

Luke 19: 28-40 (*Palms at the beginning of service*)

²⁸ After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹ When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰ saying, “Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it.’” ³² So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. ³³ As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” ³⁴ They said, “The Lord needs it.” ³⁵ Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶ As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road.

³⁷ As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, ³⁸ saying, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!”

³⁹ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” ⁴⁰ He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.”

Philippians 2: 5-11 (*Passion in message*)

⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, ⁷ but

emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form,⁸ he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross.⁹ Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.



We are on the brink of the remembrance of the central event of our faith. Holy Week and Easter shape our understanding of who we are as followers of Jesus Christ more than any

other single event. All of this, all of Jesus' story, it began at the beginning, the beginning of all that is, all that we see and know. It was at this beginning that the plan was in place that would culminate in death and resurrection. Here we are today, at Palm Sunday. This event provides a bright spot in a dark time during Christ's life, a respite from the burdensome journey plaguing the whole company. Maybe this is a Sabbath rest that steels them all for what lies ahead as Jesus heads to Jerusalem for the last time. As we prepare to share this time together, let us pray...

Turn with me to Luke 19 as we pick up the story, starting in verse 28. As Jesus and the disciples are nearing Jerusalem, he pauses and sends two of them ahead, saying, *"Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here."³¹ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'"* They went to the village

"Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'"
- Luke 19:30-31

The Lord Needs It

and did as Jesus told them to do. Those there ask, just as Jesus said they would, and the disciples respond by saying, *“The Lord needs it.”*

Without hesitation, without question, the people allow the colt to be led away. These verses demonstrate the divinity of Jesus and the working out of God's age-old plan. For the two disciples, things unfold exactly as Jesus said they would. What a powerful experience for them! The villagers lack of concern also gives us an insight into the general population's understanding and impression of Jesus. Outside of the religious hierarchy, Jesus was looked upon favorably, welcomed into many places, looked to for healing and teaching. If the Lord needs it, by all means, take the colt.



Once the disciples with the colt rejoin Jesus, cloaks are placed upon the colt's back and Jesus rides along on the colt. As he continues to work his way towards Jerusalem the crowd grows and they too spread their cloaks on the road, creating a “royal carpet” for Jesus to ride upon. As the procession picks up people along the way, there is a spontaneous praise that begins to rise up towards heaven. The crowd begins to praise God joyfully with loud voices, praising God for *“all of the deeds of power that they had seen,”* for the work that Jesus has done among them.

In these verses Jesus is building the story. In verse 38 we gain insight into what the people are saying. Here we read, *“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!”* The common people that are part of the parade recognize Jesus as the one who can save, as the one who has saved and healed many. That is their everyday experience with Jesus.

In the healings and other miracles, in the way he included others, especially women and children and the Gentiles - groups traditionally outside the religious circle – Jesus plays the role of gracious and benevolent king. Jesus is the bringer of peace to individual lives and to groups within society.

In many ways the parade into Jerusalem is a declaration. It is a pronouncement that the king has arrived. For most of his ministry, Jesus often played it close to the vest, instructing those who were healed, “Don’t tell” and to those who wanted to see his power on full display, he says, “It’s not my hour.” But as the parade rolls on into Jerusalem, the time is now. It is time for the world to know. Jesus Christ has an announcement to make. To do so, he uses the language of the culture. He orchestrates a processional drama, an enthronement scene that was acted out using the symbols that were a part of the common cultural understandings. Doing so, he touched a need or hope that was rising in the hearts of the people.

This was why they responded to his announcement so readily. He arranged for a colt, an unridden donkey symbolizing purity and peace. The people waved branches as an acknowledgment of his authority. They threw down their cloaks to cover the road to usher the king into their midst, into the city. They shouted the traditional welcome for a new king: *“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”* All this was to welcome and to announce the coming of the king.

By the time the parade nears Jerusalem, the crowd had reached fever pitch. Through the crowd’s voices of praise, Jesus was practically shouting out his arrival. “Here I am,” he announced, “your king, your prince of peace, your savior.”

They proclaimed it, loud and clear. That is why they shouted back and forth, “Hosanna!” which means, “Save us.” This calling back and forth evokes great memories for me. This reminds me of calls and responses that I have heard at Promise Keeper and youth events that I have attended over the years. One side of the stadium or auditorium would shout out, “We love Jesus, yes we do. We love Jesus, how about you?” Then the opposite side would shout the same thing back. “We love Jesus, yes we do. We love Jesus, how about you?” It was great fun!

