

Palm Sunday

April 7, 2024

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ Online Ministry. This week's message is titled Palm Sunday. Thank you to Paul, Geoff, Gloria, and Don for being part of the video. The scripture reading is Mark 11, verses 1-11. Happy birthday this week to Mike, Christella, Helen, and Don.

Welcome and Announcements

As we get going today, I thought I would start off with a short psalm of praise. Join me, if you will, in this praise to God.

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him with joyful songs. Know the Lord is good, Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good, and his love endures forever. His faithfulness continues through all generations.

Without talking to Don, I think that will fit with the theme today. A couple announcements as we start. Happy birthday to John, Jenny, and Ann. Congratulations on your trip around the sun.

This is the one that you really should pay attention to. Wednesday night, anxiety-- you named it. Yay. When anxiety overwhelms, we're going to do a Wednesday night class, short run, only eight weeks, so you're not committing to ever. We're going to look at anxiety and faith, and explore scripture in our lives together in community. We're also going to have some singing beforehand, and some coffee to help us each night. If you're interested in joining, talk to myself. Otherwise, come and show up.

Prayer request. Marie's grandson, Brayden, continues to try to figure out his food sensitivities. Please continue to pray for him. He begins a new job. And the other thing I have here is we rejoice with Ella, who was baptized this week. One of Great Lakes students, correct? Yeah.

[APPLAUSE]

Let us join together in worship today as we listen to Don, and sing some songs, and go to the table.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Communion

Borrowing from the scripture that Don has chosen for today, I'm going to read the first part of it from Mark the 11th chapter. "As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying to them, go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever written. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, why are you doing this? Say, the Lord needs it, and we'll send it back here shortly."

Seems like a fairly straightforward story, a little narrative. The Lord directing his disciples to go and arrange something for it. But I want to take a look at that and see how I think there's a parallel and a lesson for us at the table today. He tells them to go ahead and get this colt, but he also tells them, if anyone asks you, why are you doing this? Say, the Lord needs it, and we'll send it back shortly. The Lord needs it. That's why he wants them to go get it. He anticipates that there might be opposition. Or maybe more importantly, he anticipates that they are somewhat in fear that there will be opposition. I don't think it's just because he knows the way things are going to play out. I think he knows hearts. And he knows that probably they need that more for themselves than for anybody who might come up against them.

Baptism is something that we are directed to do. Just as he doesn't think there isn't going to be opposition to this, he doesn't think there is not going to be opposition to you being baptized and following him for whatever he asks.

If you think about it later on in this passage, it's going to talk about the way in which the people laid down the palm leaves and shouted "Hosanna!" "Lord save us!" or "The King comes!" And yet, in a week's time, they're going to be saying something entirely different, aren't they? He knows he's going to come up against severe opposition. As we break bread today, I want you to think about the fact that in the face of what he was going to see in another week, in front of all those people who will now reject him, he went ahead and he did what he needed to do. Why? Because he wanted to fulfill his father's will. When we become part of his church, we are putting ourselves in that same position.

As we break this bread today, it is a fellowship with him in his sufferings. It is recognizing that he didn't always tell us it's going to be all a bed of roses and it's going to be easy. He told us there will be opposition. Just as clearly as he knew it for these disciples, he knows it for us. But he gave us this supper to bond us together, to remember that he was facing the very same thing. On a scale we can't even begin to imagine. And yet, he went ahead and did the things with his disciples that needed to be done in order to prepare them for the future.

So today as we take this bread and we drink from this cup, I want us to remember that there will be opposition. That's a given. If you are following God, somebody will say, "Why are you taking that?" or "Why are you doing this?" But Jesus gave himself fully to his father and he expects nothing less of his children. Let's go to God in prayer as we break this bread.

Father, we thank you so much that in the face of what Jesus was going to contend with in just a few short days, he never gave up. That when he cried out to you, "Why have you forsaken me?" he never gave up. That when his disciples abandoned him, he never gave up. Father, help us as we break this bread today to remember the fellowship that we have with him and never give up. Give us strength, Father, for this week that we might be followers of Jesus. That your will might be done on this earth and here in this little town of Beamsville. Father, empower us as you empowered him to do your will. Bless this bread and this cup as we remember his great gift and his sacrifice and the power with which you raised him to new life. We pray through the name of the Father and the Son and the Spirit. Amen. [music]

Reading

Mark 11:1-11

The reading this morning is taken from Mark 11, 1 to 11.

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you and just 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 doing this?" say, "The Lord needs it and we'll send it back here shortly." They went and found a colt outside in the street tied at a doorway. As they untied it, some people standing there asked, "What are you doing untying that colt?" They answered as Jesus had told them to and the people let them go. When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the coming kingdom of our Father David. Hosanna in the highest heaven." Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything. But since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Sermon

Palm Sunday

I don't know if you had the opportunity yesterday to watch the funeral for former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. But I found it very moving and emotional. It really had nothing to do with politics. It had everything to do with people. He was a unique Prime Minister in that he would sometimes just open up the phone book and call people. Wanted to know what they thought about certain things. So it was interesting that they would chat and he loved that more than anything else. I say that because when it comes to scripture, I think it's important that we don't just read scriptures. We don't just read them out loud. But we try to put ourselves in their shoes. What it was like back then. And even what it's like today. And how can we relate to all of this? In the scriptures, palm has meaning of victory. Especially the victory of the spirit over Satan and flesh.

