

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Palm Sunday, April 5, 2020**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 160, 207:6, 162, 161, 50.

Lessons: Zechariah 9:9-10, Philippians 2:5-11, Matthew 21:1-11.

Sermon Text: Luke 19:28-48.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

If this were fiction and a novelist were writing this as a story, it might begin:

“The first day of the week dawned bright and sunny with no visible clue about the terrible storm clouds gathering that would destroy the week. The man whom many thought to be a prophet and his closest followers approached Jerusalem. He would be greeted by a large crowd of people who shouted joyfully as he approached the holy city with its beautiful temple.”

But this isn't fiction. We don't know if this was a bright and sunny day. But this is a day we think about

**THE IMPENDING DOOM AWAITING JESUS IN JERUSALEM**

- 1. He approaches the city on a borrowed donkey,**
- 2. He is praised wildly by crowds, but**
- 3. He issues a warning.**

What! “Impending doom”? Isn't Palm Sunday supposed to be a joyful day?

All four evangelists tell us this history lesson. Each has a certain flavor and emphasis. Luke seems to remind us that this is a King coming to his people and warning them of what is to happen to Jerusalem – and to all who reject him.

Most of you probably know this Bible history lesson pretty well. Jesus borrowed a donkey and rode into Jerusalem, As Jesus was approaching *“the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ‘Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ tell him, ‘The Lord needs it.’ Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, ‘Why are you untying the colt?’ They replied, ‘The Lord needs it.’ They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.”*

That Jesus would need to borrow transportation to ride into the city at this time was completely in keeping with his life on earth. Even though he was truly God, and had told that to people many times, he *“made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself.”* Philippians 2:7-8 (NIV)

This is the same person who will be given all power to judge the living and the dead and who will be praised in eternity as King of kings and Lord of lords, who will sit at the very right hand of God.

But on this day many, many people joyfully greet him with praises. They are shouting such words as *“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” .... Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”* Matthew 21:9-11 (NIV) *“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!”* Mark 11:9-10 (NIV) *“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the King of Israel!”* John 12:13-15 (NIV)

They rejoice that he is a king – but they don't all understand what kind of king he really is. They rejoice at *“the coming kingdom of our father David!”* but they are expecting the physical kingdom of the great King David to be restored. They rejoice that he *“comes in the name of the Lord!* but they really don't understand what he is really coming for.

They even shout “hosannas” to him. *“Hosanna to the Son of David! Hosanna in the highest! ““Hosanna!” Hosanna in the highest!” “Hosanna!”* That word *“Hosanna!”* is a Hebrew shout of joy in praising God, an expression meaning “save” or “Save now,” or “Save, we beseech Thee,” or “Save us, we pray!” that is best

understood as a prayer or a plea. So in praising Jesus as a king, or thinking he would restore the nations of Judah and Israel to the greatness of King David's time, they were asking Jesus to "save them". Of course, he did come to save them, but not in the way they expected.

Were they impressed with the scene as Jesus rode into Jerusalem? Obviously yes, as we can understand from their words of praise. But this was a rather strange picture. This was a grand parade with its center of attention a man riding on a donkey. There were lots of people shouting and praising him. They spread their cloaks on the ground and they cut branches from palm trees and spread them in his path for sort of a red carpet welcome. There was lots of praise for this man.

But they couldn't really see how this man – whom we believe and are sure is not just a man, but also true God – would bring peace. They were hoping he would bring an earthly peace, but they didn't understand that he could bring peace to their hearts only if they believed in him as Savior.

But not all is well. Jesus knows that six days from now he will be dead, having been crucified like the worst of criminals, dying a cursed death on a tree.

He issues a warning of what will happen to them because they reject him. ***"If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."***

This is a terrible warning that his hearers should have understood. He is talking about the destruction of their great holy city, Jerusalem, and the temple which had originally been built by God's direct instructions to their great king Solomon. Their nation had heard such prophecies before and experienced the results of similar prophecies. But had they forgotten their history? Did they not remember how they had suffered because they did not obey and follow the Lord God who had once set them apart from the heathen people around them and given his commandments to keep them separate?

So did they listen to this man on this day?

Perhaps some did. But many of the citizens of Jerusalem and Jews who were in Jerusalem to celebrate the annual festival of the Passover let the words go in one ear and out the other. They are the ones who five days later would be shouting "Crucify him!"

