

In the Name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and may our Lord and Savior sanctify you in the truth, for His word is truth. Amen

Palm Sunday (2021)

The Hour Has Come

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“And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.’” (Matthew 21:12–13, ESV)

“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” (Matthew 21:9, ESV) These words by the jubilant crowd in Jerusalem expressed the true significance of our Lord’s entry into that blessed city. Some 500 years before, the prophet Zechariah foretold of this blessed event, saying, *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” (Zechariah 9:9, ESV)* In these words Zechariah encourages the people to renew their covenant with God, for such would be necessary for the people to worship God in the newly rebuilt temple; however, this temple is not a temple of stone, but a temple which consists of the kingdom of God, the church of the Lord. In this temple the people worship God in Spirit and Truth. In this temple God protects His people. So, on this day, He sends His King, His Son to enter Zion to establish a kingdom of peace over all the earth. To establish a kingdom of peace over the people of this new covenant with the Spirit. Therefore, the nation rejoices at the entry of their King.

This is the significance of Palm Sunday, a significance often lost as we focus on the Passion of Our Lord Jesus during Holy Week. This week will move us from our Lord’s entry into Jerusalem to Calvary Hill where we will witness His crucifixion, with His death upon the Altar of the Cross. Of course, the climax of this week is its focus, the redemption of sinful man by the death of our Lord Jesus on the Altar of the Cross, but what must not be lost, as we focus on the Passion of our Lord Jesus, are the other important accomplishments of Jesus this week, and the first occurs on this day, Palm Sunday, as our Lord Jesus legitimately transfers worship from the Old covenant to the New, from the Temple worship of Old Testament Israel, to worship in the New Testament Israel, the Christian Church. *His Hour Has Come*, and He is fixed on accomplishing His task of redeeming all men from their sins while also establishing a new order of worship, worship in Spirit and Truth.

After entering the city to shouts of Hosanna from the people, our Lord Jesus proceeds to the Temple. Once there St. Matthew tells us, He, *“drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.’” (vv. 12-13)* Here, Jesus quotes from the prophet Jeremiah while judging a corrupt temple establishment in anticipation of its destruction. Our Lord charges the temple authorities with turning the temple into a hideout for thieves. However, He is not just protesting the dishonest trade practices of the merchants and the shameless disingenuousness of the temple authorities, He is also symbolically cutting off the supply of sacrificial animals. Taking aim at the very heart of the temple purpose, the offering of sacrifice, He purposefully interrupts the worship system of the temple, purifying it, as He renders the temple cultus inoperative. Thus, the

question must be asked, why would one who is born under the Law now render the Law of the temple obsolete?

To find an answer to this question we begin with the second verse of our text; ***“It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.”*** (v. 13) Jesus reminds the people of the prophecy of Isaiah, who said, ***“The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares, ‘I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered . . . And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant— these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer.’”*** (Isaiah 56:6–8 ESV) Thus, in Jesus, the future salvation envisioned in these verses from Isaiah has begun; the reign of heaven is at hand, *His Hour Has Come*.

The Temple is to be rebuilt anew. No longer are there to be sacrifices of animals, but rather, ***“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart.”*** (Psalm 51:17, ESV) In just six short days the final sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins will be offered and given by our Lord Jesus Christ, as He hangs on that cursed tree purchasing our forgiveness with the price of His holy blood. Transgression will be finished, forgiveness sealed, and iniquity atoned for. Everlasting righteousness will be granted as satisfaction is made for all sins, forgiveness of sins and the righteousness of faith will be proclaimed, thus fulfilling the visions and prophecy of old. In the past, it was sin and works-righteousness, but now it is faith which worships in Spirit and Truth.

