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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
April 13, 2014
Palm Sunday

Scripture Lessons: Zechariah 9:8-12; John 12:1-19
Hymns: 160 725; 162; 377:10 (367:1-2)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Hebrews 12:1-6

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of
witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily
ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set
before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,
who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross,
despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the
throne of God.

3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners
against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your
souls. 4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against
sin. 5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you
as to sons:

“My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be
discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;

6 For whom the Lord loves He chastens,
And scourges every son whom He receives.”

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God!

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our Redeemer King, dear fellow Redeemed.

INTRO: Palm Sunday

Palm Sunday is one of the high festivals of the church year. It marks a very special day in the life of Jesus, our Savior. Jesus received the honor that was due Him as Christ, the King. We read in our gospel lesson how the crowds gathered and sang His praises and called out to the Lord. It was also noted that much of the attention was because of the recent miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. Many of the people had heard of this miracle and felt compelled to see Jesus. Many were caught up in the excitement and the fervor that they joined in the praise and honor of Jesus, cutting down palm branches and strewing them before the donkey Jesus rode. Others even laid their coats on the road before Jesus. And everyone, even the children were singing Hosannas to the glory of the Lord.

With hind sight being twenty-twenty, we can understand why this was appropriate better than the people in that crowd, better even than the disciples did on that day. This type of a royal welcome which Jesus received was normally reserved for a returning hero, for a conquering king who had already destroyed the enemy. Our Champion Jesus was just setting out to meet the foe in mortal combat. The victory was assured, of that we can be certain, but this was all hidden from the crowd, and even the disciples did not understand what was coming later that week. They didn't understand why it was necessary for Jesus to be captured, to suffer at the hands of His enemies, and ultimately die on the cross.

Since the Spirit has opened our understanding to this grace, we should sing our hosannas even louder, and more joyously than did the people of Jews on that first Palm Sunday so long ago. This is a great day for us to be –

THEME: Offering Our Hosannas for our Redeemer King.

The Spirit would guide us in how we might best praise the Lord in our lives in these last days. The first point that is made in our text is for us to follow the example of the heroes of faith who went before us. With the Spirit's blessing and power we do this by –

I. Living a Life dedicated to the Lord.

For all its exuberance, the Palm Sunday praise which Jesus received was pretty shallow. The people were calling out their praises of Jesus as the Son of David, but it didn't require anything of them in true service to their King. It was words and a bit of fanfare, nothing more.

A true follower of the Lord Jesus will praise the Lord with more than words. A true follower of the Lord will serve the Lord with gladness, and not for just an hour of worship once a week. It will be a life encompassing thing. That is exactly what our text encourages.

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us.”

We have many spiritual examples that have gone before us in the patriarchs of old, as well as the apostles, and the fathers of the reformation. What they had in common was an understanding of **sacrificing** for the faith. The things of this world were just that, things, things that belong to this world, things that can weigh you down spiritually if you allow yourselves to become too attached to them. They would not allow themselves to be weighted down by them so that they were dragging spiritually.

While they were all sinners, as believers they learned repentance and true repentance at that, meaning that they didn't just say “Oops, sorry about that,” and then go on living as they had before. They were sorry with godly sorrow. They turned away from their sin and begged God for forgiveness and life. How did they do this? Whether Old Testament Patriarch or New Testament believer they all looked to the Savior for strength of life. They set an example for us to follow, that we should be --

Hebrews 12:2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Look at Jesus who is the source of all our spiritual blessings and our eternal salvation, and remember what it cost Jesus to save us, and how Jesus did not think of Himself first, but focused on that joy of having us with Him in heaven, and how He went forward to the cross.

Now it is our time. It is our time to sing our “**Hosannas**” to Him who comes in the name of the Lord, to Him who went the way of the cross, and took on the devil, **and did not sin**, and was not deterred from His mission by earthly concerns that weighted Him down. Now it is our time to “**lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us.**” And yes, sin does so easily ensnare us, doesn’t it? We each have our own problem sins that have laid hold of us, that are especially appealing to us and have found a place in our lives, It could be coveting, it could be lust, it could be gossiping, it could be failing to trust the Lord so that we are caught up in worry, **it is sin that has ensnared us.**

To truly sing our Hosannas to Jesus let us set aside the earthly things that are getting in the way of our spiritual lives, and let us deny our flesh its sinful ways, turning to Jesus for strength, that we might live to the praise of His glory.

