

**Sermon for
Palm Sunday
Confirmation Sunday**

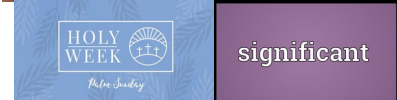
Date: March 28, 2021

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Zechariah 9:9-10

Epistle Reading: Philippians 2:5-11

Gospel Reading: John 12:12-19



Sermon Text: Zechariah 9:9-10

Sermon Title: What is the Significance is of Palm Sunday?

Hymns:

LSB 444 – No Tramp of Soldier's Marching Feet

LSB 441 – Ride on, Ride On in Majesty

LSB 443 – Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

LSB 937 – Lord, Bid Your Servant Go in Peace

LSB 442 – All Glory, Laud, and Honor

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: John 12:12–19

The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 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!” And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

“Fear not, daughter of Zion;
behold, your king is coming,
sitting on a donkey’s colt!”

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. The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.”

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Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

We're used to hearing the Palm Sunday account. We hear it every year. Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the donkey, the palm branches being waived, and the coats thrown on the road before Him. All that with the shouts of Hosanna! Save us Lord!

Have you ever really thought about what the significance is of this scene, and why it would be shared with us by God in His Holy Word? Why did Jesus come to Jerusalem like that? When Zechariah wrote this prophecy, hundreds of years before Jesus was born, he was writing to a people discouraged, confused and broken people. How did they hear it? What did it mean to them?

Well interestingly enough, the language and style Zechariah uses to describe Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is in many ways like that of a royal wedding. He uses the language of marriage. God's people, Israel, is the bride, and the Lord the God of Israel, is the groom who is coming in regal array to meet His bride. All the preparations have been made, everything is now ready, and the groom is coming! He is met by the customary shouts and rejoicing. This is a festive time, a time of great joy and expectation!

Zechariah also speaks of the wedding gift that the Lord is bringing to His bride, the gift of peace. At Zechariah's time, to a group of people who have just returned from exile, to a city populated by foreigners and a Temple that had been flattened, this picture painted by Zechariah's words is a wonderful and encouraging message.

However, the scene painted by Zechariah is also a bit unusual because the King, the bridegroom, is riding on a donkey, not the usual mode of transport for a king! As we are soon to find out, the gift of peace this King comes to bring to His bride is the gift of Himself. He indeed is "righteous and having salvation," but it is a salvation that would not come in a show of power and might, but in the humility, shame and sacrifice of Himself.

He does this so that by His death His bride would live. So that by His blood His bride would be cleansed. So that by His body His bride would be fed. So He comes, not just as any bridegroom, but as the groom who lays down His life for His bride. Who lays down His life for you.

That is what we come to face this week, this Holy Week. The greatness of our King, who did not consider His greatness something to be treasured and kept for Himself, but lowered Himself down to us, to us sinners, to the unfaithful bride, to die for us.

The only way to hear this account of Jesus correctly is with the end in mind. Our King, our royal groom, who came to lay down His life for our peace and forgiveness, will also take His life back again in His resurrection which we will see and celebrate only a week from today.

When He comes again for His bride, she, we, now cleansed and pure by His blood, will be ready for Him! He will take us to His home, His Heavenly home, to celebrate the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom which will have no end. That feast we anticipate now, in Holy Communion, which is far more than a simple reminder of what Jesus did. It is the very life giving gift of forgiveness and grace that Jesus gives to us, to sustain us, and carry us home.

So as you hear again the record of our Lord's suffering and death this week, think about these things. What you will hear this week is a love story. This is not only the account of your Savior and your salvation, it is the record of your groom, coming for His bride. Coming, because it is His great love that brought Him here, to cleanse you and lay down His life for you, giving everything, so that you will live life eternal.

Ponder on that. Consider His great love. He does not cut us loose, or cut Himself loose from us! In fact, He lets Himself be bound for us, so that He would be bound to us. His vows are as perfect as is His love. So, even though His bride might be unlovable, and unfaithful, He will not stop His relentless march to the cross for you. He will not resist. He will not fight. He will not stop loving with a love that we cannot fathom or understand.

Why would God do so much for so little? When you ask that question you are using a measuring stick of your own making. God's love doesn't fit there. This week, realize, that's a good thing. God's love is a love beyond our measure. A love that is not about getting, but about giving. Who could not be amazed at that? Who could believe it?

You. You believe it. Your groom, who has given everything for you, and given you everything, has given you the faith to believe it as well. Standing forgiven of all your sins, washed clean and restored, you are what He has always seen you to be. We see Him not as a groom we can live with, but as One that we cannot live without.

Death breaks the marriage covenant. "Til death do us part" we promise in our vows. Not with this groom. He dies and rises so that we will be His forever, together in His kingdom which has no end. As His love is eternal, so He wills that

we live in that love eternally. His death means that our death is simply the gate to that eternal life.

These are not random events. This is a love story. The story of our bridegroom, who will stop at nothing, to save and protect His bride. Our confirmands will soon step up and affirm before this congregation that same faith. Then confirmed in that faith we will welcome them into that same family of faith that is called, by God, His bride.

To the confirmands I have a message for you specifically. Confirmation is not graduation. You are not done. If Confirmation is anything like graduation it is graduating kindergarten. Confirmation has prepared you to begin living a life of faith publicly. Confirmation supplies the tools you need to grow in your faith and prosper.

Just like in marriage, the marriage is not over after the wedding. The wedding is not a graduation, an ending, it is the beginning. There are many things that will try to get in the way of your relationship with your Savior. Strive against those things.

When I spend time in pre-marriage classes the one thing I speak about most is forgiveness. There is nothing more powerful. There is no greater thing you can do to foster a relationship than being willing to apologize for your own wrongs and forgive the wrongs of others. There is no greater feeling of release and healing than repentance and forgiveness. There is no better things you can do to lift the burden from your shoulders. Too often we want to find ways to justify ourselves, to explain ourselves. It is much easier to simply admit the mess and let God lift it off of you. There is no greater peace than hearing the words, “you are forgiven.”

There is a very real, and very important, reason every worship service starts with admitting sins and receiving forgiveness. These things are at the very foundation of our relationship with our God, and with each other. You can expect that in this relationship you have with God. There will be times when you mess up. Don't give up. Just tell God what you did, ('cuz He already knows anyway) and repent, apologize. Then hear and know the forgiveness He offers. Offer that same peace to others. That is a Christian.

Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**

