

4-5-20 Palm Sunday

Sermon: Blessed Are We...

Scripture: Matthew 21:1-11, CTW PS 118:19-29

Hymns: 215, 217

Theme: The scripture reading for this occasion reminds us that "blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." The people at the parade that day did not understand what it really meant to be in a true state of blessedness. As modern Christians approaching the cross, we are supposed to...but do we?

Introduction:

As we begin our journey to and from Easter, we'll be taking the same roads Jesus took and spoke about. They are the roads that led Him not only to His death, but also from His resurrection.

Although these roads go in different directions and to different locations, like Jerusalem, Emmaus and Damascus, they all end up at the same destination, and that is Jesus Christ. In the midst of our current worldly crisis, we need to understand that now more than ever, we need to be traveling the same road as Jesus. Today we're going to be traveling on the Jerusalem road.

Of course, given an opportunity to make an entrance, most would choose the grandeur style over that of mediocrity or poverty. We would choose the blazing white stallion over the small grey donkey. And it was such a grand entrance the disciples were hoping that Jesus would make into Jerusalem.

The people were hoping for some grand entrance on a blazing white stallion, sort of like the Lone Ranger, with a cloud of dust and hearty "Hi O Silver." They were hoping Jesus would come into Jerusalem and kick the bad guys out of town.

A. That's the Jesus they wanted, and that's the type of Jesus most want today. But Jesus entered Jerusalem differently, and upon a road that isn't so easily followed. In fact, it's a road that not many, if any, would choose for themselves. It's

a road that leads to the Father's will and our destiny, which means that it's a road that leads to death.

Jesus knew this and said to His disciples:

"We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life." (Matthew 20:18-19 NIV)

Yet even knowing the pain and suffering that was waiting, Jesus still went. There was a deep determination on Jesus' part to travel this road to Jerusalem and to His death.

We see this in **Luke 9:51** ⁵¹As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.

B. In the same manner, especially in this time of world crisis, we MUST set our faces and determine deep within ourselves to follow these roads that lead to and from our own Easters, to our own deaths and resurrections. But know this about these roads, they'll also lead to a new and exciting life in Christ, and then eternal life with Him in heaven once this life is over.

It was the time for the Jewish Passover, one of the three feasts that God commanded the Jews to celebrate in Jerusalem. Passover to the Jews is kind of like our feast of Thanksgiving. Passover is the Jewish celebration of thanksgiving for God's mighty hand in delivering them from their Egyptian bondage and captivity.

At this time the people had heard of Jesus; heard of His great wisdom and how He had put to shame the religious leaders. They also heard of His healings and miracles. They heard how he had fed the five thousand with just a few fishes and a couple loaves of bread, and how He raised Lazarus from the dead, so they lined the streets crying out, "Hosanna to the son of David," or "Messiah, save us now."

But what the people wanted was diametrically opposed to what the Lord was doing. Jesus didn't enter that day to set up His

kingdom; rather it was to die to save the people, not from their Roman oppression, but to save them and deliver them from their captivity and bondage to sin and death.

And so the Jerusalem road for Jesus was the beginning of the end of His earthly life. And although it led to the Cross, it was also a road that would lead eventually to heaven with Jesus sitting at the right hand of the Father.

And when we take this Jerusalem road, it will not only lead to our own deaths, that is, death to self, but it will also lead to our eternal destiny in heaven.

There are four things we see about this road that we need to understand as we take our own journey of faith, our own journey down this Jerusalem road.

I. The first thing we see about this road is that it's a Road of Humility

When we think of Jesus as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, we immediately think of Him coming in power and glory, in dazzling white garments and riding on a white horse. But that is not how He entered Jerusalem on that day.

A. Instead of the grandeur, Jesus chose the road of humility. He didn't come riding on a great white stallion; instead He rode on the colt of a donkey, and it wasn't even His, it was borrowed.

Yet this reflects the life that Jesus led. Jesus didn't come into this world wealthy, but in poverty. He didn't enter in grandeur, but in meekness, and His life wasn't one of fame and fortune, rather it was lived outside the limelight. In fact, Jesus always spoke about His kingdom being of servant-hood, not ruler-ship.

To His disciples Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (**Matthew 18:3-4 NIV**)

Not only did the disciples not understand, neither do we. None of the disciples understood Jesus' purpose. Even on the last night He

spent with them they were arguing as to who would be the greatest.

They didn't understand this road of humility that Jesus was walking, and by all appearances, neither do we. We need to get off the white stallion of pride in our own self-achievement, and get on the small grey donkey of humility, and times like this sure do tend to make a person humble. We have all experienced that recently.

So in humility we need to put away the thoughts of grandeur much as Jesus did.

In **Philippians 2:8**, Paul says,

"And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross."

It's this kind of humility that God not only sees, but that He exalts. This is seen in Jesus' story of the Pharisee and the Publican. They had both gone to the temple to pray. The Pharisee went in congratulating himself on his works and giving, and that he wasn't like all those who were obvious sinners like the Publican.

