

# Palm Sunday

Scripture reading: Luke 19:28-40

Sermon Title: Who is Jesus?

Sermon Text: John 12:12-19

<b>MAIN IDEA:</b> Make sure the Word of God informs your view of who Jesus is; Christ the Lord.
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The crowd sees Jesus as: Celebrity Ticket

The Pharisees see Jesus as: Competition

The Scripture sees Jesus as: Christ the Lord

## INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE STAGE

(open Bibles to John 11:45)

Palm Sunday is the beginning of Holy Week. It is the first day of Jesus final week in Jerusalem.

Today is called Palm Sunday because when Jesus journeyed along the road to Jerusalem from Bethpage, crowds of people welcomed Jesus by laying down palm branches and their coats on the ground as a way to honor Him.

Let's put ourselves in the situation ...

The Jews were celebrating Passover. Passover is held during the Jewish month of Nisan, which typically is in early April on our calendar. It is spring time in Jerusalem, so the atmosphere is festive.

Celebrating the Passover for the Jews was celebrating their salvation. Imagine all of us getting saved on the same day. Passover is celebrating when God delivered His people from bondage and promised to bring them to the Holy Land. God commanded they celebrate the Passover feast according to the Law of Moses.

Everybody loved to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Jerusalem was the Promised Land. It was a very joyous celebration. Normally, Jerusalem had a population of about 20,000 to 30,000 people. During Passover, the population would swell to as much as 150,000<sup>1</sup>. Historians tell us there were preparations made on the bridges and roads and freshening up in the city to prepare for the influx of people.

Not everybody stayed in Jerusalem during the night, in fact, the Gospel of Mark tells us Jesus and His disciples stayed in Bethany and would travel the two miles into Jerusalem during the day time.

Passover is on the 14th of Nisan, which that year fell on Friday. Many went to Jerusalem early so they could make preparations for the feast and purify themselves at the Temple.

Jesus journey began on the other side of Jericho, beyond the River Jordan. It was there He got word from Mary and Martha that Lazarus was sick. Lazarus was in Bethany, which is like a suburb of Jerusalem on the road from Jericho.

After waiting two days, he tells His disciples He is heading to Judea again. Last time He was in Jerusalem, at the feast of the Dedication, the Jews were trying to kill Jesus because He claimed to be God, "I and the Father are one." But, Jesus got away (John 10:39).

The disciples remind Him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?" (John 11:8). But, we know Jesus is on a mission so off they go to Bethany.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://chosenpeople.com/main/index.php/holidays-and-festivals/191-passover-in-israel-past-and-present>

On their way to Bethany they passed through Jericho, where Jesus healed blind Bartimaeus on the way out of town. Jericho is located about 17 miles east of Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> Bartimaeus and some others joined in with the already growing crowd of people who followed Jesus.

**Matthew 20:19** says As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him.

15 miles later, He enters Bethany. We all know what happens when Jesus reaches Bethany; He calls Lazarus from the tomb. The raising of Lazarus was no small event. There were lots of people because of the upcoming Passover Feast. Not only that, Mary was surrounded by people who were consoling her. Jesus performed this very public, very incredible miracle of calling Lazarus out who had been dead for four days (John 11:39).

John 11 tells us:

**John 11:45-46**<sup>45</sup>Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him.<sup>46</sup>But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done.

So now, the guys who wanted to kill Jesus a few months ago, find out Jesus is back and now is raising people from the dead.

Jesus is now very famous. Everybody is talking about Him. He's had three years to create quite a stir with all the many miracles that He has done.

We read in John 11:

**John 11:55-57**<sup>55</sup>Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves.<sup>56</sup>So they were seeking for Jesus, and were saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think; that He will not come to the feast at all?"<sup>57</sup>Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him.

The stage is set. Jesus is now going to enter into Jerusalem where everyone is waiting for Him.

As we look at the passage in John 12, notice there are three distinct perspectives of the person of Jesus.

