

The Via Dolorosa for the King
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.
April 13, 2025 – Palm Sunday

Text: Matthew 21:1-11

Purpose: Jesus intentionally walked the road to the cross - the Via Dolorosa (The Way of Suffering). It was out of His love for you and me that He chose this path. The crowds wanted an earthly reigning king, but Jesus' kingdom was of a different kind. He wanted to reign in the hearts of mankind.

Introduction

It was Palm Sunday but because of a sore throat, 5-year-old Johnny stayed home from church with a sitter.



When the family returned home, they were carrying several palm fronds. Johnny asked them what they were for.

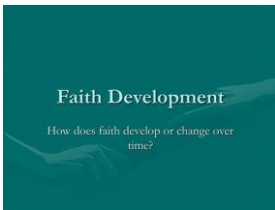
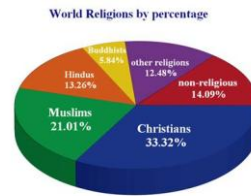
"People held them over Jesus' head as he walked by," his father told him.

"Wouldn't you know it," Johnny fumed, "the one Sunday I don't go and He shows up."¹



This past week I have spent some time down at Salter Path at the Trinity Center with my Peer Learning Group. This is our 21st year as a group. It was good to get away, but I surely did miss home!

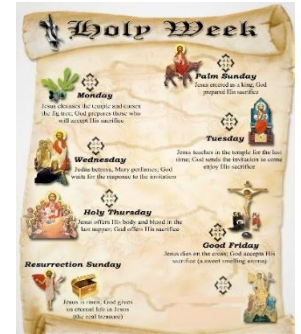
While I was a student at Campbell University Divinity School, I took a World Religions course taught by Dr. George Braswell, who was a former missionary to Iran. Our class assignments included the opportunity to listen to a Jewish Rabbi from Raleigh and hear more about his faith and how it compares to Christianity. We also were able to tour a Jewish synagogue, a Greek Orthodox Church, a Muslim Mosque, and a Hindu Temple near the RDU airport. What we saw and experienced during our time there could fill several hours worth of discussion. Each of these faith communities come from a different perspective and opinion of God, Jesus Christ, and salvation.



One of the things that impressed me the most is the way each group attempted to continue to reinforce their faith by sharing stories and passing them on to the next generation. The Jewish Rabbi told the story of the people of Israel leaving Egypt and it is remembered through the story of Passover. The Greek Orthodox Church reinforces their faith stories through the various icons or pictures throughout their worship facility. The Islamic Mosque reinforces their connection with Allah through meeting together five times a day for prayer – sometimes at home privately, and at the Mosque other times

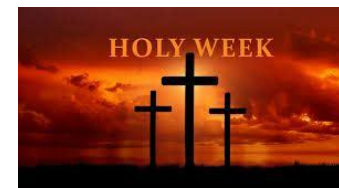
during the day. The Hindu Temple reinforces their traditions by bringing daily food offerings to their deities.

For those of us that have been involved in the life of the church almost all of our lives, we come to a season like Easter and say, “Oh yea! I already know the story of Jesus. I already know about the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, the cleansing of the temple, the betrayal by Judas, the Last Supper in the Upper Room, the details of the crucifixion, and finally the Resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday morning.” For some of us this could be considered a repeat of what we have already heard. But we need to hear **our** story again to reinforce **our** faith traditions and doctrine.



But for the sake of some that have never heard the story of Jesus’ last week here on earth, I wanted to give an overview of the events that unfolded.

An Overview of the Last Week of Jesus’ Life



As we approach the passion narrative found in the Book of Matthew, all the events seem to fall within a short period of time. It is quite possible that all the events that are listed in the Book of Matthew did occur over a period longer than a week. But tradition and the Book of Matthew seem to indicate a chronological order of the last week’s events in the life of Christ.

