



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

I am excited to see you here this morning. Last Palm Sunday I stood in this sanctuary, alone, recording a message on my iPhone in hopes I could figure out how to download it to Facebook. I missed you and waving my palm as I walked down the aisle singing, "All Glory Laud and Honor." It feels more like Palm Sunday today. It feels like the beginning of the most important week in the life of the Christian community.

If we think back to that last Holy Week, we remember that there was much confusion and turmoil regarding the pandemic. Who do we listen to? How do we stay safe? When will this be over? What will happen next? We saw our government struggle, right against left preparing a stimulus plan for the American people. Both sides saw different ways of trying to help our country economically and physically. People were getting sick and dying by the hundreds. It was a scary time.

I remember a few sleepless nights thinking about what would happen to my family and our precious little church here in Park Falls. Should we be closed? How long until we could gather again? How could we stay connected? When would this be over and "normal return"?

In our passion story for today, there too was much confusion. The crowds, the disciples were all a bit confused. Yes, they had been following Jesus, but they were not sure of what was going to happen next. After all, here was this guy who was born, not in a palace, but in a stable. He was dressed not in fine silks

and linens, but in swaddling clothes. He was attended not by princes and kings, but by lowly shepherds.

And now, as the Son of God enters Jerusalem, the Holy City, He is accompanied, not by soldiers and servants, but by a rag tag bunch of men, the disciples. We see him riding not on a great white stallion, but on a donkey. As some lay palm branches and cloaks on the road to honor him, others are confused as to who this man really is. His humble procession was a statement that said that the Almighty God works in a different way, a way that the Jews were certainly unaccustomed too. And so they were confused. What sort of God would choose humility over power?

And during our Holy Week we see it clearly again and again. Jesus will move through the week, doing his Godly work of cleansing the temple, denouncing the rich and powerful, teaching his followers, lamenting over the Holy City, sharing a last meal with his disciples and then praying in the garden. All these actions of the Son of God will be curtailed as Jesus is arrested, mocked, beaten and put to death on a cross, like a common criminal.

So what are the people to think of this all? No wonder they are confused. This is not the way the Savior was supposed to be, was it? It certainly is not the way the people of Jesus' day thought God would send a Savior among them. And yet, this is the way God chose to do it. Humility instead of power. And God is God. Folks, He is in charge after all.

I know that if we had been the ones to create a scenario in which a Savior would come to earth it probably would have been much different. Maybe Jesus would have just come down out of the clouds. Maybe a lightning bolt would bring him to earth. Maybe Jesus would just have killed all those who did not believe. Maybe all the infidels would have died in the Red Sea with the Egyptians. Maybe Jesus would sit all day long on a high and mighty throne. But none of those things happened.

Instead Jesus came to us humble, born in a stable. When it was His time some thirty years later, He came riding into Jerusalem in a donkey. For God's ways are not our ways. Nothing more clearly demonstrates that than Palm Sunday and Good Friday. God's ways are not always easy to understand and comprehend. But know that God has a vision for His world and Palm Sunday,

Good Friday, and Easter Sunday are all the fulfillment of His promises. His vision is only realized in humility and in the great love He has for all creation.

Today there are many lessons we can learn from Holy Week. First, we must not despair when we look at our often-messed up world. Jesus hung on the cross until death overtook him. But it was not the end, it was only the beginning of his victory. We are blessed to have a new beginning in Jesus.

Secondly, there need not be despair no matter how trying times get. When the darkness comes, and it will, we can have God show us the pathway through it and bring us new meaning in our lives.

Third, God shows us the way to use our power in Godly ways to bless others. Through service and love brought about by humility, we can do wonderful things in our life.

Jesus does ride into Jerusalem on a donkey, not because he always wanted to know what it would be like to ride a donkey. Jesus goes to Jerusalem for you and for me. Jesus goes to Jerusalem fully knowing what is waiting there for him. Jesus goes to Jerusalem to offer his perfect life for our imperfect lives. Jesus goes to Jerusalem to die for us so we will not have to face death but instead have a life of joy happiness, and peace that will have no end.

That folks is why Jesus came to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. He came to save you and to save me with an empty tomb on Easter morning.

So there is no need for confusion. Palm Sunday that begins our Holy Week is simply the living out of the plan of salvation that God put in place long, long ago. God's steadfast love for the world, shown in Jesus, leads us to the cross, where his humility does more than confront us, it overcomes. **AMEN**