1. Who does the crowd think Jesus is
2. Who do the Pharisees think Jesus is
3. What does the Scripture say about who Jesus is

Let's read the passage.

**John 12:12-19**<sup>12</sup>On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,<sup>13</sup>took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and *began* to shout, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/the-triumphal-entry#ixzz3VJXScBDV>

King of Israel.”<sup>14</sup> Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, <sup>15</sup>“Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.”<sup>16</sup> These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him.<sup>17</sup> So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify *about Him*.<sup>18</sup> For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign.<sup>19</sup> So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him.”

**MAIN IDEA:** Make sure the Word of God informs your view of who Jesus is; Christ the Lord

## THE CROWD SEES JESUS AS: A CELEBRITY TICKET

What do I mean when I say, they saw Jesus as a *celebrity ticket*?

What I mean is they saw him as being popular; one who has influence to make things happen. The people had a desired outcome. Jesus was the ticket to that outcome.

A ticket gets you somewhere or something. But after you get what you want the ticket has no value. Jesus was their ticket, a means to get something they wanted.

The people wanted a Jewish King.

Jerusalem, the city of King David and King Solomon, was under Roman rule. There was no Jewish King. Jesus would make a great King.

They are giving Him a King’s welcome. In placing their coats under Jesus as he proceeded they are doing like what is described in 2 Kings 9:13 which tells us how “each man took his garment and placed it under” Jehu, son of Jehoshaphat, blew the trumpet, saying, “Jehu is king!”

Waving palm branches was a symbol of victory and triumph. A Roman philosopher of this same period, Cicero, said one who has many victories—*a man of many palms*.

The Jews used palm branches as a nationalistic symbol since the days of the Maccabean revolt (around 165-65BC). It is believed Simon Maccabeus had a similar welcome when he entered the city to overthrow the Greek rule.

Palm branches were consistently used to celebrate military victories and probably stirred up hope in the messiah leading a rebellion.

The people were shouting Hosanna! “Hosanna” in Hebrew means “Please save” or “Save now.”

They were quoting Psalm 118:26 and giving Jesus messianic titles to Him. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the King of Israel. Everyone sang Psalms 113–118 during the Passover season, the Hallel, so these words were fresh in everyone’s mind.

In essence, the people were saying, "Save us King."

This wouldn't be the first time the people sought Jesus to be their king. Last year during the Passover feast, the crowd was following Jesus. John 6 tells us the crowd was following Jesus, it was a big crowd, again because of the Passover, and they were following Him

**John 6:2**, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick.

After feeding the five thousand,

**John 6:15** <sup>15</sup>So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.

This seemingly has become a pattern. Jesus shows signs and the people try to make Him King.

The passage tells us why the crowd sought after Jesus in verse 18.

On Palm Sunday, the people went and met Jesus on the road was because they heard that He had raised Lazarus from the dead.

Jesus said, "This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign."

The crowd saw Jesus as a celebrity ticket, not as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

### **Their sin had blinded their eyes**

They could not see the real Jesus because they were seeking to satisfy the desires of their flesh. They were seeking Jesus for the wrong reasons.

When they discovered Jesus would not satisfy their flesh, they turned against Christ.

Later in the week, Jesus, their political candidate for King started saying things that were not very agreeable to their politics. For example, "Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Mark 12.17).

"We don't want a King who supports Caesar, we want a King who opposes Caesar." Who needs a king like this? By the end of the week, the crowd was very dissatisfied with their political candidate Jesus.

By Friday, the crowd was agreeing with the religious leaders and appealed to the Roman authorities to crucify Christ on the basis that he was claiming to be the "King of the Jews" and not in service to Caesar. Sunday they were crying "Save us King" and by Friday they were saying, wrong guy.

My how people change when things don't go as expected. We want our fleshly desires to be met.

Their flesh made them blind.

Many times when Jesus or Christianity doesn't meet our expectations, then we'll just reject Jesus.

When our expectations are not met we become angry against those who don't meet them. That is the problem.