The answer to our question may also be found in Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. In that encounter, ***“Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.’”*** (John 4:21–24, ESV)

In purifying the temple, Jesus declared that in His death the temple would be destroyed and replaced by His Body. Thus, as the temple of the “end time” Jesus is now the source of cleansing and life-giving waters by which all nations would be gathered on the Last Day. The new temple is established when from the Altar of the Cross, Jesus declares, ***“It is finished,”*** and [bows] his head and [gives] up his spirit.” (John 19:30, ESV) After His death, one of the soldiers who crucified Jesus thrust a spear into His side. St. John tells us, ***“at once there came out blood and water.”*** (John 19:34, ESV) The life-giving waters, mixed with the blood of the Lamb, flowed from His side. Indeed, Jesus is the true Paschal Lamb, ***“who takes away the sin of the world!”*** (John 1:29, ESV) He is both the true and final sacrifice and the new temple. He is the place of the Spirit and the glory of God; thus, He alone worships the Father in Spirit and Truth by His obedient death. However, all who become true followers of Him, who are united with Him in His worship of the Father, become true worshippers of the Father in Spirit and Truth.

But worship in the new temple relies on the new and final sacrifice of Christ, and moreover, this new life in Christ is not an “interior” reality, but an “exterior” one, which worships the obedient death of Jesus on the cross, a worship which is only possible for those who are begotten by water and the Spirit, who have become children of God in Baptism. In those blessed waters, the believer is united with Christ in His Passion and death, and with a filial relationship with the Father. Therefore, having been made one with Christ, the new life of the believer is lived in the Spirit, namely, a life of faith guided by the Father’s will, which springs up to eternal life.

To worship in Spirit and Truth means to thank the Spirit and to worship in communion with Jesus, who is the revealed Son of the Father. St. Paul who reminds us, ***“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.”*** (Galatians 4:4–7, ESV)

Now, on this first day of the week when our Lord Jesus humbly enters Jerusalem on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey, He comes to complete His redeeming mission for mankind. He comes to meet His final hour! And He does so by establishing a new worship, worship of Him. Sadly, many of the inhabitants of Jerusalem did not understand this, and their folly was trusting that Israel’s God would never allow the temple to be destroyed again. Their sins were many, as were the sins of their temple leaders. So great were their sins that it required Jesus to be born of a virgin so He could save them from their sins. But their sin was more than simply a failure to follow the Ten Commandments, their sin was rejecting Jesus and His true identity as the Son of God and Israel’s true King. They failed to acknowledge Him even as He is being hailed as the Son of David who comes in the name of the Lord. They failed to acknowledge Him when He healed the sick, forgave sins, calmed the storm, worked miracles, and raised the dead. The chief priests and scribes who witnessed the people acclaiming Jesus as King, not only refused to believe, but incredulously they asked Him, ***“Do you hear what these are saying?”*** (Matthew 21:16, ESV) We can hear Jesus’ thinking, “Who do these people think that I am?”

Such is the beginning of their opposition to our Lord throughout the week, that opposition which led to His death upon the Altar of the Cross. They refuse to repent and believe just as they refused to believe John the Baptist who proclaimed God’s present righteousness in Jesus. Moreover, they will continue to harass and challenge Jesus throughout the week, and it is this refusal and rejection of the Christ that will bring the judgment of God upon them.

So, we ask, is there any hope for the people or their leaders? There is, but only if they will admit their need and approach Jesus with it, only if they will acknowledge their sin and themselves as poor miserable sinners in need of God’s forgiveness for the sake of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

But not all the people rejected Jesus. St. Matthew tells us, ***“And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them.”*** (Matthew 21:14, ESV) These sorely afflicted people easily recognized that the healings Jesus performed was proof that the reign of God was within Him. His authority issued forth in grace, healing, and restoration for all who would come in lowliness to Him. He said to you and me and everyone, ***“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”*** (Matthew 11:28, ESV) I will restore you; I will heal you; I will cleanse you of all your sins. I will give you the Spirit who will give you the gift of faith that you may worship Me in Spirit and truth, that you may be healed through Word and Sacrament ministry, that you may be brought to faith through the Word of the Gospel and fed with My Body and Blood given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins.

Yes, My *Hour Has Come* and now I go to Golgotha to give My life as the ransom price for your sins, shedding My blood that you may be justified before My Father, and that the door to His heart may be opened so He would forgive you and prepare a place for you in His heavenly mansion. Yes, My *Hour Has Come*. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.