In Revelation chapter nine, we hear these words. 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. Meaning Jesus. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands and they cried out in a loud voice. Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the lamb. Meaning Jesus. All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and four living creatures and they all fell down on their faces before the throne and they worship God saying, Amen. Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power. Be to our God forever and forever. And then in John 12, they took palm branches and went out to meet him and cried, Hosanna, blessed he who comes in the name of the Lord.

So this is the beginning of the week. And then next Sunday we're going to be look at the most magnificent scriptures of all and yet maybe the most terrible scriptures of all. The fact that Jesus gave his life for us and the resurrection. But we'll look at that next week. So I just have a brief

message today that I want to share with you. A lot of scripture reading today that I hope that you will listen as we read it.

Mark chapter 11 verses one through 11. And again, if you would just picture in your mind as I read this as they approach Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany and the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent two of his disciples saying to them, go to the village ahead of you and just as you enter, you will find a colt there which no one has ridden and tie it and bring it here. And then if anyone asks you, why are you doing this? Interesting that people might ask that question. Why are you doing this? And the answer, the Lord needs it and we'll send it back here shortly. So interesting. Then they went and found the colt outside in the street tied at a doorway. As they untied it, some people standing there asked, what are you doing on tying that colt?

They answered, Jesus told them to bring it. And when they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over, he sat on it. And many people, and you could just see this in your mind, many people spread their cloaks on the road while others spread branches that cut in the fields. Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the coming kingdom of our Father David. Hosanna in the highest." Now that may not mean so much to us, and yet it means a lot to us. And if we put ourselves in their shoes, I think people were wondering, well, what is all this about? Hosanna in the highest? Okay, that's praising the Lord. That's wonderful. That's great. But what's all about the colt and everything else? And what's interesting to me is there's not a lot of explanation in all of this. It's the understanding that Christ will be the sacrifice, but that was beyond them. It was trying to figure out what all of this was about. So in Mark chapter 11, it talks about this in a unique way, but it continues on as well. In Matthew chapter 21, a bit of a lengthy reading, I think it's pretty unique. It says, "As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find that donkey, tied up there, and bring them to me." And if anyone says anything to you, tell them the Lord needs it, which is an interesting concept. The Lord needs it? Lord? Does the Lord really need it? Does Jesus really need it? What's this story all about? And I think it comes down to, for each person, the understanding of our own relationship with Jesus.

And without trying to bring politics into it, yesterday at the funeral, it was interesting how he would just call people out of the blue, just to talk. I want to know what's going on in your life. I want to know how Ontario, how Canada can be better. I want to know about all of this. And in these scriptures, because we've read the scriptures so often, we know that Jesus is our Saviour. We know we have scriptures. We know we have the Lord blessing us. And so what? It's wonderful. It's great. It's fantastic. It's wonderful that we have our own future. We understand what all of this is going to be about. But do we ever really put ourselves in the shoes of what the scriptures are saying? I find it really, really profound.

So listen to these words. Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables on the money changers and the benches of those selling gobs. You don't think of Jesus in those terms, do we? We don't see Jesus walking in and flipping over tables and so forth. But it says, "It is written, "He said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer, but you're making it a den of robbers." Strong language.

The blind and the lame came to him at the temple and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, "Hosanna!" to son of David, they were indignant. "Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked. "Yes," replied Jesus. "Have you ever read from the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise?" Thank you, God, for our children. They teach us. They exasperate us, but they teach us. What's really important? What really counts? We can look at scripture and we can define it. We can go deep into it. We can try to single out all kinds of things. But in reality, it's Jesus. It's God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and the encouragement that we get by putting ourselves in their position.

Listen to these words. "Early in the morning as he was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up, found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to this, then he said to the leaves," interesting. "Then he said, may you never bear fruit again. Immediately the tree withered. When his disciples saw this, they were amazed. How did the fig tree wither so quickly?" they asked. Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth. If you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done by the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, go throw yourself into the sea and it will be done. "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask in prayer." I suppose that's hyperbole, but it's the understanding of the faith that we can have with God because, have you ever thought of this, God has faith in us. God is our great encourager. Help us God to understand even better. So it really is incredible.

So somebody's asking all these questions. What about the authority of Jesus? Where did he get all of this? Jesus entered the temple courts and while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority? Jesus replied, "I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I'm doing these things." John's baptism. Where did it come from? Was it from heaven? Was it from men? They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say from heaven, he will ask then why didn't you believe him?" Good question. But if we say from men, we are afraid of the people for they all hold at John was the prophet. So they answered, "We don't know." That's a good thing. Then he said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I'm doing these things." Basically, Jesus is saying, "Watch me. Listen to me. Here's how we ought to live." Here's who we should be living even to this day.