It wasn't Jesus. It could have been anybody. They would have done the same to you or I.

We do the same thing all the time.

When our church, friends or loved ones don't meet our expectations we reject them.

As long as church goes my way, as long as Jesus answers prayers the way I want them answered, everything is just fine.

I remember a phone call to the church from a stranger who wanted help with their electric bill. They were all nice about Jesus until I said they had to come in and fill out some paperwork because we just don't hand out money to strangers. Then, they were not so nice anymore.

Maybe the church doesn't have enough children's programs or has too many children's programs. Maybe the church stops singing your style of music or you wish we had never done away with the choir.

The church will not meet your expectations. How will you respond?

I will not meet your expectations, how will you respond?

Your spouse doesn't meet your expectations, how do you respond?

Jesus will not always meet your expectations.

Jesus will not always give you what you want, but he will always give you what you need.

There are hundreds of reasons the crowd leaves Jesus. They all boil down to one common denominator. They leave Jesus because He doesn't meet their expectations.

We have to be very careful and be sure to examine our heart motives.

What is in my heart that will cause me to turn away and reject people?

Ask, why am I following Christ?

Ask yourself, why do I follow Jesus? What do I expect Jesus to do for me? Are my expectations Biblical?

Do I follow Jesus because He is the celebrity, the person with the influence, to get me what I want? Am I like the crowd and follow Jesus because I seek to have my fleshly desires met?

Jesus is not a ticket to eternal life, or a ticket to a mansion in heaven, or a get out of Hell free ticket, or a ticket to a better marriage, or to be cancer free, nor is He the key to a new car or house or job.

Jesus is the ticket to get Jesus.

If you are not completely satisfied in having only Jesus, you don't want Jesus as your Savior.

We can all be a little bit like the crowd on Palm Sunday. Hosanna on Sunday and not too happy with Jesus on Friday. God shows us these people so we can look into the mirror and see our own hearts.

Ask God to forgive you and help you have the right expectations.

## THE PHARISEES SEE JESUS AS: COMPETITION

The Pharisees saw Jesus as a threat to all that they enjoyed and had come to love. Jesus was competition to the desire of the Pharisee's heart. Jesus threatened to take away what they longed to keep.

They longed for the praise of men and Jesus was getting the praise. They desired the best seats in the synagogue and Jesus was getting the hero's welcome. They gave tithes and prayed openly so people would marvel at their spiritual works but the people were marveling at the works of Jesus.

It's hard to get followers when the other guy is raising the dead.

Jesus was stealing their thunder. This is why they sought to kill him.

**John 11:47-48** <sup>47</sup>Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. <sup>48</sup>"If we let Him *go on* like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

Their jealousy of Jesus was so bad, that even Pilate could recognize it.

**Matthew 27:18** <sup>18</sup>For he knew that because of envy they had handed Him over.

On Jesus entry into Jerusalem, when they see the people crying out Hosanna to Jesus, they are outraged. They tell Jesus to have people stop praising Him. "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." (Luke 19:39)

They are so frustrated because no matter what they try, it is not working. They vent their frustration towards one another.

**John 12:19** <sup>19</sup>So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him."

They were supposed spiritual leaders, but we can see today their assessment of the crowd reveals how little they understood about what was happening spiritually. They said the whole world has gone after Jesus when actually, most of those people did not really believe in Jesus. The world was after what they thought Jesus could offer.

Imagine if they felt frustrated on Sunday, think of how they felt about Jesus on Monday when He overturned all their tables in the Temple courtyard. Jesus flat out tells the people beware of the scribes and Pharisees.

It's almost as if Jesus sees their jealousy and feeds it all the more. During this week, Jesus would teach daily in the temple. The chief priests, scribes and the leaders were trying to destroy Him, but they couldn't do anything because the people were hanging on to every word Jesus said (Luke 19:47-48).

What the Pharisees didn't know was that in just a few days, they would be able to convince the world "who on Sunday had gone after Jesus" to crucify Jesus on Friday.

