**John 12:12-16 (ESV)**

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.

**“Purpose Pointing To The Cross”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. We live in a world of extremes. There is life and there is death. There is rich and there is poor. There is strong and there is weak. There is male and there is female. There is old and there is young. As the holiest week in the Christian Church begins, Jesus comes to pull these extremes together. No one else creates such a collage of people to praise His Name. God going to the extremes to save sinners is why the Savior stands out. The magnetic attraction to Christ is because “God so loved the World that He gave His one and only Son” (John 3:16). Palm Sunday pulls together what no other person could possibly do. The extreme blessing for all comes in Jesus.

 At the same time, Palm Sunday quickly turns into the Sunday of our Lord’s Passion. The extremes come together in order to condemn Jesus Christ to death on the cross. All had to be a part of it. There were the leaders and there were the followers. There were the Jews and there were the Gentiles. There were the women and there were the men. There were the sacred and there were the secular. All united against God’s Son. All wanted His destruction. All were right while He alone was wrong. Yet, it was at this moment where the extremes of men met at the cross. We also find the Father passionately going to extremes to save men by the sacrifice of His Son. As St. Paul said, “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

 As society goes to the extremes to deal with indebtedness, health care, education, and everything else under the Sun. It is fitting that the extreme nature of Holy Week drives the Church to lift up the Son of God. We are to remain beneath the Savior of a sinful world. Everything stands on that first commandment. “Thou shall not have any other gods before me.” We break it all the time. Every sin includes having to break this commandment. It happened on the first Palm Sunday. Such diverse kinds of people had many different pictures of Jesus. The palms projected a symbol of “prosperity, beauty, and victory.” All of it was self-seeking over what this king would bring for me. Rather than false praise, the palm branches already served their purpose on Ash Wednesday. As one writer states, “the destruction of a palm tree is a metaphor for divine destruction of upper levels of society along with the lower levels” (The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary 791). The ashes of palm branches have pulled us together. They marked all as sinners at the start of Lent. United in repentance is to worship Christ whose true prosperity, beauty, and victory as king comes for us by His cross.

Of course, the moment this king did not fulfill the heart’s desire for glory. One extreme went to another. Rather than crying out the blessed praise, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" The people were just as eager to exchange Christ for a criminal crying out to Pilate, “Let him be crucified! And he said, "Why, what evil has he done?’ But they shouted all the more, ‘Let him be crucified!" People want what they want. We want what we want. Plenty complain about spoiled kids. Adults are just as spoiled before the God who gives everything by grace. “Hosanna!” was a word used during the Passover Feast. It praised God for delivering His people from the angel of death in Egypt. Hosanna means “Save us now” or “Save, I Pray.” Applying it to Jesus meant the Jews expected a great deal in terms of service. He did a great deal, but it was in terms of faith in Him as the sacrificial Lamb of God. We sing our “hosannas” when we have the sacrament of the altar. Jesus does come to save. It is to “Passover” our sins by giving us His passionate death to eat and to drink. It lifts up our hearts to His all-sufficient sacrifice for sinners. There is no better service. Christ by the cross knows, “how to sustain with a word him who is weary” for He has worn our sin and shame (Isaiah 50:4).

As things became extreme on Palm Sunday, God’s Word called forth an extreme humility. Jesus as the Word become flesh did not ride in on pride. He put Himself on a donkey, a beast of burden. It is the promise foretold in Scripture. The Father sending His Son was not sending the extremes away, but calling them to Christ. As the Lord declared, “Fear not, daughter of Zion behold your king is coming…” This is far from quieting fears by the way of comprise between the extremes. Governing by democracy can make idols just as much as a dictatorship. Instead, only in Christ do extremes end by way of the cross so a new creation comes. St. John told us about Palm Sunday, “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.” Pulling together the extremes means to focus on Jesus for forgiveness, life, and salvation. In other words, the first commandment rests with Him being Savior and Lord of His Church. Attentiveness is to the Word because only by the Word does a new creation come in Christ. Amen. No may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting, Amen.