

Palm Sunday

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[0 : 0 0] is the penultimate journey of Jesus on earth, the triumphal entry before his journey to the cross.

The story is told in each of the four Gospels, and putting those four accounts together, it becomes clear that the triumphal entry was a significant event, not only for the people of Jesus' day, but to Christians throughout history.

All four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, have their own accounts, their own details, their own emphasis and their own significance.

However, John's perspective shows to us that Jesus' previous visits to Jerusalem always brought trouble.

From the cleansing of the temple, chapter 2, the healing of the paralytic, chapter 8, the statement, before Abraham came into existence, I am.

[1 : 2 1] And followed by his claim to be the good shepherd in chapter 10, implying that the Jewish religious leaders were wicked shepherds.

The journey to Bethlehem, or from Bethany to Jerusalem, was two miles. And from Gethsemane to the cross was about 500 meters.

And those journeys were filled with different expectations and emotions. We recall, for example, in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus explaining to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things.

And that he must be killed on the third day and be raised to life. The triumphal entry.

But was it a triumphal entry? In some senses it was. People welcomed him. They cried their hosannas.

[2 : 4 0] They shouted their acclamations to Jesus. But unfortunately, the people lavished on Jesus was not because they recognized him as their savior.

But rather they welcomed him out of their desire for a messianic deliverer. Someone who would lead them in a revolt against Rome.

But when he failed in their expectations, the crowd quickly turned their hosannas to crucify.

Those who hailed him as a hero should soon reject him and abandon him. Those who welcomed Jesus as the King of Kings the King of Israel are some of the people who a few days later would cry out, we have no king but Caesar.

And those who cried out, hosanna, let's save us now will be shouting, he saved others. Himself he couldn't save.

[4 : 1 4] You see, their vision was distorted. They didn't have 20-20 vision. They had blind spots. They weren't seeing properly.

There was no clarity in their hearing. It was too distorted. The real purpose was muffled. What Jesus had been teaching was ignored, forgotten, or even misunderstood.

They were going from celebration to condemnation. They were going from celebrating the man who was King of Kings and Lord of Lords to condemning him to a cross.

And we too can often find ourselves in that place where our spiritual vision is out of focus or indeed our spiritual hearing is distorted.

As many of you will know, I've got a hearing aid. And a few weeks ago, my wife took this hearing aid and put it in a hanky, a paper hanky, and forgot it was there and flushed it down the loo.

[5 : 45] And what I had to help me hear had gone. And sometimes the spiritual helps that God gave to us, we ignore them and we leave them aside.

We sometimes fail to understand or realize what God is saying to us or what God is teaching us because we've been distracted or we're laid.

If rebellion is the worst place you can be spiritually and it is to have a heart that is broken and ready to receive direction from God is right where God wants you to be.

It's the best place to be spiritually. A broken heart, a contrite heart, a heart ready and willing to listen and hear and obey his words to you.

The psalmist says the Lord is close to the broken hearted and saves those of a contrite spirit. you see, scripture teaches us that God loves us, that we are a child of God.

[7 : 12] They want to protect you and provide for you in every way. but sometimes we foolishly wade into dangerous situations not knowing what lies ahead and that's the time the enemy attacks.

That's when the tug of war begins and if you, my friend, this morning have scars of his love on your arms, be very, very grateful.

He did not and will not ever let you go. They're there for a purpose. They're there to show you that he does care.

he has your best interests at heart and we often look at people and we see the scars in their lives. My friend, let me just say this to you.

Do not judge other people's scars because you don't know how they got them. Judgment is something we often do without thinking about it.

[8 : 37] or without thinking about the consequences. We can understand motives and don't see the real reason behind them and often come to our own conclusions.

Someone once said we should spend most of our time judging our own actions before judging the actions of others.

Is my motive right? Are my actions correct? Am I following the way God wants me to rather than thinking about what this person or that person has done or has said?

And we carry our scars scars of a painful past. Some of those scars are unsightly and have caused this deep regret.

But some wounds are there because God has refused to let go. In the midst of the struggle he has been there holding you.

[9 : 59] Because God is never blind to your tears. He's never deaf to your prayers. He's never silent to your pains.

He hears. He'll deliver. And be reminded of this. That Jesus himself had a broken heart. when he was at the graveside of Lazarus he wept.

As he looked over the city of Jerusalem he wept. As he hung from the cross he wept. He wept for an individual, a city, the world.

beyond the celebration of that day there was condemnation. You know if the story had ended on Palm Sunday if Jesus had taken up his kingdom then we'd be lost.

[11 : 16] we would have no hope for the future because his victory could only be won through his own horrible suffering and death.