Sunday – Palm Sunday: Entry into Jerusalem, turned over the money Changer's tables, and returned to Bethany (Matthew 21:1-17)

Monday to Wednesday – Cursed the fig tree (21:18-22) Numerous Teachings and Parables in the Temple (21:28-25:46)

- Questions of Jesus' Authority
- Parable of the Wicked Tenants, the Wedding Banquet, the Ten Bridesmaids, and the use of talents
- Questions about paying taxes to Caesar, the Resurrection
- Numerous clashes with the religious leaders
- Prediction of the destruction of the Temple
- The Return of the Son of Man

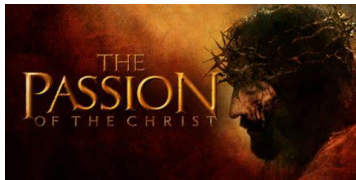
Wednesday PM– Anointing of Jesus' feet in Bethany as well as Judas' betrayal. (Matthew 26:1-16)

Thursday – Preparation for the Passover, Last Supper, Gethsemane, arrest, trial before Sanhedrin (Matt. 26:17-75)

Friday – Trial before Pilate and Herod, condemnation, crucifixion, burial (Matthew 27:1-61)

Saturday – Jesus was sealed and guarded in the tomb. (Matthew 27:62-66)

Sunday – Easter: Jesus' Resurrection (Matthew 28:1-10)



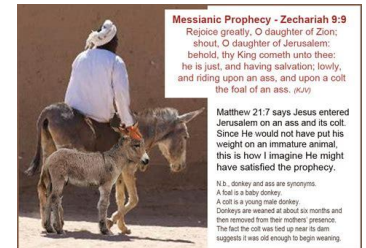
Many of you that have seen the 2004 movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, which details the last 12 hours of Jesus' life. It had a tremendous impact when it was

first released. The movie began in the Garden of Gethsemane and ended at the garden tomb. At the end, you see a brief scene that shows Jesus on Sunday morning, but it is a small portion of the whole movie. I read recently that Mel Gibson will begin filming *The Passion – Part 2*, in August this year.

Maybe over the next week, you could set aside some time each day to read the passages found in the Book of Matthew. In doing so, you will prepare your heart and have a richer appreciation of the final week of Jesus' life before we gather each day during Holy Week and next Sunday for Resurrection Sunday.

Our Text – Go and Get the Colt (Verse 2)

Our focus this morning is actually what occurred on the first day of the week – Sunday. Jesus drew near the town of Jerusalem and instructed two of His disciples to go into town to a certain place and get a donkey and a colt and bring it back to Him. I am sure that Jesus had walked many miles to and from Jerusalem and there is never a mention in scripture of needing a donkey or colt prior to this. But on this special occasion, Jesus was in need of a special animal.



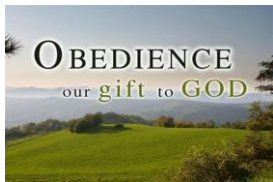
It seems as if Jesus was living out His life in such a detailed manner so that every little detail would be accomplished by Him prior to His crucifixion on the cross of Calvary. In Zechariah 9:9 we find a prophecy concerning the coming Messiah. In that passage of scripture, it says, “*Rejoice, greatly O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just*

and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

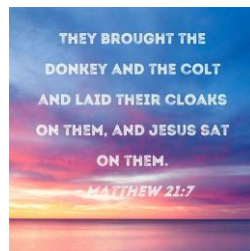


What I find most interesting when comparing Matthew’s account with Mark’s and Luke’s is that we see Jesus sending His disciples to get two animals – a donkey and a colt. Matthew’s story continues to have Jesus using both animals as he entered Jerusalem. Whether Jesus entered into Jerusalem with one or two animals, they symbolized one coming in peace, instead of war. If He had come on a horse, it would have shown Jesus coming as a military leader. Jesus understood the significance of entering Jerusalem in this manner and so did others.

Jesus’ instructions were clear and understandable to the two disciples. **Go and get the donkey and colt.** How many of us have heard a clear word of instruction from God and failed to do as He asks? It could be as simple as attending church, tithing, forgiving another, or yielding to the call of salvation. We have heard the inner urging from God, but have failed to yield our will to His will. Until we are obedient in what God has called us, we cannot move forward in our relationship with God.



Let me say that again, until we are obedient in what God has called us to do, we cannot move forward in our relationship with Him.



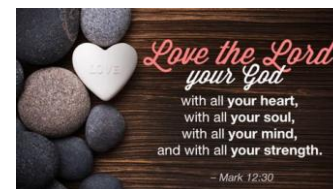
Our Text – The Lord Has Need of It (Verses 3)



Many people have speculated as to whose donkey and colt these were and how did Jesus know they were there? Did Jesus have supernatural knowledge of these animals and their location or did Jesus make prior arrangements with this man? I believe this man was holding these animals for the special purpose of bringing Jesus into Jerusalem. Apparently, the owner of this donkey and colt understood and knew the Lord’s needs. Jesus instructed the two disciples that if anyone says anything about getting the animal, simply tell them, “*The Lord has need of it.*” When the disciples came and asked for it in the name of the “*Lord*” the owner quickly released the animal.