They were incredibly frustrated. They had been plotting to kill Jesus but all their plans were not working. Jesus was not diminishing in power, He has gone from Rabbi to people now calling Him king and putting palm branches in His path. All the attention they normally would receive during Passover was now being directed at Jesus.

The people's reception of Jesus made the murderous plans impossible. They were going to try to quietly arrest Jesus in some back alley so they could kill Him. Good luck with that.

They hated Jesus so much,

**John 12:10** <sup>10</sup>But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also.

How very wicked is the human heart. If Jesus supported them, they would think He was great.

Here we are, it's Passover and the Pharisees are supposed to be the big men on campus. They expect people are supposed to come to them as they hang out in the Temple and listen to them talk about the Exodus or maybe help people become pure. Maybe they worked for two months on their Passover sermons.

They were the religious elite. This was the most important holy city on the most important religious holiday and they were supposed to be the most important religious leaders.

Jesus crashed their party. Jesus got the attention they thought they deserved. Jesus even went so far as to criticize them, which made them even less important on the religious scene.

What we see is Jesus competed against their hearts desires. They desired fame, importance, and self-exaltation.

They longed for the praise of men and Jesus was getting the praise.

Just as Jesus said, the Pharisees honored God with their lips, but their heart was far from God. If their heart was close to God, they would worship God's Son.

### **Sin blinded their eyes.**

Like the crowd, the sin of the Pharisees kept them from seeing Jesus.

Jesus popularity revealed the heart condition of the Pharisees.

The problem of the Pharisee is pride. It's not so much they hated Jesus, they hated their followers were leaving them to follow Jesus. They hated not being most important. They hated not getting the recognition they thought they deserved. He got more friends and more likes on Facebook.

Pride and jealousy is nothing new. The Pharisees were not the first to be filled with pride and they are not the last. This happens all the time in our society. It happens in the church.

How come they were asked to serve on the special committee and not me? I would like to sing a solo. I think bulletins should be folded this way. I show up for all the work days and he doesn't, but nobody notices. It is the same heart condition.

Perhaps you used to be in charge of something in the church or you want to be in charge, leadership, home fellowship, worship team, nursery, facility, ushering, but you were not asked or asked to step down for one reason or another. And now you are bitter. It is the same heart condition.

Just like the Pharisees, our sin can keep us from seeing Jesus.

Sin blinded the eyes of the crowd. Sin blinded the eyes of the Pharisees.

It is not hard to imagine on that day any one of us being one of the crowd or one of the Pharisees.

In fact, if God had not opened our eyes, we would be just like the crowd or the Pharisees.

Sin blinds the eyes of all people so they may not see Jesus and treasure His worth.

But!

The gospel opens the eyes of the blind. The Word of God reveals our sinful heart and reveals the glory of Christ.

## **THE SCRIPTURE SEES JESUS AS: CHRIST THE LORD**

Jesus is Christ the Messiah; the anointed one of Israel. He is the Lord of Lords, and King of Kings.

The crowd was correct in their praise, but wrong in their heart.

Jesus is Lord, our knee should bow to Him. We are to submit to His rule.

The Scripture sees Jesus as Christ the Lord. Jesus knew the Scripture. This is why on His way to Jerusalem, Jesus was ensured the prophecy about Him would be fulfilled. He sent two of His disciples on ahead to get a donkey to ride into Jerusalem.

This was to fulfill the prophecy about the Christ as it is written in Zechariah

**Zechariah 9:9** <sup>9</sup> Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout *in triumph*, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Our passage in John tells us the disciples didn't see the prophecy taking place, but when Jesus was glorified, they remembered the prophecy and what had taken place.

During His ministry, Jesus said, "If you knew Moses and the Prophets (if you knew your Bible), you would know me, because the Law and the Prophets spoke of me."

The Scriptures see Jesus as the Christ.

Before His ascension, Jesus would open the Scriptures and explain all the prophecies to His disciples.