From celebration to condemnation but Jesus of course turns that round and we know on Easter day we have celebration again.

The crowds have got it wrong about Jesus that Palm Sunday. They got it wrong about Jesus as he hung upon the cross.

but in their misunderstanding he still loved them. Peter was to deny him.

Judas was to betray him and the betrayal of Judas strange as it may seem was Judas worst act of wickedness helped to bring about the atonement.

[12 : 52] Love so amazing so divine he held no grudges and cried father forgive them for they don't know what they are doing and we all need to remember the need for forgiveness.

as the psalmist says the Lord is close to the broken hearted and saves those of a contrite spirit.

But how does God do that? We see some examples of that in scripture. We remember David the shepherd boy who became king who acknowledged my heart pounds my strength fails me even the light has gone from my eyes and later confesses and repents I have sinned against the Lord.

A man who was called after God's own heart. He loved him he failed him but he was restored he was renewed and that can happen to us too.

We might have failed him but we can be restored by him. We think of Nehemiah who wept on behalf of a nation.

[14 : 30] The wall of Jerusalem is broken he says when I heard this I sat down and wept. I know how many of us need to weep for our nation our community our families our local area this area surrounding our church we need to weep for them because without God they're going to a lost eternity.

you can see the contrition in the heart of Nehemiah as he prays for the sins and the sins of the nation.

God is the time and purpose for bringing about his plans. He seeks to renew restore revitalize.

God wants to do that and don't let the opportunity pass you by. He wants to use you to do it. The psalmist David Nehemiah and we think too of the prodigal son in Luke chapter 15 when he came to his senses he said I will set out and go back to my father and say I have sinned against God and against you.

I have done wrong and while he was still a long way off his father who had been watching ran to him hugged him kissed him and gave him a great welcome.

[16 : 30] God sees a broken heart as a realization and acknowledgement of our sin and as a need for forgiveness.

Technology is a wonderful thing. it allows doctors to perform surgical miracles.

However science can't detect a broken heart but the great physician understands pain.

He knows what causes a broken heart heart and he alone offers the cure and fear can be replaced with love and confidence in Christ.

his forgiveness is continual. He stands ready with open arms. No sin is too big or too small to forgive.

[17 : 43] He obliterates our past and God sees a broken heart as having an ability and willingness to change.

And when that forgiveness is sought God deals with a broken heart in his forgiveness by reviving us by restoring us as we see in the prodigal son.

And you know my friend there are many many prodigals on the outskirts of our churches today. People have been hurt by the unhelpful word or their own attitude and have reacted in a way that's not been helpful.

people who have had their faith or their actions questioned in an unloving manner. And both sides need to seek forgiveness and it's only by the grace of God that it can happen.

Have you been wronged or have you wronged someone? need to ask for their forgiveness.

[19 : 22] Just as God forgives us and cleanses us and tells us with authority you're mine, you're restored, renewed.

just as God revitalizes us so he can revitalize the person you've offended.

We need to make that path plain. I wonder this morning if we are on the road to Jerusalem like those in our scripture reading.

You're caught up in the singing. You come here because you love the singing. It's joyful. But do you really understand the purpose of thanksgiving and praise?

Or are you struggling towards Gethsemane knowing you're experiencing the scars in your own life and asking, why are these here?

[20 : 43] And failing to realize that God is traveling with you. Holding things together. the one who went to Calvary on your behalf, who was crushed for the evil we did.

The punishment was made, made as well, was given to him and we are healed because of his wounds.

Malachi says in chapter 3 and verse 3, he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.

silver. And some women were puzzled by that. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.

Puzzled by it. And one woman offered to find out what the meaning behind that was and so took herself off to a silversmith.

[22 : 01] and watched him at work. Didn't mention anything about the reason why she was there watching him. And as she watched the silversmith, he held a piece of silver over an open fire and let it heat up.

And explained in refining silver one needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire for the flames were hottest as to burn away all the impurities.

That woman thought about that. Questions came into her mind. And she asked the silversmith if it was true that he had to sit there in front of a fire the whole time the silver was being refined.

The man answered yes. He had to keep his eyes on the silver. if the silver was left a moment too long in the flames it would be destroyed.

The man was silent for a moment. Then she asked the silversmith how do you know when the silver is fully refined?

[23 : 42] He smiled at her and answered that's easy when I see my image in it. Nothing touches us as not first passed through his hands.

He is a great position. He is the one who refines us and his image is marked on our lives.

God loves you. God wants to bless you. God wants to use you. Are you on the road to Jerusalem? Road to Gethsemane?

[25 : 07] Father God thank you. What you've done for us and are doing help us to allow you to refine us day by day that your image may be seen on our lives.

Amen.