometimes we, too, are caught up in the excitement of the moment. We are filled with great enthusiasm, a fresh burst of energy over a particular project. Unfortunately, enthusiasm so easily fades and interest is lost. It was great while it lasted but now it is gone. It is easy to shout--it is not as easy to follow.

The Jesus movement started with a small group of men and women and would grow person by person through the ages until it reached the furthest ends of the world. That ragtag army now numbers in the billions and is still growing. It is building hospitals, universities, and schools. It is healing the wounded and setting captive peoples at liberty. It is still bringing people from darkness into light. Today we again welcome Jesus – not underway to execution – but as our hope for Peace and God's Kingdom on earth! In spite of confusion, opposition and darkness we will work ~ wait ~ hope and yearn for a day when oppression will be no more and God's people across the world will live in dignity and peace and freedom together. That is why we hail the power of Jesus name as we again sing our songs of hope and peace,

“Let peace begin with me ~ Let this be the moment now.  
With every step I take ~ let this be my solemn vow;  
To take each moment and live ~ each moment in peace eternally  
Let there be peace on earth ~ and let it begin with me.”

AMEN