B. This is how we often come to God, prideful in whom we are and what we've done.

The Publican, on the other hand, entered the temple staying far in the back. With his head lowered he beat his chest asking God to be merciful to such a great sinner as himself. It was this humble repentance that Jesus said justified him before God, and it's with such humility that the Lord dwells.

Isaiah 57:15 says: "I live in that high and holy place with those whose spirits are contrite and humble and give new courage to those with repentant hearts."

And so the first thing we see about this road to Jerusalem is that it is a road of humility.

II. Secondly, It's To Be A Road of Fulfillment

A. Jesus' entrance upon the colt of a donkey didn't happen by chance, it was the direct fulfillment of God's

divine plan. About 550 years earlier God had not only planned this entrance, but also chose the mode of transportation.

In **Zechariah 9:9** we see this reminder: ⁹Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

This is just one of the many prophecies that we see in the Old Testament concerning the coming Messiah, and that are fulfilled in Jesus. There are over 300 in all, and the mathematical odds of just one person fulfilling them are mind-boggling.

Jesus' life was to fulfill God's divine plan of redemption, that is, to save us, and thus Jesus took Jerusalem's road for our salvation, knowing full well it meant His death.

B. The question God would have for us is are we fulfilling His plan for our lives? Jesus traveled this road knowing full well it would lead to His death, but also that it would lead to a better life for us. Jesus died so that we could not only have eternal life, but life more abundantly, a life that fulfills His calling.

In **John 15:16**, Jesus said, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you."

Of course, part of God's fulfillment in this is the giving of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would lead, guide, and show us the way to walk upon this Jerusalem Road that we're traveling.

And not only will the Holy Spirit help us to fulfill God's calling upon our lives, but when disappointment and discouragement sets in, He will be there as our Comforter, giving aide and relief to help us in our time of need...Just as we are all in need now!

Therefore, we must be willing to travel down this road of fulfillment with Jesus, and we must be willing to follow God's plan, purpose, and will for our lives.

III. The third thing we see about this road to Jerusalem is that It's a Road of Obedience.

Jesus' life was one of obedience. In **John 4:34, and 6:38** Jesus said,

My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work... For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

This obedience is seen in Jesus prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane when He said to the Father, "Not as I will, but as You will." Even as a child Jesus told His parents that He must be about His father's business, and so this is the way He lived His life.

A. Notice something else, the disciples obeyed when Jesus told them to go and get both a donkey and her colt.

Can you imagine what was going through the disciples' minds? They were asked to obey some pretty weird instructions. But God's ways are not our own. God tells us to go and do something that may not make a whole lot of sense, but in obeying we find God has had a plan all along.

As you all know, I once thought that any meaningful life was over for me because in my narrow view, I could see no respectable future for myself. God picked me up and made a way for me to attend seminary. That was over 20 years ago...proof that God's ways are not our ways.

The Jerusalem Road is one of obedience, and it calls for us to not only hear, but to obey the word of the Lord.

IV. Finally, It's a Road of Destiny

The people were spreading out their clothes and palm branches on the road crying out, 'Hosanna, Hosanna, blesses is He who comes in the name of the Lord.'" Basically they were asking Jesus to save them now. These were the words of Jesus' destiny. For Jesus was destined to die, even from the foundation of the world.

Revelation 13:9

A. Jesus' destiny was to die so that God's divine plan for our salvation could be fulfilled, and many of those same voices that cried Hosanna were the same voices that were soon crying out for His crucifixion not more than a

week later. Not even Pontius Pilate could prevent this destiny as he tried to substitute Barabbas for Jesus.

Jesus' destiny was to bring a new destiny back to humanity, a destiny lost back in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. And to do that, Jesus was not only destined to die, but He was also destined to rise from the dead, and not even Satan and all His forces could keep Jesus from His divine destiny.

What is destiny? Destiny is God's purpose for our lives. It's our appointed or ordained future. Destiny is what God has predetermined for us to be and to become.

God in Christ has done a new thing, and at the cross He gathered up all our destinies in Jesus. Yes, we all have individual destinies because of our individual our talents, gifts and callings, but we all have the same fixed and predetermined destiny from God.

The Apostle Paul said it so eloquently:

"For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will." **Ephesians 1:4-5 NIV**

Our real destiny is to get to know Jesus better, to walk blameless before Him, and to be a child of God through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ, for eternity.

B. We cannot separate ourselves from our destiny, which is to die to self and become like Jesus Christ. Jesus traveled the Jerusalem road. It was His destiny, and it's also ours.

The Jerusalem road is a choice. Jesus could have easily chosen not to travel it, and we have the same choice, but personally, the consequences of such a choice, and disobedience can scare people. These are scary times, so the choice becomes even more important!

What will be your choice? Will you continue to go the way of the world and have a different destiny than what God has planned for you, or will you choose to follow and obey, and have heaven and an eternity with God as your ultimate destiny?

Travel the road with Jesus...AMEN!
LET US PRAY.