May this not be for just a moment or a day! Let us join the throng of the believers of old in --

II. Honoring the Lord with Endurance.

One of the things about Palm Sunday that always strikes us is how **short-lived** the praise was. The leaders of the Jews were so worried that the whole nation was going to follow after Jesus that on that Palm Sunday and then also Monday they were very confrontational about people, even children, singing Jesus’ praises. However, it didn’t take long and the people seemed to forget how they had praised the Lord. By Friday morning the crowds were aligned by the scribes and Pharisees to despise Jesus, and they rallied the people to cry out for Jesus to be crucified. The people’s loyalty to Jesus turned out to be very fickle and short-lived.

The Spirit would have us take a very different approach to discipleship, and our praise of the Lord. Our text encourages--

Hebrews 12:1 let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

Again consider Jesus and His perseverance for us in His suffering. The devil came at Him with all that he had to get Jesus to sin. It hadn't taken much of a deception to get the first Adam to sin; if he could trip up this second Adam then the devil would win the day.

Hebrew 12:3-4 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. 4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.

The devil used all that hostility from sinners to try to break Jesus' down, if it were possible to do so. And please remember that in those hours of that dark night and dreadful day, Jesus was not using His divine powers to handle the tribulation and the sufferings and the abuse which He endured. In His state of humiliation He handled it just as we would, or rather as we should. And the assault was continuous. Jesus was reviled, and He was abused, and Jesus was beaten, and cursed, and mocked, and falsely accused, and it went on for hours! It went on repeatedly, first with the temple guard, then with Pilate's soldiers, and then Herod and his guard, and then again with Pilate's men, a whole detachment being called together when they had scourged Him. Every time He was struck in the face with men's fists and slapped, and spit upon, and had His beard pulled out, and He was beaten, and that crown of thorns was pushed down upon His head, and He was scourged. Jesus endured, not just physically, but spiritually. **In all this Jesus did not sin.** In all this Jesus was faithful to His Father in heaven, and kept the commandments, and remained the pure and sinless sacrifice for sin. All this He endured for our salvation.

Now consider that statement of our text: “**You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin**” (v.4). That was true for the first recipients of this epistle. They had been pressured by family and friends. Psychological pressure surely was used against them, but they hadn't resisted to bloodshed. It had happened earlier

with others in Jerusalem, and bloodshed would come later with other persecutions, but it wasn't happening with these Jewish Christians.

And that is true for us also. It has happened in the past with others. It is happening with our Christian brothers and sisters in other parts of the world. Some of these brothers and sisters are now with us in the United States. Oh, we have been called names. We may have endured a rant or two because we don't agree with the public endorsement of sin that is prevalent in our modern society.

However, we have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. So let us not become discouraged and silenced in our Hosannas to the Lord. Let us remain faithful, resisting sin, even if force is used against us. Let us praise the Lord with endurance, to the end of days. In this help us, dear Father in heaven.

Of course under duress we face special challenges, but the Lord has always dealt with us as beloved children. So let us praise the Lord by continuing to --

III. Trust Jesus through Life's Tribulations.

In the depth of His sufferings Jesus continued to trust in His Father to deliver Him. David gives us insight into the Savior's soul while Jesus suffered.

Psalms 22:19-21 "But You, O Lord, do not be far from Me; O My Strength, hasten to help Me! 20 Deliver Me from the sword, My precious life from the power of the dog. 21 Save Me from the lion's mouth And from the horns of the wild oxen! You have answered Me."

Jesus prayed, and He prayed fervently for help and strength and deliverance. And Jesus was confident that the Father heard and answered His prayer, even though it was the Father's will for Jesus to continue to endure the sufferings that were necessary for our salvation. As we open the Scriptures and learn of our salvation this is what is revealed for us. We read of this in --

Hebrews 2:9-10 "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and

honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. 10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”

Now apply this truth to our own lives. God allows that which is good and necessary for our spiritual life and eternal salvation. He deals with us in love.

Hebrews 12:5-6 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.”

He uses the tribulations and the persecutions and sufferings of this present life, to keep us in contact with Him, that we remember that He alone is our strength and our salvation. He keeps us on the road to heaven that we remember that this life is not our end and goal, but that life which is to come. He loves us and keeps us in true faith so that we look above where Christ is, because that is where our life is, hidden with the Lord. So it is that even in trials and persecution, and tribulation we praise the Lord and sing our “Hosannas,” for we know Jesus as our Redeemer and King.

On this Palm Sunday may we be blessed by the Spirit of our God so that our hearts are lifted up by the wonder of grace that we see in Jesus, who came in humility, riding upon that donkey, a colt the foal of a donkey, as He entered Jerusalem, coming to be the Champion of our Salvation. **“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the Highest!”**

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.