Palm Sunday 2016

03/20/2016

This is Palm Sunday; the last day of Lent and the beginning of the Holy Week, and what a week this was some 2000 years ago. Jesus had just raised Lazarus from the dead, which had people talking. His reputation spread rapidly, preceding him to Jerusalem.

The week began in tremendous exaltation and prophetic understanding in the eyes of the people who had been acquainted with Him for the last 3½ years. He was fully recognized and heralded as the fulfillment of the coming Messiah.

When he arrived in Jerusalem, the Jews were excited and filled with expectation. They declared Jesus to be “King of the Jews” as prophesied by the prophets, and fully anticipated him to relieve them from the subjugation and oppression of the Romans and the current Jewish leadership. But instead of making a strong military presence, Jesus found a donkey colt and fulfilled the Biblical prophecy of riding into town on the foal of a donkey.

This must have been confusing for the people. Yes, this was the fulfillment of prophesy, but Jesus … since you’re going to free us from the stranglehold the Romans have on us, couldn’t you at least show just a little more strength and force, and somehow intimidate these soldiers?

So as the week progressed, the exaltation turned to disbelief, disappointment and finally to anger. By the end of the week, the same people who had adulated Jesus now rejected him and sentenced him to death.

Today is Palm Sunday -- a day of rejoicing, celebrating, and expectation. Three lessons stand out to me this year from Palm Sunday: to remain non-resistant, unchained, and unrelenting.

The first lesson the Christ teaches through Palm Sunday is that Life is going to give us ups and downs, isn’t it? And we are to appreciate the up times; give thanks to God and enjoy them. Then during the down times, we must trust that the Love of God surrounds us and that whatever lies before us is part of God’s perfect plan. Palm Sunday teaches that we are to remain non-resistant to what the world is showing us – not to press back, not to defy, not to judge, and not to rollover and give in. We face the applause and appreciation with acceptance, but we don’t let it influence who we are or what our mission is all about.

From the highest spiritual perspective we are not serving God for the applause or the compensation, however it may come. We give from our hearts because that is what we are guided to do. We celebrate life and love, because it is our nature. We are told that hat even the rocks would shout out in honor and praise of the Christ. Our joy cannot be contained.

In the same manner, we do not let the frustrations, failures, and challenges distract us and imbalance our inner peace. We don’t have to judge what we encounter as good or bad; we can actually stay neutral and at peace in all situations. Just as quickly as the accolades come, so appears the disapproval. Then we are revered again; then unappreciated.

So goes Life. It is always easier to follow God than to follow the ego and our worldly nature. I’m not saying it is easy; but it is easier to follow the path of Love, Joy, and Peace than the path of Doubt, Hatred, and Fear. Palm Sunday teaches us to remain balanced and nonresistant, with an eye ever on God.

The second lesson of Palm Sunday is to be unchained, unfettered, and unshackled. It just seems that most of the world’s challenges stem from a basic ignorance or outright defiance of our spiritual nature: we listen to what humankind has to say rather than go within and listen to God’s still small voice. It seems people would rather play out their fears and anger rather than submit to the love of God that is tapping on their hearts.

It is fear, doubt, shame, and hatred that enslave us. When our spirits are ensnared by the world, we feel imprisoned and confined no matter how large our living quarters. When we are attached to wealth, no size house or property can give us the freedom our souls seek.

1 Corinthians 7:29 says, “I tell you, brothers and sisters, the time is running out. From now on, let those having wives act as not having them, those weeping as not weeping, those rejoicing as not rejoicing, those buying as not owning, those using the world, as not using it fully. For the world in its present form is passing away.”

As we engage the Christ, and allow the Christ-Power, Christ-Love,

and Christ-Peace to flow through us, the world as we know it

passes away: We can live with our ‘things’ but our ‘things’ don’t control us, they don’t influence us, they don’t own us, and most importantly, they don’t enslave us.

For many of us, non-attachment is a great challenge. Our attachment to the temptations of the world can severely block our vision of God. Palm Sunday teaches that the things of the world, the circumstances of the world, the luxuries and the challenges of the world will pass away; they are temporary.

Through the process of allowing God to penetrate our hearts we slowly learn to redirect our desire for worldly ‘stuff’ towards the Divine. We no longer layup treasure on earth, but experience what Paul shared in Philippians 3:7-8: “*Whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ*.”

The first lesson of Palm Sunday is being nonresistant; the second is being nonattached, and the third lesson is being unrelenting toward doing God’s work. 2 Thessalonians 3:13 tells us “*Never tire of doing what is good*.” Galatians 6:9 shares this: “*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up*.”

While we have bodies, our mission is to serve God and each other. But there are times when we lose heart, when the people we are serving do not appreciate our efforts. It is easy to fall into victimhood and complain that no one sees us, no one values us.

When we feel this way it is time to reevaluate why we are doing what we are doing. Are we doing it for the accolades and shows of appreciation? If we are, then we will soon grow tired of giving, even if it is good. Our treasure is gained from our actions when our attitude is that of giving for God, serving for God, working for the Kingdom of God.

When we are busy doing God’s work, there is no time to tire; we are filled with an unabating energy and we shine with the selfless Light of Spirit. We are told to let our light shine, and when we do we don't need to tell anybody; they know it. Lighthouses don't fire cannons to call attention to their shining - they just shine.

When we are fueled by Christ, doing God’s work we shine; we don’t grow tired. This is what Jesus taught us. Despite the challenges along the journey, through God we have the strength and zeal and energy to see it through to the end. A joyful heart is a free heart; and a free heart is an untiring, unrelenting heart focused on doing God’s good.

Today, we remember not just Jesus' entry into Jerusalem in the past, but also his entry into our hearts and minds today. My prayer is that during this Holy Week we remain nonresistant to the ups and downs of Life; that we remain unburdened from the stresses of the world, and that we face Life and serve God with tireless unbounded energy. Let us pray….