

Palm Sunday
Mark 14

News Flash from Captain Obvious – TODAY IS PALM SUNDAY

Palm Sunday is one of the hardest days to preach because if you focus on that one event – the Entry into Jerusalem, then you miss so much of what happens during the week. And next Sunday is Easter, so the focus is on the resurrection. But a lot happens in between:

Here's a short list of highlights of the last week in the life of Jesus.

- Jesus enters Jerusalem
- He cleanses the Temple- chases out the money changers
- Numerous substantive and hard-hitting teaching and parable narratives of Jesus with the crowds, religious leaders, or the disciples.
- The Last Supper – The Upper Room Discourse – The Garden of Gethsemane / The High Priestly Prayer
- The Betrayal by Judas
- The Six “trials” / the scourging, / mocking / crown of thorns
- The denial by Peter and abandonment by the other disciples
- The Road to the Cross / The Crucifixion / The Seven Last Words from the Cross / Laid in an empty tomb

There are so many things that happened that week. When we focus primarily on the “Triumphful Entry” we miss some of the lesser known, but crucial aspects of what was happening in the life of Christ.

Being a part of the play Maundy Thursday has given me a fresh appreciation for the very real human aspect of the ministry of Jesus. The play deals with the disciples and their encounters with Christ. These were real men who were following the one they thought of as the Messiah. They weren't real sure what that even meant for them, for Him, for themselves, or for the nation. The ups and downs of being a part of Jesus' entourage were experienced by real men who had real jobs and real families. Just imagine what it must have been like.

It had to be a rather “heady and surreal” experience to be walking in with Jesus on that entry into Jerusalem. They must have been pinching themselves as Jesus was getting the “red carpet” treatment with Palm branches. Imagine their Instagram or Twitter feed for that day!!

It was a very diverse group brought together by Jesus. On their own, they probably would not have socialized with each other. Some would have really hated each other, and now, here they were with Jesus in the midst of an adoring crowd. They would not have predicted what would happen just a few days later.

There was nothing special about these 12 men. They did not have a social or religious pedigree. Some were looked down upon by the Pharisees as “uneducated men.”

Let's take a few minutes to get a glimpse of two of the disciples. Matthew, who would have been hated by all, since he was a tax collector, and Simon the Zealot, who was a political hot-head / “terrorist”

Matthew – wrote the Gospel, but only mentions his own name twice. Other gospel authors don't mention that he was a tax collector, but Matthew does.

Tax collectors (TC) were “appointed”, i.e. job was given to the highest bidder. This mean you had a Jew collecting taxes for Rome, and he paid to do it. He was also paid well for doing it. He could collect more than was due and pocket the rest. This made him very unpopular with the people.

In several passages the TC were listed along with prostitutes, heathens, and other sinners. They were disqualified from being a witness in courts, scoffed at as common criminals and were refused entrance to the synagogue, where their money was refused for alms for the poor. They were given the status of social lepers.

So, imagine the scandal when Jesus calls Matthew to follow him, and then he goes to Matthew's house to dine with him (Matt 9). It greatly upset the Pharisees 9:11-12

It is quite likely that Andrew, Peter, James and John all paid "business" taxes to Matthew, for the fish they caught. You can imagine their surprise when Jesus called Matthew to follow Him. **While others may have seen a man worthy of hate, Jesus saw a man who needed to know His love and forgiveness.** God's grace knows no bounds.

Have you known people like that, who were converted by Christ? People you never thought would have been interested in Jesus. I was like that. Looking back at who I was I would think, "that guy would never be interested in spiritual things. He's a lost cause." Maybe you were like that. Maybe that's you today.

Jesus is the Savior of the lost. He knows that it is the sick, not the healthy who need a physician. As he said, "I have not come to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance."

SIMON THE ZEALOT:

ONLY four references in the scripture – 3 in gospels and then Act 1 – Simon the Zealot. He is listed either 10th or 11th in the listings and Judas is always last, so this Simon comes near the end. The description "Zealot" gives us all that we know of him. The Zealots were the violent political wing of the Pharisees. They were often involved in the assassination of romans soldiers or officials (like TC??). They struggled to free the Jews from roman rule and opposed the paying of tribute by Israel to a pagan emperor.