What would you do if someone came up to you and began to take your colt? Would the conversation go like this?

Hey! What are you doing with my colt?
“The Lord has need of it.”
What do I care? I need it for myself.
Leave it alone and get out of here.



That may sound kind of harsh but we would never do that to God? Right?

- God may say, “The Lord has need of your time.” But we say, “Sorry, but my time is limited. Besides, it is mine.”
- God may say, “The Lord has need of your strength.”

But we say, “Sorry, I can’t take on another thing. I am almost exhausted as it is now.”

- God may say, “The Lord needs your mind.” But we say, “Sorry, but I have all I can give my attention to, and more. I have troubles enough to think about.”

What kind of priority does God get with us? When the Lord calls us to sacrifice and give - do we? Or do we keep it for our own selfish needs?

Our Text – Hosanna to the Lord (Verses 4-9)

After the disciples had received permission to take the colt to Jesus, they proceeded to go into Jerusalem. Growing up in church as I have, I have seen many different pictures of this scene enacted. People obviously knew Jesus was entering Jerusalem.



This Miracle Worker who had healed the sick, given sight to the blind, cast out demons, even raised the dead was now entering their city. Jesus had so many people following Him that at one point, as many as 5000 men (not counting the women and children) followed Him into the desert for three days with no food for the journey. It was there that He fed them all with only five loaves of bread and two fish.

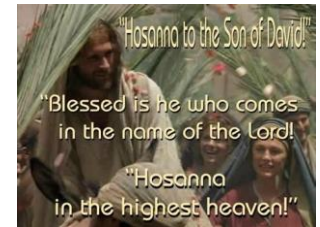


There is no record of how many were gathered along the streets of Jerusalem to welcome Jesus. They were so caught up in the celebration that they took off their shirts and coats and laid them on the ground before Jesus. They even

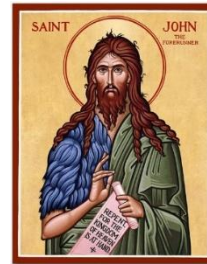
stripped nearby trees of leaves and branches to line the way that Jesus and the colt walked.

The enthusiasm was festive and contagious. They cried out with a loud voice,

*“Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is He who comes in the
name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest!”*



The song that the people were singing comes directly from Psalm 118:26. Jerusalem has been anticipating the coming Messiah for hundreds of years. There is a collective groaning among the nation for their Savior to come. Throughout the Book of Psalms, you will discover that there was an anticipation and hopefulness for One that will save the people.



Those that had seen John the Baptist and understood that John was the forerunner as predicted; also understood that the Messiah was to come soon. They all hoped that He would be the One to overthrow Roman rule. This crowd wanted Jesus to seize power from the government and rule and reign on the throne of David. But the Pharisees and Sadducees were afraid that Jesus’ popularity among the people would destroy everything. Even the High Priest said that the death of One will save many. The irony of their decision to kill Jesus in order to save the status quo caused them to lose everything in 70 A.D. when the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem and the temple.

Those gathered there that day wanted a political king but very few heard Jesus' warnings that He would go into Jerusalem, suffer and die. The disciples heard it, but they just didn't comprehend all that was occurring so quickly around them. The disciples may have been following Jesus, but they were not comprehending exactly how Jesus was fulfilling every "*jot and tittle*" in the law.



Our Text – Jesus Looked (Verse 11)

The Book of Matthew and Mark differ in what happened next. In the Book of Matthew, Jesus entered into the temple and turned over the money tables. In the Book of Mark, it says: "*And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve.*" I believe both things could have happened – Jesus cleansing the Temple as well as looking at all of the things there in the Temple.



When Jesus walked into the temple, He saw the Laver of water where the priest would wash their hands prior to touching the sacrifice. The priest had to be undefiled and the sacrifice had to be unblemished as well. He would then enter the court of Priests where the sacrifice was tethered to one of the four horns, slaughtered and offered on the brazen altar.

Surrounding the Court of the Priests was a room where the priest's vestments were kept, a place for making cakes of bread for the showbread table, room where wood was stored

for the altar fire, a place where salt was stored for preserving the meat, and a chamber for keeping the flame. Each of these things would be significant in relationship to the sacrifice that Jesus was going to offer in just a few days.



