

Palm Sunday 4/10/22

It's the Sunday of the Passion. It is our honor to think on the Lord Jesus. We should prize it above riches and honor and fame, above every pleasure we have on this earth, this highest of all glory, to behold the God-Man crucified for us. In fact, have you ever thought about this: on Good Friday, a veil will cover the cross to remind us how unworthy we are to even view God suffering for us.

In 5 days, Jesus will be crucified for us and for our salvation. Throughout the season of Lent, our sermon series was *Witnesses to Christ*. We focused on a portrait of Jesus through the eyes of those who interacted with Jesus in His Passion. On this Sunday of the Passion, we are going to do the same thing. To peer into the mystery of the suffering of God for us, so that we dare not take it for granted, we are going to look at our Lord Christ's passion through three different sets of eyes: the crowd, Jesus, and the donkey.

First, we have the people who met Jesus with songs of Hosanna. Hosanna means, "Save!" And it is this cry that marks our constant preparation for receiving Jesus. He is our Savior. And we know we need this Savior. Because we know the pride of our hearts, the desire to make ourselves look good and gossip and judge our neighbor, our laziness and our putting earthly pleasures over heavenly riches. But more than this, we know the pain and corruption all around us, in our own families, in our own bodies. The Lord Jesus says on Palm Sunday that if we didn't cry out the rocks would have to, because creation itself groans for release. And our cry of groaning for release is Hosanna! "Save us," to the Son of David, our dear God and Brother who came to make us a new creation released from

all sin and pain and death and corruption forever. He set His face to go to Jerusalem, and today He rides into Jerusalem to bring it to completion.

And notice that the people not only cry out, "Save us," but they show with their actions, that Jesus is their everything. We call it Palm Sunday, but in fact most of them throw their clothes on the road for Jesus to trample. And this is the confession we Christians all make. Everything I have Jesus gave me. **Everything.** If I think I've earned it, I'm fooling myself. The strength of my arm comes from Him. The desire to do any good comes from Him. My spouse. My children. My house. My job. My health. Every good that I enjoy in life, every laugh, every pleasant walk, all of it He has given me and all of it He has redeemed me to use for His glory. The confession we make today in view of our Lord shedding His blood for us is that we gladly commit everything to Him. And, we would rather lose everything, the whole world, than lose Jesus, who redeemed us with His blood. He has lived and died for us. We live and die with Him and give Him not only our stuff, our money, our clothes and our palms, but our hearts and our lives.

Second, Jesus. Please note carefully, Dear Child of God, He doesn't come for vengeance. He doesn't come to punish sinners. He comes humbly on a donkey to save us. And, He comes determined, knowing exactly what is ahead of Him. On Holy Thursday, our service ends with Psalm 22, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Jesus knew that in 5 days He will hang from the cross and speak those words, experiencing suffering no man has known, to be even abandoned by God. He knew He was riding to His death.

Jesus rides in love that surpasses all understanding, with pity for each and every one of us, willing to suffer the unthinkable, to dirty Himself

not only with spit and mockery of others, but with our sins, as He bears our punishment in His holy body and sinless soul. See your Savior's determination. See him riding boldly to His death. See His love for you. And know that this determination and this love has not stopped, it has not decreased; for He comes to you today with the same boldness and the same insistence. Since He has died for you and reconciled you to God, He will have you as His own, to live by His Spirit, to confess your sin to Him, to throw your cares and your anxieties and your most intimate secrets at His feet, so that He can forgive you and comfort you and unite you to your God by feeding you His most precious body and blood.

Third, there is one eyewitness left to Palm Sunday. The donkey. Very early on, the mockers of Christianity called Christians, "donkeys." And they still to today. People still insult Christians by calling them donkeys, but they use another word, which I'm not about to say, especially from the pulpit. The church father Tertullian even talks about how the pagans would mock Christians and draw pictures of Jesus on the cross with donkey ears, even with the head of a donkey. But, those Christians pointed to our reading for today to show why they didn't mind being called donkeys.

Jesus rode on a donkey, a beast of burden. Our Lord Christ carried our burden of suffering, guilt and shame, sin and all its wages of death. Baptized into Him, living and moving and having our being in Him, we are happy to bear our Lord Jesus. We bear His name. Because He lives in us and we live in Him, we wear His righteousness. And as He Himself says, we bear His yoke upon us. When we stray from walking the narrow way, He pulls on the reigns and tugs us back. When we fall, He lifts us up again. When we do wrong, He forgives and restores.

The donkey is the lowly and humble creature, and so we Christians remain lowly and humble. Our glory is not in ourselves. The donkey's glory is only in his rider. Our glory is only in Christ. And beautifully, He gives it to us. We share in it all. We suffer with Him. We live with Him. We become sons of our Father because we belong to Him, the eternal Son of the Father. The angels who serve Him serve us for His sake. The Father who loves Him loves us for His sake. The Spirit who lives from Him gives us His life. And as Christ bore our burdens, so we being Christ to our neighbor, bear our neighbor's burdens, rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep.

Dear Children of the Heavenly Father, Holy Week is here. We are given the greatest privilege imaginable this week, to spend our days meditating on the death of God for us, so that we can celebrate with everlasting joy His glorious resurrection. I invite you to join us as we see and ponder, once again, our Lord's Passion with our Holy Thursday worship at 6:30 PM and our Good Friday worship, again, at 6: 30 PM.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.