From all that they had seen and heard prior to this day, the people probably had an inkling that this indeed was the one who could save them. With that hope, they shouted praises and they pulled branches off trees. They threw the branches and their cloaks into the street as way to welcome the coming king. It was their way of saying, “We love Jesus, yes we do. We love Jesus, how about you?”

We began worship today by reading from Psalm 118. These words can be read as a prelude to the palm parade – as a prophecy about a one-day event. Turn with me to Psalm 118 as we connect these ancient thoughts and images into what the people along Jesus’ parade route would relate to the day that Jesus rode into town. The words of this Psalm would be well known in Jesus’ day. They would have leapt to the people’s minds as Jesus rode in that day. *“The one who enters in the LORD’s name is blessed; we bless all of you from the LORD’s house... So lead the festival offering with ropes all the way to the horns of the altar... Give thanks to the LORD because he is good, because his faithful love lasts forever.”* These words of hope would raise the people’s spirits and would rev up their longing for the king.

How long they have waited to be blessed by a great king who leads the festal procession up to the temple. How long have they waited for God's goodness and faithfulness to restore the nation of Israel. This fervor, this energy, it drove the parade along its route that day.

For Christians living in 2022, Psalm 118 is also prelude of the day of the Lord. In the future tense it speaks of the day when the Messiah will return, of the day when every knee will bow down. On that day almost 2,000 years ago, some in the crowd - the rabble to the religious leaders, those shouting "Hosanna!" to others - they recognize the Messiah, the Lord, the Savior. Others - those concerned with the rulers of this world and with their own status - they dismiss the parade. These would be the ones we talked about last week who cling to their accolades, to their titles, to their status.

You see, the people who gathered to welcome Jesus in, to welcome the new king, they weren't the only ones who heard the joy and hope ringing up from the parade route. Some of the Pharisees heard it and they didn't like what they heard. In verse 39 we read, *"Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, order your disciples to stop.'"* Those guarding the gates, those keeping the circle closed - they spoke these words to Jesus. Those concerned with keeping their place of authority, those worried about placating the Romans - they wanted the crowd's voiced stilled. "Keep it down!" they shouted to the self-professed king on a colt. "Shut them up, or there will be trouble," they implied. The religious leaders had one eye looking down their noses with contempt at the rabble grasping at their palm straws.

And their other eye was cast over their shoulders in fear of Rome. “Tell them to stop!” the Pharisees shouted. Tell them to stop, or else...

The religious leaders probably weren’t the only ones in power who heard about this little event. Herod and Pilate certainly heard about this parade, albeit after the fact. At the time it didn’t likely cause a blip on their radar. But when they did hear, did they see it as a threat or as a meaningless little party for this Jesus character? And for later in the week, did it influence how they will deal with Jesus as he stands before them?



To Jesus all this did not really matter. Jesus was concerned about that time, about the right time, about ordering these events in the way that would reach the desired outcome.

The masses had recognized Jesus as the Messiah, as the Savior. That was important. But he also had to build the story so that we who would later come to see and hear would also understand and accept, so that we would understand that his story, that this story, it’s our story. We had to see ourselves in this story; we had to find ourselves in the parade and in him. To help us understand what this means – to see ourselves in the Palm story and to find ourselves in the one who leads the parade, let us turn to our Epistle reading, to Philippians 2.

In verse 5 Paul begins this section by inviting us to be like Christ. He puts the invitation this way: *“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.”* This passage contains one of earliest hymns in Christian church. Paul quotes the hymn to make an important point: to be like Jesus, we must have the mind of Jesus.

Paul goes on to remind the Philippians and all who will one day read this passage that Jesus emptied himself and took on human likeness. Jesus became one of us; he became human. In the flesh, Jesus set the example for us to follow. In verse 8 Paul continues, reminding us that *“he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross.”* Jesus was so humble and so obedient to God that he walked the difficult and painful path to the cross. That path begins today, on Palm Sunday, as Jesus triumphantly enters Jerusalem. But we cannot forget where it ends. That is all part of the story of Holy Week.