The riding of the donkey is only one in the list of hundreds of prophecies about Jesus.

Most striking are those which talk about His death. Listen to this sampling from Psalm 22

All who see me sneer at me.  
my bones are out of joint, but not broken  
tongue cleaves to my jaws  
A band of evildoers has encompassed me;  
they pierced my hands and my feet  
for my clothing they cast lots

Remarkable!

Surely this is the Christ!

Jesus knew what was happening. Jesus knew His hour had come. He was to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Think about the timing.

In the past, the people had tried to make Jesus King. After feeding the five thousand the Scripture tells us:

**John 6:15** <sup>15</sup>So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.

In the past, Jesus also avoided the Pharisees.

**Matthew 12:14-15** <sup>14</sup>But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, *as to* how they might destroy Him. <sup>15</sup>But Jesus, aware of *this*, withdrew from there.

Now, Jesus is not avoiding the crowd or the Pharisees. Previously, Jesus hadn't ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey.

In the past, Jesus would say, "my time has not yet come."

Now, it is time. Now the time is perfect. Everything is ready.

During the time of Moses, the blood of the Passover lamb enabled the Israelites to be freed from the bondage of Egyptians. They were an enslaved people who were set free and able to enter the Promised Land. Once they were set free, they were able to worship God freely.

The Passover lamb is a picture of Christ, a foretelling of the Lamb of God. When we put our faith in the sacrifice of Jesus blood, we who are enslaved to sin are set free and are able to enter into the eternal Promised Land. When we are set free from the bondage of sin, we are able to worship God freely.

The sin of the people and sin of the Pharisees didn't allow them to see Jesus as the Lamb of God.

But, that didn't stop Jesus. That is why He came. He came to open their eyes and to set them free.

Jesus came to die for the sins of the crowd and the sins of the Pharisees. 3000 were saved on the day of Pentecost. And later, Saul, the Pharisee of Pharisees, would also be saved.

Jesus came to die for you and for me.

The very sins which cause us to be selfish and seek to satisfy our flesh, like the people in the crowd, Jesus overcame. The sins which make us jealous and fill us with pride and self-worth, like the Pharisees, Jesus overcame.

And when we are in union with Jesus by faith, we also overcome.

### **What then is Palm Sunday?**

Palm Sunday is the day our Savior humbly rode into Jerusalem to battle for our souls.

Our King was riding to fight and free us from our sinful hearts.

The Lamb of God riding into town for Passover. He was the sacrifice. He was coming to save us from the sin which blinds us from seeing His glory.

The sword was drawn for battle, but it wasn't in His hand. The sword was aimed at our King.

When the battle began, Peter used his sword to strike and begin the battle, but Jesus stopped him. That was not how the battle would be won. He picked up the slain ear of His adversary, put it back on the head.

Our King was in the midst of the battle. There was also an inscription above Him, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." He was crowned. He was lifted up so all may see Him. And the battle began and the blood flowed.

The blood of the battle still flows and we are washed in His blood. The blood of that great battle still speaks and it says to sin and death, you have no power. A Kingdom is established. A people are redeemed. The New Jerusalem shines brightly and forevermore and Her King sits upon the throne. He sits there right now.

This is Jesus, Christ, the Lord. He has declared us to be His bride and He is our bridegroom. To show just how much He loves us, He mounted a donkey and rode into Jerusalem to fight a battle on our behalf.

Open your eyes and see Jesus, He is the Christ, the anointed Messiah, the King who came to save. Let us wave the palms for He has gained the victory.

Hosanna!

## **PRAYER**

## **BENEDICTION**

Hosanna to the King. All glory to Him.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ has opened our eyes and revealed God's plan, a plan kept secret from the beginning of time. But now as the prophets foretold and as the eternal God has commanded, this gospel message is made known to all people everywhere, so that they too might believe Christ and obey him.

Let us endeavor by the grace of God to obey our Savior and King.

All glory to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, forever. Amen.