There were probably no two groups of Jews who hated each other more than TC and Zealots, yet Jesus brought them together.

JESUS UNITES PEOPLE WHO USUALLY WOULD NOT LIKE EACH OTHER. If you haven't seen that happen in your Christian life, then you need to examine the Jesus that you are following.

As you read the Holy week narratives you'll notice that Judas betrayed Jesus, and Peter denied him, but in reality...

- When Jesus told of a betrayal, no one knew it would be Judas- "Is it I?" Mark 14:19
- All the disciples proclaimed faithfulness to death, not just Peter - Mark 14:31

One betrayed him, but they all fell away. It's easy to think, "I'd never do that", but would we?

Don't we, in different ways, deny Jesus in our daily lives? Like when we don't want to tell others about him, or be identified as a Christian, or we act in ways that go against His teaching on morality, marriage, finances, relationships, generosity, compassion, and forgiveness.

Remember that Jesus came because WE ALSO NEED A SAVIOR.

I mentioned that a lot happens in between the Triumphal Entry and the Resurrection. It was a very busy and important week. In fact, a lot of the gospel accounts deal with the final week of the life of Jesus. I've read some biographies over the years, not a bunch, but my guess is that you won't find many where 1/3, 1/4 or 1/2 of the content is devoted to the final week of the person's life.

The break down according to each of the Gospels looks like this...

- **A third of Matthew, from Matthew 21-28**

- A third of Mark, from Mark 11-16
- A quarter of Luke, from Luke 19-24
- Nearly half of John, from John 12-20

As one can see the Gospel of John is the most concentrated upon the last week of Jesus. Furthermore, nearly a third of the Gospel of John is dedicated to one day (24 hour period), from John 13-19.

These statistics led **Andy Naselli** to say “**The Gospels are essentially passion narratives with extended introductions.**” He’s right.

** SIDEROAD – one way to discern whether a spiritual movement, church, ministry, or even a book is biblically grounded is to examine how much weight is given to the Cross of Christ. If the overall content of teaching ignores the Cross in order to focus on our response, our behavior, and how to have our best life now, then be careful. **

So much of what happens in the gospels during the Passion Week is found in the Words of Jesus. Perhaps the most important, if you can say that, are the words He prayed in the Garden – “**Not my will, but Thy will be done.**” **Mark 14:36**
Any other response would have derailed the whole plan of Salvation.

Jesus Didn’t fall away from what God had ordained for Him. He didn’t turn from the Father the way the disciples turned from Him. He had the perspective expressed in the Hymn...

“What’er My God Ordains is Right”

3. What’er my God ordains is right,
Though now this cup in drinking
May bitter seem to my faint heart,
I take it all unshrinking
My God is true,
Each morn anew
Sweet comfort yet shall fill my heart
And pain and sorrow shall depart

4. What’er my God ordains is right,
Here shall my stand be taken
Though sorrow, need, or death be mine,
Yet I am not forsaken
My Father’s care
Is round me there
He holds me that I shall not fall
And so to Him I leave it all

Mark 14:17-42

There are several categories where we may have to learn to say “Not my will, but Thy Will be Done” or “What’er My God ordains is Right”. Whatever we face, we can know that Jesus has gone before us.

Disloyalty

Loyalty is a wonderful quality. Loyalty of friends and colleagues is encouraging, upbuilding and reassuring in times of troubles, trials and temptations. Disloyalty is gutting. Jesus had spent three years with twelve people he loved, lived with and had trained. Yet he had to say to them, 'One of you will betray me' (v.18). It is horrible to be betrayed by an enemy or an acquaintance. But to be betrayed by a friend is almost unbearable. Have you experienced such disloyalty in your life?

Jesus walked the path of obedience, even knowing that his own disciples would abandon Him. If that is where you are, then know that Jesus knows how you feel. He is with you.