Moving into verses 9 through 11, we hear how God exalted Jesus for his humble obedience. In these verses we read, *“Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* This is what happened along the parade route for those who could see who Jesus truly was – the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Jesus was exulted that day.

Jesus chose to make self nothing, to take on the very nature of a servant. He humbled himself and became fully obedient to God. God exulted Jesus' example. Make no mistake, Jesus is our example. Jesus never sought anything for self, never was personally ambitious, always sought to be a servant. Paul reminds the Philippians that greatness is defined by a downward mobility that seeks to serve others.

So, we must ask: How do we follow this example of humble obedience so that others can recognize and bow down at the name of Jesus? How do we daily live out humble and obedient service so that every tongue will confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?

Returning to Luke 19, to verse 40, Jesus responds to the Pharisees request to make his disciples be quiet. *“He answered, ‘I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.’”* The necessity of praise is unavoidable. When it is time, it is time. The purposes of God will be fulfilled. It is time for prophesied events to unfold, for the process to begin so that Jesus can gather us up and carry us to a new reality, to a new way of living, to a new hope. Or we can let these events and their meaning pass us by if we so choose. Choose we must. It is time. It is your future, your choice.



When we call Jesus "Lord" today, do we do so as ones willing to follow his example of self-giving love and humble service? On that day, when many people praised Jesus as Lord and Savior, others failed to see Jesus as Lord and Savior. Today many do not see Jesus as their Lord and Savior. How do we help others to see and know Jesus as Lord? In Greek the original word that we translate as humility would have been *humus*. Literally, it means 'dirt'. To be humble means to see oneself as grounded, as drawn from the earth, as connected to all of life, to be no better and no worse than all of creation, to be dependent on one another.

In what practical way can we live these things out this week? One way would be to serve a neighbor or a friend. Bring them some cookies or a meal. Wheel their garbage can back up the driveway. Take a minute at the store to notice something nice about the checkout person. Hold the door open and wish another a good day. Pick up the phone and have a conversation with a relative. Invite someone to church on Easter or Maundy Thursday or Good Friday.

We are Easter people
living in a
Good Friday
world.



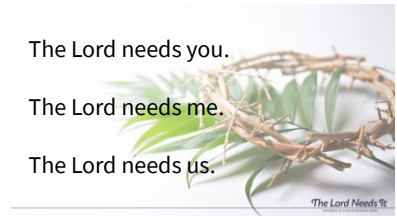
The Lord Needs%

As many have said, “We are Easter people living in a Good Friday world”. We are resurrection people living in a world that strains to hold onto power, to protect one’s own, to

elevate self above all else. We live in a Good Friday world. We are people who celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ and all that this event means for us and can mean for our world.

Philippians 2 teaches us another important truth that reinforces this statement: we are never as bad as we think we are, and we are never as good as other people say we are. Let me repeat that: we are never as bad as we think we are, and we are never as good as other people say we are. The reverse is also true. We must therefore remember that our value is found neither in what we think of ourselves nor in what others say about us. Our real value, our true worth is discovered when we see ourselves as God sees us. True worth is understanding that we are interconnected, that we are interdependent on one another. True humility allows us to recognize and live into these truths of our faith, to love and humbly serve one another.

As the two disciples secured Jesus' ride into Jerusalem, some people questioned what they were doing. Their response? *"The Lord needs it."* Yes, Jesus did need the donkey. And he needed people to respond to his pronouncement that the king was coming. He needed the world to know that salvation had come. That is not all that Jesus needs. The Lord needs you. The Lord needs me. The Lord needs us.



On that first Palm Sunday, the disciples and the crowd proclaimed Jesus as Lord, as Savior, as Messiah. The world needed to hear that message. The world continues to need to hear the message that Jesus saves. This week, may you and I be witnesses to the resurrection power found in Christ alone. May it be so for you and for me. Amen and amen.

GPS – Grow, Pray, Study

- 1) *Grow*. How does proclaiming or witnessing to “Jesus is Lord and Savior” help you to grow in your faith? How will you live this truth out this week?
- 2) *Pray*. When has the Spirit recently nudged you to serve a neighbor or friend? Pray for the courage to respond to the nudge this week.
- 3) *Study*. Read Matthew 21:1-11. How does this passage connect back into the Old Testament? How does this add depth and meaning to Palm Sunday?