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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
March 29, 2015  
Palm Sunday

Scripture Lessons: Hebrews 12:1-6, Matthew 21:1-17

Hymns: 160; 162; 725; 161:3 (242)

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

Sermon Text: John 12:1-19

Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. 2 There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. 3 Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. 4 But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, 5 "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" 6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.

7 But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. 8 For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always."

9 Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. 10 But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, 11 because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.

12 The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna!

‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ The King of Israel!”

14 Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: 15 “Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, Sitting on a donkey’s colt.”

16 His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him.

17 Therefore the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness. 18 For this reason the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign. 19 The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, “You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!” (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

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

In Christ Jesus, God my Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Can you show some proper respect?

I’m not sure it has ever been a strong point in American culture to show proper respect and honor to those who deserve it. From the earliest days in American history there was an attitude that every man is an equal, and there are no lords to which one must bow. They started showing respect to George Washington when he was first elected president, calling him “Your Highness,” but he immediately quashed that idea, and opted for “Mr. President,” which holds yet to this day. With our political system and freedom of speech we are free to criticize those who govern us, but this is regularly confused with the idea that one has the right or even obligation to denigrate and be disrespectful to the man or woman who holds high office.

I am afraid that some of this, actually quite a lot of it has carried over into our spiritual lives, and that not only as a nation, but also as individuals. We are rather cavalier in our attitude towards the Lord. Our old Adam doesn’t feel any obligation to acknowledge

the authority of the Lord in our lives. Human nature is quick to assert that when it comes to my life I am master of my fate, and captain of my ship. In other words, we not only fail to acknowledge God with the honor due Him as our Creator, but we also fail to honor Him as our Redeemer, who is in truth the Lord of our lives. We say “Christ, our **Lord**,” without considering what that means. The fact that He is our Lord means that He is our superior. He is our Master and He does have authority over us in our lives, in every aspect of our lives. We should be thankful for that and not bitter or begrudging toward Him who loved us and redeemed us.

On this Palm Sunday as we are about to once again enter into Holy Week when we give special observance to the Lord’s suffering, death, and resurrection. It is right and fitting for us to consider how we should be --

### **THEME: Honoring Jesus as Savior and Lord.**

Our text gives us a glimpse of how those close to Jesus were -

#### **I. Personally Honoring Jesus as Lord and Savior.**

When Jesus arrived at Bethany just a short distance outside of Jerusalem, His friends had a Sabbath meal prepared for Him in the home of a man referred to as Simon the Leper. One may assume that since this man was back in his home and receiving company that he also had been a beneficiary of Jesus’ healing power. Lazarus, whom the Lord had recently called forth for the dead, was among the guests, and Lazarus’ sister, Martha was among those who served the Lord Jesus along with His disciples and other guests.

The first observation that we make here is that Jesus was a welcome guest in the home of Simon the leper, and welcome company for those who were joining them for dinner. There is a plaque hanging on the walls of many Christian homes that declares that this is true of our homes as well, that Jesus is not only a welcome guest, but that He is invited to listen in and be a part of every conversation. Surely that was very true at that dinner. They were very appreciative of the Lord’s gracious presence among

them, and how He had blessed them with His mercy, grace and power. Jesus was very much the focus of conversation that day.

It is good for us to think about this for a moment. Is Jesus a welcome guest in our home, I mean consciously that we think about the wonder and grace of His presence in our homes? Or do we forget to include Him in our family discourse? Are there conversations we would be embarrassed for our Lord to hear because unkind words were spoken? Do we even remember to thank the Lord for the blessings we receive as we sit at the table and ask Him to bless these gifts, or is that reserved for only special occasions?

Ok, granted this was a special meal, a special occasion in the home of Simon the leper, but even when we have a special holiday meal do we remember that this is a meal we are serving to honor the Lord? It should be! That is supposed to be the point of these special meals! Many of us will have such a special dinner next Sunday for Easter. Will it be about the Lord and the wonder of His resurrection that we are celebrating as a family, or will it be merely a social occasion when family happens to get together and celebrate spring?

Something very special was about to unfold in the days quickly following this dinner in Simon's house, and while most present weren't giving it a thought, or were even ready to acknowledge that it would happen, there was one there who was determined to give the Lord special honor for what He was about to do, for what He was about to endure. Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, entered the dining room while the men were still dining, (which in itself was unusual) and went to the couch where Jesus was reclined with his feet directed out from the table. She brought with her a very expensive container of perfumed oil with which she anointed Jesus' feet, and then kneeling at His feet she in lowly manner wiped Jesus' feet with her hair. *She had let her hair down in public!* She used her hair in a manner that would have been *humiliating* for others, but she humbled herself *willingly* before the Lord. She made a sacrificial gesture which not only startled the men present but troubled them as well. They didn't understand, but Jesus did.

