

## Lent 6 / Palm Sunday / April 2, 2023

### John 12:26

**“If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there my servant will be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him.”**

Jesus long journey throughout Galilee and Judea had reached its end point with His arrival in Jerusalem. Jesus visited Jerusalem many times, but this was the most important time. Jesus’ parents Mary and Joseph, brought Him for dedication on the fortieth day of His birth, as was required in the law for the firstborn males, in remembrance of the Passover. He accompanied them to Jerusalem for feasts throughout His childhood. When He was twelve years old, He asked questions of the teachers in the temple and amazed them with His insight and knowledge. He knew the temple was His Father’s house and He was His Son. He worshipped annually at Jerusalem during Passover, as was required of all devout Jews. Jerusalem was central to His life as a devout Jew, and also for the purpose for which He was born into the world. He was the true temple of God on earth and in His body, He would offer the sacrifice that would fulfill the work of the temple and atone for the sin of the world.

Jesus was the perfect son of Israel. He came to fulfill the purpose for which God created Israel; to make His name known in the world and bring the blessing of salvation to all peoples. Jesus came to fulfill the ceremonial law to which Israel was obligated and the moral law, which all humans are obliged to keep. He fulfilled the ceremonial law as a devout Jew. He fulfilled the moral law as the perfect Son of Man, in order to be our Saviour. Through His obedience even to death on the cross, He earned our salvation and became the Saviour of all people, especially of those who believe.

Jesus was received into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday by the crowd of pilgrims, who confessed Him as the King of Israel. He wants us to receive Him into our hearts as Saviour and confess our allegiance to Him as King. He calls us to join the pilgrim crowd and confess our faith and loyalty, saying, “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.” There is no one more important than Jesus. There is nothing more important than living in relationship with Him in faith and faithfulness! He is our Saviour and King.

Jesus’ journey, which culminated in His final visit to Jerusalem, began with His departure from heaven and conception by the Holy Spirit within the womb of the blessed virgin Mary. His mission was to redeem the world from sin and lift the condemnation of eternal death from the heads of those who believe. He achieved His goal in the sacrifice of His cross at Jerusalem. He calls us to believe and receive Him as our Saviour and King.

Jerusalem was central to Jesus’ ministry, because Jerusalem was central to God’s plan for universal redemption. Jerusalem was the city of the great king David. Jesus is a King greater than David. He is God’s Son from eternity. Jesus is also David’s son according to His humanity received through Mary. As Son of God and Son of David, Jesus is heir to the eternal kingdom God promised to give to one of David’s descendants.

Jerusalem was central as the place where God gave His glory to dwell in the temple. Sacrifices were offered in the temple for the forgiveness of sin. Jesus’ body is the true temple in which God’s glory dwells and through which God offers forgiveness for all to receive. In reference to His body, Jesus said, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.” In the sacrifice of His body on the cross, Jesus fulfilled the work of the stone temple. He offered the sacrifice that truly and fully took away the sin of the world. In Jesus and through the sacrifice of His body on the cross, we have confidence to enter into the presence of God through faith. He calls us to come to the Father through faith in Him.

Unlike the other evangelists, John begins His gospel with Jesus’ cleansing the temple. Jerusalem and the temple are the location of much of Jesus’ teaching and two of His great signs; the healing of the paralyzed man and the opening of the eyes of the man blind from birth. In these miraculous signs Jesus’ revealed His glory, so that people would believe in Him as their God and Saviour. He calls us to believe in Him as our God and Saviour!

Just outside Jerusalem a few days before He entered the city on Palm Sunday, Jesus gave the greatest sign of His glory. He called Lazarus to arise after four days in his tomb. One day Jesus will call us and all believers to come out of our tombs to share in His resurrection. He will do this, because through His death at Jerusalem, He defeated death. He will do this, because on the third day He rose from the grave, as the first-fruits of those who believe. Holy week was His most important visit to Jerusalem, because on the cross, He offered Himself for the sin of the world. This was His most important visit to Jerusalem, because on the third day rose for the salvation of all who believe. He calls us to believe and follow Him in faith as our King and Saviour!

Jesus visited Jerusalem many times, but He was never welcomed as He was on this day. On Palm Sunday He was accompanied by a crowd, who professed Him as the Christ, the Messiah, the King of Israel. Many of these people may have encountered Him as He preached throughout Galilee. Some had just witnessed Lazarus come alive out of the tomb when He called. With one voice they announced Jesus as King of Israel. Jesus always attracted a crowd. This crowd was different in that they identified Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, the King of Israel. Jesus knew His hour had come. He would be glorified as the Son of God, the Saviour of the world.

Yet, it wouldn't happen the way the crowd expected. He would not be raised high on a royal throne, crowned with a golden crown and hailed King of Israel. He would be crowned with thorns, raised upon a wooden cross and condemned as the King of the Jews. He would not come into His kingdom with worldly glory, pomp and circumstance, as our new king Charles will at his coronation this Spring. Jesus came into His kingdom through the blood of His cross, shed for the forgiveness of our sin. His kingdom is not of the world. His kingdom is in the human heart, where He reigns as Saviour and Lord of all who believe. He calls us to open our hearts in faith that He may reign in us as our God and Saviour.

The crowd that accompanied Him into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday believed He was the King of Israel. They were not the same people who demanded His blood and cried "crucify Him," on Good Friday. They were the faithful in Israel, who like Anna and Simeon in the temple in Jesus' infancy, were awaiting the consolation of Israel. They were the faithful in Israel, but they did not yet understand the true nature of His kingdom, the way in which He would come into His kingdom and the way in which He would be glorified. His is a kingdom grace based on the forgiveness of sins. He came into His kingdom through the shedding of His blood, which He offered as a ransom for the sin of the world. He was glorified on the third day when He rose from the dead. His kingdom comes when human beings, women, children and men like you and I, believe in His name, trust in His promises and follow Him in faith and in faithfulness.

He calls all people to enter His kingdom in the repentance of our sins and confession of Him as our God and Saviour. Even as the crowd of pilgrims received Him as the King of Israel and accompanied Him into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, He calls us to receive Him in faith as our Saviour and to follow Him faithfully as our Lord. There is no person more important than Jesus. He is our Saviour and King. He brings us into relationship with God in time and for eternity.

Because it is our most important relationship, Jesus calls us to follow and serve Him intentionally and wholeheartedly. He says "If anyone serves me he must follow me." He promises, "and where I am, there will my servant be also." He assures us, "If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him." God bless us always to proclaim Him our Saviour and say with the faithful of Israel and every time and place, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord," Jesus our Saviour and King. In His Name. Amen