Disappointment

The crowd on Palm Sunday- "Hosanna"

A few days later - Their fickle hearts were exposed as they shouted "crucify Him." Even though Jesus knew what was in store, it had to be disappointing when the time came.

It's easy for us to criticize the crowd, but the sad reality is that I'm not much different. Neither are you.

Not only did one of the disciples betray him, all the rest fell away (v.27). Again, this must have been a huge disappointment to Jesus. These were his closest friends yet in the time of trial they all fell away - even the one who was such a strong leader, Peter. Although Peter was absolutely determined not to deny Jesus, he did eventually disown him. They all made the same claim as Peter, and they also fled the scene when times got tough.

Distress

As Jesus approaches the terrible moment, he is 'deeply distressed and troubled' (v.33b). His soul is 'overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death' (v.34a). That is a description of the God-Man who is in distress. We tend to think of Jesus as floating along above the ugliness and pain of life. He was in the midst of it. What an admission, a statement of vulnerability, and look how they responded - THEY ALL FELL ASLEEP.

Are you in distress? If you know Christ, then you have access to the Father, even as He did. If you don't know Christ, then come to know Him as Savior.

EX: Dallas Willard - You will never find real healing until you come to the place of saying, "God has done right by me."

Death

Jesus knows the reality of death. He knew that he had come to die. During his ministry he kept telling the disciples that He would be killed. They didn't want to believe it. Jesus didn't HAVE TO DIE; HE CHOSE TO DIE.

We can see that there is an Old Testament background to the cup of God's wrath against sin. As he passes around the cup he says, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many' (v.24). Later on in Gethsemane he prays, 'Take this cup from me' (v.36a).

The death of Christ was according to the Plan of God- it was ordained by the Father, and Christ the Son submitted - "Not My Will, But Thy will be done" i.e. What'er My God Ordains is Right

At the Good Friday Service, when you take the bread and the wine in communion, meditate on his great love, his sacrifice and his death for you. Receive again his forgiveness, mercy, grace and favor. Dedicate your life again to him and say, 'Yet not my will but yours be done.'

But what makes the passion narrative so important for Christians?

It shows that at the heart of Jesus' life and ministry is the sacrificial work of Christ as both the priest and the sacrifice for our sins.

We live in an age where people like to put the focus on the nice things Jesus did and not so much on His miracles because that implies too much about Him being divine. The focus is on the love of Jesus, but not on the death of Jesus. Yet, that is where the love of Jesus is best seen. When scripture wants to underscore the love of God for us, it takes us to the death of Christ –

John 3:16;

Rom 5, 8

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

1 John 3:16

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

1 John 4:10

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Think about it.

Christ came to die.

He died for your sins.

How much of your Christian life is concentrated on beholding the suffering and work of Christ on the Cross for our sins?

When was the last time you were moved by the thought Jesus died on the cross for sinners and also the accompanying suffering even before He went on the Cross?

<https://banneroftruth.org/us/devotional/the-grace-of-the-cross/>

By thy cross crucify my every sin;
Use it to increase my intimacy with thyself;
Make it the ground of all my comfort,
the liveliness of all my duties,
the sum of all thy gospel promises,
the comfort of all my afflictions,
the vigour of my love, thankfulness, graces,
the very essence of my religion;
And by it give me that rest without rest,
the rest of ceaseless praise.

It is imperative that we align ourselves with what God emphasizes. We should definitely study and meditate much on the final week of Christ for the sake of loving Him. For the sake of our own spiritual growth. For the sake of glorifying Jesus.

<https://veritasdomain.wordpress.com/2017/04/09/are-you-aware-of-the-4-gospels-focus-on-the-last-week-of-jesus-life/>

<https://bible.org/article/chronology-synopsis-passion-week>

<http://www.jesus.org/death-and-resurrection/holy-week-and-passion/a-time-line-of-the-passion-week.html>

http://www.gracebiblegranbury.com/home/398/995/docs/Passion%20week%20chronology.pdf?sec_id=995

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