Standing high in the midst of the Temple stood the Holy of Holies. It was this very spot that Abraham offered His son Isaac up to the Lord. The day had come where the "*Lord Himself will provide for Himself a sacrifice*" as quoted by Abraham centuries earlier. It was this very spot that David purchased the threshing floor and his son, Solomon built the first temple. It was this very spot where Babylon destroyed Solomon's temple over 550 years earlier. This temple mount was God's design. This Temple Mount was the place where for centuries sin was atoned for by the blood of animals and forgiveness was received.

Jesus understood that in a few days, He would be the perfect Lamb of God brought before priests and slaughtered by the hands of unclean sinners. His shed blood would cleanse humanity's sin once and for all. In generations to come, all that called upon the name of the Lord would be saved. This one act, this one selfless act, would forever settle the question of sin and separation from God.

The magnitude of what Jesus was doing was missed by everyone. In the Book of Mark, it only records, "*He looked at all things.*" But the things that Jesus saw only reinforced why He had come and what His purpose was. Jesus had come to die.

The Via Dolorosa

The Via Dolorosa is a road that meanders through Jerusalem. This would be the road that Jesus traveled as He carried His cross to Golgotha – the place of the skull. I have walked the streets of Jerusalem down the very path that Jesus navigated as He headed to the cross of Calvary. Jesus



entered Jerusalem knowing that the Via Dolorosa (the way of suffering) was quietly calling Him to obedience. Jesus understood that the will of the Father, included suffering. He had read Isaiah

53 and knew the awfulness of the agony that would be unleashed upon His body. But He chose to walk it anyway. Why? So, we might be restored and renewed when we claim Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Palm Sunday is a day of celebration. Our King had finally announced publicly that He is the Messiah. But it is also a day of solemn reflection because we see what is coming on Friday. That day almost 2000 years ago had been called the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. But that event pales in comparison to what we will see one day when Jesus returns to claim those that love Him. That day will be Triumphal!

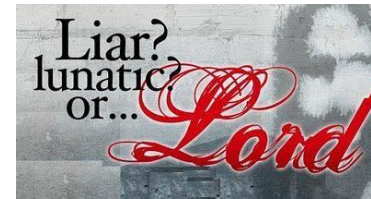
Jesus understood exactly who He was and the significance of the sacrifice.

Who is Jesus? What is our Response?

But do we really understand who Jesus is? Many will say that they accept

Who is Jesus?

Jesus as a good moral teacher, but do not accept Him as the Son of God. The Jews accept Jesus as a prophet but reject Him as the Messiah. Muslims accept his moral teachings but do not accept Jesus as the Son of God. Jehovah Witnesses deny the deity of Jesus. The Mormons claim that they follow the teachings of Jesus but claim they can become a god themselves and be like Jesus. How we define who Jesus is, determines how we respond to Him. How we respond to Him determines our eternal destination.



C. S. Lewis in the book, *Mere Christianity*, said that “either Jesus is the Son of God or He was a liar and a lunatic. You can call Jesus a fool, you can spit on Him, you can crucify Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God.”

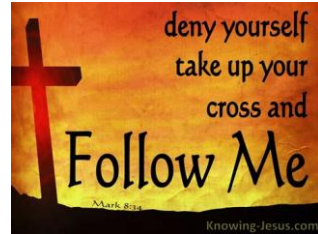
Jesus has created that kind of division down through the centuries. He has divided families, friends and even history. Our calendars are divided on the basis of the birth of Christ - “B.C.” and “A.D.”

Today, we celebrate that God so loved us that He gave us His One and Only Son. God did what He promised when He sent us a Redeemer and Savior. We do not need to mourn for our sins because they have been removed from us as far as the East is from the West. We can claim this forgiveness when we claim Jesus as our Savior and our Lord. We can praise God for this wondrous Love poured out at Calvary.



Almost every year as we have celebrated Palm Sunday, we have all been passed a Palm leaf and asked to bring it forward and lay them at the foot of the cross. This year, I am asking you to take your Palm leaves home with you as you leave. Let it be a reminder of who Jesus is, and that our praise for Him is not just on Palm Sunday, but every day until His Final Triumphal Return.

Jesus is calling us to take up our cross and follow Him. Will you surrender your all today?



LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹Mikey's Funnies, A Kid Funny, April 3, 2020