

It was springtime in Jerusalem: Light, palm leaves and a Savior: It was the first Palm Sunday. God's light shown brightly on that Sunday as the people gathered around their Savior. They needed Him, for their hearts were blistered with so much pain and their minds were filled with so many contradictions. They longed for, they prayed for God's intervention, and they waited. They waited under the oppressive hand of the Romans, and under the weight of their sin. This morning we're going to talk about what this meant to the people in Jesus' day and what it means for you and me in our walk with God and with one another.

PRAYER

READ John 12:12-19

The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" ¹⁴ And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, ¹⁵ "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!" ¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. ¹⁷ The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. ¹⁸ The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. ¹⁹ So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."

On that first Palm Sunday a storm was brewing. It was a spiritual storm, a storm between the forces of good and evil, between God and the devil. Its distant rumblings could be felt if one was paying attention. For despite the sense of celebration among the people, the enemies of Jesus muttered among themselves, looking for ways to destroy him.

But none of those gathered around Jesus waving palm branches wanted to believe it. They didn't want to let go of this moment of joy on this lovely spring day. Light, palm leaves, and a savior on a donkey. Life was good.

But the storm was near, nonetheless. The Pharisees eyed those who followed Jesus, and said, "Look, the world has gone after Him."

But the people cried out, "Hosanna!" which means "save us." That's what they wanted: Salvation. It's what we all long for, relief from the heartache, and fear, and joylessness of the backbreaking labor, and the crushing burden of broken relationships.

So what's an impending storm mean to people being carried so high with the promise of salvation, the promise of a king who would protect them, and lead them, and rule over them with justice, and give them peace of mind? Not a thing.

So the people proclaimed ever more loudly, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"

A king rode a horse into a conquered city to demonstrate his power and dominance. But He would ride a donkey if he wanted to communicate peace and goodwill to a people who had chosen to submit to His authority. The people laid their coats and palm branches before the donkey on which Jesus rode, for they desired nothing more than that he be their king.

Israel had been under the tyranny of other nations for over 750 years. They longed for peace, the peace God had promised their forefather Abraham. Indeed, God's promise of redemption and wholeness was imprinted on their hearts, written in their DNA. When they saw Jesus, they saw the personification of the promised work of God in their very midst! He had confronted the authorities who had enslaved them, he preached a message of love and joy and forgiveness, he had healed the sick, given sight to the blind, and he had raised the dead.

Death is man's last enemy and Jesus had defeated it. Jesus, the king of peace, was the embodiment of life eternal! "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"

But the clouds were rolling in. They were low, and dark, and the rains would come, and the winds would tear through everything with overwhelming speed and power.

But Jesus would throw himself into the eye of the storm and give himself to the people as their king and savior. So they cried out, “Hosanna!”

The storm I speak of is the forces of evil—the devil, the world, and our own sinful nature—pitted against the will of God, his will to save us for life eternal, life in his presence, in his kingdom forever, his will to save us through the sacrifice of his son, Jesus on the Cross.

It was the perfect storm. With hurricane force winds and a path incalculable, the lives of so many people would be consumed by it. Indeed, it would rip the life from our own hearts but for God’s Word which sustains us.

In our minds eye and in our hearts we stand in the midst of this crowd on the first Palm Sunday. And though we see the storm coming, we don’t care! For our King is in our midst. He grants us security from the evils of this world, for he has forgiven us for our sins. “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel!”

We shall not be consumed by the storm, for God has already interceded on our behalf through the death and resurrection of His son, Jesus. There’s nothing to fear. Neither wars, natural catastrophes, epidemics, persecutions, disease, nor famine can take from you what God has already given to you!

Friends in Christ, this week as we march towards the Cross may you be filled with a sense of thankfulness for what King Jesus did for you, singing in your heart, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel!”

May you be lifted up in your heart of hearts, filled with confidence, knowing that nothing can take away from you what King Jesus has given to you.

And may you have the opportunity to share this good news with another person who really needs to hear it, in the name of the Lord. Amen.