

# Sermon Text for March 25, 2018

*by Rev. Robert K. Bronkema*

Psalm 118: 1-2, 26-29, Mark 11:1-11

## **“Answering Grace”**

Just as Jesus stopped in some Gospels just outside of Jerusalem to almost gather himself for that triumphal entry into Jerusalem at the last week of his life, so today we begin the last week of this Lenten journey that we have been on. Palm Sunday begins a week where we have times of worship in the next 6 out of 8 days. It is an intense, spirit-filled time and nothing can compare to what Jesus went through his last week, but this week we gather ourselves to worship the risen Christ as he enters Jerusalem today.

There is no other time than this week that the grace of God is so evident by the actions and sacrifice of his son. Our challenge is, and always has been to respond to that grace. We must respond to the powerful undeniable love that God has for us which is so clearly evident this last week of his life when we see so clearly what it means that God loved us so much that he sent his only beloved Son, to die for us, to suffer.

Jesus knew where he was headed as he stood on the Mount of Olives and looked down on Jerusalem. We are going back in time for our Palm Sunday, Sunday. We have been leading up during Lent to his last few hours, and we take a look back to where this week all began, as he begins his descent from the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem. He knew Jerusalem was the final stop in his journey and today he makes his way off of the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem. Let's follow him and see how we can answer his grace with our actions.

### **READ**

There are so many hidden meanings in these verses that it would do us well to go almost verse by verse and get a lesson on the meaning of Palm Sunday. There should be no doubt that the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem was set up and planned to be the entry of a Messiah/King. There are too many places in these verses that refer back to the Old Testament understanding of the coming Messiah for it to mean anything else.

The very first verse we have Jesus standing on the Mount of Olives, very specifically identified for the first time in Mark. Why? Zechariah 14:4 states that the

Lord, the coming Messiah: shall stand on the Mount of Olives, which lies before Jerusalem on the east. As Mark goes on he talks about Jesus riding a colt into Jerusalem. Again in Zechariah 9:9 we find: read.

But to enforce the fact that Jesus is being set up here for the reader to understand that he truly is the king, the Messiah spoken of old we find that this colt is what? It has never been ridden. I Samuel 6:7 talks about the oxen pulling the ark of the covenant as never before worn the yoke. This was a sign of purity and also a symbol that the ark, the king is able to control all things, even donkeys never ridden, which is no small feat.

Mark establishes from the very beginning the understanding that Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is not just a saunter into town but rather a very specific, planned event that later takes on greater significance with the palms thrown before him, the Hosannas given to him, and the cry by the people: blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David. There should be no doubt in anyone's mind when they read Mark that Jesus is entering Jerusalem as king, as the Messianic Lord and Savior that was attested to and planned since the Old Testament.

Do not think that all of this took place by accident or by chance. Everything in these verses points to Jesus asking because it was arranged beforehand that way for the maximum effect. Now some people don't like to think of Palm Sunday, Jesus riding into Jerusalem as a type of worship service where the hymns are planned ahead of time, the prayers are prepared, and the sermon is written nearly a week before schedule. People like to think of Palm Sunday as a spontaneous response to Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

That is not what we find in Mark, and certainly not what we find as far as his disciples are concerned. His disciples have been with him for the past three years. Their actions are a response to the love of Christ that they have known for these past years. They answer the commands of Christ w/out question in Mark because they know and trust that if they go and take a tied up donkey from the road and someone objects, Jesus has it covered. After these years of trials and tribulations their last week they are at a point where they will do what Jesus tells them to do.

This scene contains some of the most powerful answers to the grace of God on the part of the disciples that we find in all of Scripture. Their answers, to grace are unmitigated expressions of love without any hope for glory and praise.

Our answering the grace of God is an answer that comes from quiet discipleship and humble following. Our answer to grace is to follow Jesus' commandments, if you love me you will follow my commandments.

Today we are going to experience together something that a group within this church and from Chestnut Level experienced as they made their way to Houston to respond to a call from the Lord to follow his commandments. We have focused over lent on ways in which we can actively respond to God's call in our lives. These men and woman responded in a way that they will never forget, and they want to share it with you so that you can join in as the crowds joined in on that Palm Sunday.

- I. The group
- II. The work
- III. The meaning
- IV. The impact
- V. The results
- VI. What significance for FPC

As Jesus enters the disciples completely fade away and all you have are the crowds walking that fine line between the joy of the coming king and the celebration of their liberator. God needs our time, do we have the time, usually our answer is: Sorry, my time is limited anyway it's mine. God needs our strength, Sorry, I can't take on a single thing more. I'm exhausted as it is now. God needs our mind. Sorry, but I have all I can give my attention to, and more. I have troubles enough of my own to think about.

Jesus needs to turn our answer to grace to here I am Lord, send me.

The last thing Jesus does in these verses which is very different from the other gospels. Usually he goes and cleans out the temple. Here he just enters and looks around. Almost as if he were evaluating for the next day when he was going to go and clean house.

Jesus went into the temple. What if Jesus were to step into this church and look around at everything, at every program, at every family, at every worship, at every event, would he find people truly answering grace with a Hosanna and a laying down of our gifts and talents before him?

Let us answer grace with a loud Hosanna and lives that reflect a reliance upon the risen Savior. Amen.