

# Sermon Text for April 10, 2022 PALM SUNDAY

By Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

*Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 Luke 19:28-40*

*“Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord”*

On Friday I gathered with the preschool kids and I gave each of the kids one of these palm fronds and I had them line up and who doesn't like a parade, and they paraded down the aisle of the church and said quietly at first: Jesus and King, and as we marched down the aisle I said louder, and they proclaimed louder that Jesus is king, until, well you know kids, you can't really tell them to stop, so they were shouting at the tops of their voices that Jesus is king and the walls were reverberating. I was waiting for a Pharisee to come in and tell them to stop.

They were able to take home the palm branch and I heard one of the parents ask, why do you have that palm? And guess what the kid answered: because Jesus is king. Our task here at church is to proclaim and preach the Gospel of the saving power of Jesus Christ and that proclamation has to go outside of these walls and affect everyone, even and especially the families of those preschool kids.

It hasn't always been the tradition of mainline churches like the Presbyterian Church to make it a priority to preach the Gospel so that people will come to a saving knowledge of Jesus. Sometimes it feels more like we are following Jesus' words after he heals and tells people: go and tell no one. As an evangelical Christian I understand this as our primary goal here, to proclaim Jesus crucified and risen from the dead. From that message and from that transformation of someone getting to know Jesus, emanates everything else, loving God and loving our neighbor. But first, you have to have a personal relationship with Jesus which comes about through proclamation.

Both of our Scriptures this morning proclaim God's steadfast love in triumphant and energetic and memorable ways. Our lives ought to be a reflection of our desire to see everyone come to Christ. So on this Palm Sunday we will see that it is our job to be vehicles of the proclamation of the Gospel. Let's read.

## **READ**

We begin in Psalm 118 which contains so many different familiar aspects of Scripture that we find ourselves using in different times of our faith journeys. There is much to underscore in this psalm such as how we see the incessant repetition of the phrase: the steadfast love of the Lord endures forever. We find it both at the beginning where we read in vs. 1 as well as at the

end in vs.29. We need reminders in our lives that the steadfast love of the Lord endures forever even as we sin, even as we go through dark days, even as we celebrate. In all seasons of our life it is important to understand personally that the steadfast love of the Lord endures forever.

Has anyone recently doubted that sitting in the pews here today? If so, then here is another verse, look at vs.24: This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it. I say this verse every funeral that I preach and I set it up with the understanding that even as we are confronted with a coffin or the painful absence of the person that we love, somehow, some way, we will be able to find the presence of God in such a way that we can say: this is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.

There is a bitter sweet aspect to this verse just like there is in Palm Sunday. Palm Sunday takes us to the triumphal entry of Jesus into the crowds who call him king today but on Friday ask for him to be crucified. The bitter sweet aspect of knowing that our loved is not with us today, but their resurrection is secure in Jesus. We also see in vs.25 the shouts of Palm Sunday as we read: which translated those words Save us and give us success translate to Hosanna, Hosanna. Psalm 118 is the most appropriate psalm for Palm Sunday.

But there is more, as we find in vs.26 the shout that the crowds proclaimed in Luke where we read in this verse: Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. So, welcome to Palm Sunday. Let's look at the actual event as the Gospel writer Luke portrays it. Every Gospel has it described in a little different way. Notice that we don't have any palms in Luke's portrayal of Palm Sunday, but don't let that throw you off.

In fact, it seems like Luke spends more time giving us the details of the preparations for Palm Sunday, the geographical details of where they are and where the disciples need to go in order to get the donkey that he was going to ride. It seems like there is more attention given to the logistics of this event than the event itself. Not only that, but it seems like it is the disciples who are doing all of the heavy lifting: They go ahead of everyone else, they untie the donkey, they speak the words their master has need of it, they put Jesus on the donkey, they spread their cloaks on the donkey and on the path, they shout aloud.

But the reason why all of the people are there and are shouting for Jesus is because he is the king, the messiah, who has come in the name of the Lord. Vs.37 makes it very clear that the people were there because they had seen deeds of power that he had done. They had seen him turning the water to wine, they were there at the feeding of the five thousand, they were amazed with everyone else when he healed the man born of blind, his deed of power when he told the

lame man by the pool to take up his mat and walk and he did they witnessed. Is there any other greater deed than raising a dead man like he did with Lazarus?

All of these things and many more were enough to attract the attention of the crowd. And just as Zechariah 9:9 describes that the Messiah will come to Jerusalem: READ. It is very clear that the event is Jesus fulfilling this Scripture as the Messiah, as the king who will save the people. That is the primary event of Palm Sunday, and honestly, the primary event of our lives, that our king is alive and is Lord of our lives.

Notice Luke changes the words from he to king. That's important and significant. Also Luke adds not only the words of Psalm 118 with the addition of king but he brings Jesus' life full circle. The words the people say in vs.38 the beginning comes from the psalm, but the ending part, you know Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven, where did you hear that before? Remember in Luke when Jesus is born the angels say that this is what Jesus will bring. So here we are, on Palm Sunday, full circle with Jesus who is the king at the end of his life and who will bring peace on earth just as God promised at the beginning of his life.

But at the end of the event, of Jesus entering Jerusalem, not everyone is happy. Certainly the religious leaders tell Jesus to make his disciples and the crowds stop yelling so loudly. It is uncouth and it borders on heresy. This final call to silence in some ways is where many of us find ourselves. We know that Jesus is king, we know that he is the Messiah, but we have taken the words of the Pharisees to heart and we have told no one.

Jesus says if they are silent, then even the stones themselves will shout out. All of creation is wired to obey and proclaim the lordship of Christ. Just like the thorns and thistles that grew as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve. Just like the cows and the bears who graze together and the lamb and the lion lying side by side according to Isaiah. Matthews tells us of a special star that appeared when Jesus was born and the earth that shattered and broke when he died. The Gospels tell us of the sun disappearing when Jesus is crucified.

Folks, if we do not share the Gospel of Jesus Christ, God will provide a witness though every mouth be stopped. Of course, if we are silent, the stones will cry out. But why be silent? How are we at proclaiming the arrival of the king and the presence of God in our lives and in the life of those around us? How do we witness to Jesus in our families as we take part in activities and events that proclaim him?

How do witness to Jesus at our work, by inviting that co-worker who is so tired of trying to do things by herself day in and day out. How well do we know our neighbor in order to invite

them to church when they have told you that they feel a bit lost and unsettled. Do you know that our preschool has been the source of more families coming to this church than any other program that we have? We need to continue that push to encourage families that we know in our preschool to try us out because we love it.

This Palm Sunday I want to challenge you to invite to church this Easter one family that you know is not already going to go to church on Easter. One person, one couple, one family, whoever, next Sunday I want you to bring someone with you as a reflection of your love for Jesus. I'm guessing many of you have never done that, invited someone to church with you. This week is your week to do that.