We find religious leaders condemning Jesus. Some of the people who believed themselves to be more religious and better than others, the Pharisees, ***"said to Jesus, 'Teacher, rebuke your disciples!' 'I tell you,' he replied, 'if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.' As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, 'If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you.'"***

To this very day the archeology and the study of the stones of Jerusalem tell the story of its destruction. The only thing left of the great temple is a wall of foundation stones. On the site of the temple today is a Muslim mosque, worshipping a false god. The very religion worshipping on that location does not recognize Jesus Christ as the only Savior for mankind.

What would bring them peace? This man would bring them peace, peace of conscience if only they would listen to him and the words written about him in their sacred Old Testament scriptures. But they couldn't see it.

Jesus' terrible words came true. The fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy occurred about a generation later, when the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem and completely annihilated it. The Romans would besiege the city and try to starve it. Jesus gives the horrible picture of bodies being dashed to the ground – not only the adults but the children too – even within the city walls when the Roman soldiers would get into the city. Even the secular historian Josephus describes the terrible conditions inside the city when the Romans besieged the city and surrounded them on every side.

The unimaginable destruction of not one stone standing on another would come true. Remember how terrible the pictures are when we see the building-flattening destruction that hurricanes and tornadoes make? Imagine Jerusalem, a city and temple built of stone being flattened!

And it would happen, Jesus tells them, ***"because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."*** On this very day Jesus is coming to them. On this day he is beginning their last few days to see, hear, and really

listen in person to the Messiah, the Savior sent to the descendants of Abraham whom they have been waiting for for about 2000 years. For them this was the time of God's coming to them.

In these words we see a warning for us, too. Today, right now, is the time of God's coming to you. You really don't know for sure that you will have another chance to hear the Word of God just as you are doing here today.

In Jesus' words we can see a preview of the destruction of the world on judgment day, when this same prophet comes back to judge the living and the dead. But judgment day when all will be gathered before Christ is not the only thing we must think about. Judgment day will come sooner for individuals who die before judgment day. How many people's lives aren't snuffed out unexpectedly every day? That is when they face the judgment of Christ. We pray that such tragedies spare us, but our lives are totally in God's hand.

These people cheering Jesus on this day didn't know that by the end of the week this one whom they welcomed so joyously on this day would be dead, crucified by their own people led by their own religious leaders.

Not only is this a warning for you who are sitting here, but also for everyone not worshipping with us today.

There are many who have never heard about Jesus' death and resurrection for them. For many, next Sunday, the day we will celebrate Jesus' resurrection is only a day of candy and eggs and bunnies and a big meal.

And this is especially a warning for those who once heard this message of Jesus and are ignoring it this very day. For them, too, Jesus' message is a message that ***"would bring [them] peace--but now it is hidden from [their] eyes."***

What happened was God's plan. Jesus' capture, his beatings, his humiliation, his suffering and finally his death like the scum of the earth all happened the way God planned it. You see, man has sinned and had to pay the penalty for sin. This one, the very Son of God came to earth, ***"born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."*** Galatians 4:4-5 (NIV) He as true God and also true man paid the penalty for sin in your place. ***"He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."*** Isaiah 53:5 (NIV) Those who rejected him in crucifying him rejected the right to be sons of God, despite their pride in their ancestry as descendants of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and other heroes of faith.

So they didn't really listen and take to heart this praise of this man who was more than just a man riding on a donkey. They didn't know or believe who he really is.

If they had really understood and believed the words that the crowd – they – were shouting, they would have realized he was the Savior, the Messiah, the Son of David who would save them from sin, death, and eternal damnation in hell.

He didn't come to make their political situation better. He didn't come to save them from wicked Roman leaders. He came to save them from themselves, from their sins, from their stubbornness, from their wicked hearts, thoughts, words and actions.

Yes, terrible destruction would come upon Jerusalem, and it is possible that some of this very crowd would still be alive when the prophecy of the destruction of their great city would come true. After all, children, too, were praising him.

What hope do we have? We have the same hope they had.

Believe in the Lord Jesus and be saved! Let us be careful that Jesus' warning does not go in one of our ears and out the other, too.

Look at the words with which they greet Jesus. Is that really the way we greet Jesus today? With our hearts and our lives? Don't things of this world get in the way? Let's see, today is Palm Sunday and next week is Easter. Are you thinking about what's going on in connection with Easter? I bet you are now that I have mentioned it. Don't forget the real reason for the day we call Easter. That is the day of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, assuring us of our resurrection.

Look at all the ways the world has come up with to celebrate the resurrection of this prophet, this Savior, this Son of God. I don't have to repeat any of them. The images of the world are before our eyes.

Your king is coming in love, because he loves you. Greet him not only in words, but in faith and with your whole lives. Let us, too, welcome him with praises, not only words, but also hearts and lives as the Savior for whom we want to live our day – and our entire lives. Amen.