So it's remarkable story. Jesus entered those temple courts who gave you this authority. And he goes on to understand it even further. So then in Mark 11, verses 1-11, again, if you can just picture this in your mind.

"As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethpage and Bethany, the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples saying, "Go to the village ahead of you just as you entered it, as was read earlier today. Untie the colt. Why are you doing this? The Lord needs it," he says. "And they went and found the colt outside in the street, tied in the doorway. And as they untied it, some people standing there asked, "Why are you doing an untying that colt?" They asked as Jesus told him that the people, so the people would let them go. And when they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it." Cool. "Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they cut in the fields. Those who went ahead of them shouted, "Hosanna!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the coming kingdom of our Father David. Hosanna in the highest."

It's a beautiful understanding of Scripture, but it's not going to be long when they take him, beat him, scourge him, and put him on the cross. And Jesus knew exactly that that's what was going to happen. So his words to them, a week in advance, was going through the motion of what's going to happen. Because what's going to happen is the worst thing that could ever happen, but it's the best thing that could ever happen.

That he's going to come sacrifice himself, give himself up for our forgiveness of sins. His death, his burial, his resurrection, our death, our burial, our resurrection. He gives it all to us. Jesus didn't care for religion that was just religion. He cared for people. And he cared for their soul, their spirit, their mind. He cared for the understanding of love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. And that's an easy Scripture to quote. It's not so easy to really understand and to figure out how all this happens. So in Mark 11 it talks about this, clearing out the temple. The next day as they were leaving, Jesus was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. And when he reached it, he found nothing but leaves because it was not the season for figs. Then he said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." Which is interesting.

On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area, driving out the people who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. And as he taught them, he said these words, "Is it not written, "My house will be called a house of prayer," listen, "for all nations, for everyone, but you have made it a den of robbers." The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him. "What do you do with someone that you really fear? Let's get rid of them," they said. The whole crowd was amazed at his teaching. And when he even came, they went out to the city. All of this is progressing for what we're going to be sharing next Sunday. The fact that Jesus came into the world, lived and showed us how to live. His death, his burial, our resurrection. Our life, our death, our burial, our resurrection.

The connection that each of us has with God the Father, with God the Son, with God the Holy Spirit, isn't just words. It is a reality. Now I know we don't think of God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit every second of the day. We have things to do. We're busy people. I suppose God is too. But the reality is, I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. I will be with you always. Even when we sleep, he's with us. I've often thought, many of us can understand this, when our children were young, babies. And when a brand new baby is in a home, it's just marvelous. We go over and we look at this precious child sleeping. All dependent on us, of course, but you see this child sleeping. And you look at this child and you just go, "Wow, I love this child so much, it's incredible." I say that because I think that's how God feels about us. He looks at us. We may not necessarily receive it, but when we do, we get it. He loves us so much that he tells us that we are his child. He's our parent, spiritually. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, all of this wonderful understanding of God comes to us, even in these scriptures. The meaning of all of this is truly, truly profound.

So maybe just finish up today by talking about the idea that the reality of each one of us is that we're here. So is God. So is Jesus. And so is the Holy Spirit. He's with us always, as has been repeated several times. "I'll never leave you, I'll never forsake you." So as we come to Holy Week next week, if you will, we look at this death, burial and resurrection. All we can say from the depths of our hearts is, "Thank you God. If there's any way that we could love you as much as you love us, let it happen." Amen.

Closing

Thank you, Adam, Geoff and the folks in the back. While we were at West, at Kenosee, one of the things we did is we partnered with a church in the town next over every year, and we would host Good Friday back and forth. And the tradition was every other year one of us would host and the other minister would speak. So we would host and the other minister would speak and vice versa. And one of the things that melding of two different traditions presents interesting challenges, but also interesting opportunities. And one of the things was one year I ended up speaking at the other church and the minister was there at the time and said, "No, no, we're not doing the entire Easter weekend. We're just doing Good Friday and the events on Good Friday and that's it.

Now I'm a good Church of Christ boy. We don't really do Good Friday very much, at least historically. And we tend to do all of the Easter season in one shot. And it was a challenge for me to think about just Good Friday and the events there and to talk about it. And I found great value in that and it opened up a world to me that I didn't understand previously. So let's say thank you to Don for helping us to take a pause on Palm Sunday and to look and feel and experience what was going on there. Let's close with a quick prayer.

Dear Lord, thank you for all you've given us and all you've blessed us with. Thank you for this time. Lord, as we go about our day, help us to remember you, help us to live like a people who have remembered, who have heard your words, who have hopefully been touched. Lord, if it is your will and if we agree to that will, help us to marinate in this Easter season, to see, to feel Palm Sunday and the coming of Easter Sunday. Help us to incorporate that into our lives and to live like a people who have been down that road with you. In Jesus name, Amen.

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