**John 12: 4-8** But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, 5 "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" 6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. 7 But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. 8 For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always."

While Judas found this personally offensive, a waste that kept a good amount of money out of his pocket, Jesus saw it as a wonderful sacrificial offering in honor of the sacrifice He was about to make. **Mary anointed Jesus for His burial.** That was what was on her mind. She loved her Lord and sought to honor Him for the sacrifice He was about to make, and so she sought to offer a sacrifice worthy of her Redeemer. The oil of nard she poured out on Jesus' feet was equal in value to an entire year's wages for a common laborer. It was a lot of money to be poured out over someone's feet and onto the floor. Judas saw it as a waste, but Jesus didn't see it that way. He saw the love and devotion in Mary's heart and was honored by her sacrificial act.

Didn't Judas have a legitimate point? Couldn't that money have done much good for the poor? The Spirit reveals that Judas didn't really care for the poor, but was a thief who saw an opportunity for personal gain lost. (By the way, it was immediately after this dinner that Judas sought out Jesus' enemies and agreed to betray Him for thirty silver coins.) Of course the Lord desires that we should do good for the poor. There will ample opportunities presented to Christians to do just that, but we shouldn't denigrate the desire to give gifts to the Lord that simply honor the Savior and His love for us.

A true appreciation of all that Jesus has done for us and our salvation is what ought to lie at the heart of every offering we make, rather than a compulsion to pay some bill or meet some other need. Recalling the sacrifice which Jesus has made will prompt us to give far more generously to the Lord as we see the offering plate as an opportunity to honor Jesus with a gift that is also sacrificial. Yes, that means we will honor Jesus with offerings that may require us to go without something we would otherwise

have so that we might recognize and honor the depth of the sacrifice He has made for us.

The word got out that Jesus was in Bethany staying at the home of Simon the leper, and the crowds started to gather. People wanted to see Jesus, and Jerusalem and its surrounding villages were packed with pilgrims who had come for Passover week which was to begin the next day. The next day the people joined together in --

## II. Publicly Praising Jesus as our Redeemer King.

**John 12: 12-15** The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: “Hosanna! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ The King of Israel!” 14 Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: 15 “Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, Sitting on a donkey’s colt.”

This public adoration began spontaneously. They had all heard about Jesus and knew about the wonderful things that Jesus had done. It was spontaneous in that this was not set up by the disciples, however it was known by the Lord, and it had been foretold by the prophets. It was fitting for this praise to be given to Jesus as He approached Jerusalem as Savior and King.

The words which the crowds sang were words they knew very well. They had sung these words many, many times as they traveled together on the way to Jerusalem every year for Passover. These words were from the Hallel psalms, psalms of praise that were sung by each family as they gathered around the table to eat the Passover Supper. Many were chanting “**Hosanna!**” which means “**Save now, we pray.**” These words of prayer could not have been more appropriate for the occasion to serve as an encouragement for Jesus, who fully comprehended that this was all about salvation and deliverance of the people from sin and death.

Jesus also comprehended that this salvation could only be secured by His humiliation. He came in deep humility. He came as the prophet foretold riding on a lowly donkey. It was by permitting Himself to be subjected to the vilest abuse, and the ignominy of

crucifixion that Jesus would save the people of the Jews, and not the Jews only, but the whole world.

The disciples didn't get it. They wouldn't understand until after Jesus was glorified. The people didn't understand it all either. The crowds continued to grow, but it wasn't because people were saying this is the One who is going to crush the devil's power and free us from sin. No, it was all about this is the One who raised Lazarus from the dead. The pilgrims flocked to the road where Jesus walked so they might catch a glimpse of this prophet. The connection wasn't made that the raising of Lazarus from the dead was a display of the power of resurrection that was to be found in Jesus, the Son of David.

The leaders of the Jews were completely frustrated. They had done all they could to discredit Jesus and make Him look bad to the people, and now they watched as the crowds grew and the prayerful chant increased in volume, and the people waved the palm branches in honor of their King. The leaders of the Jews not only held Jesus in disdain, but the people as well.

How shall we praise the Lord and honor Him as our Lord? First, let us realize that our faith in Christ is not to be kept to ourselves. While it is not only appropriate but important for us to praise and honor the Lord in our personal devotions and in our private homes, it also behooves us to praise the Lord and confess His name before the world, even if we are subjected to the disdain of the elite or the intellectuals of this world.

We don't have to go down the street waving palm branches and chanting Bible verses to impress others with the glory and honor of our Lord. It was the right thing to happen on that first Palm Sunday. Today we make public confession of our faith among our fellow believers. We let it be known by our faithful church attendance that we honor Jesus as Lord of our lives. When good things happen in our lives we praise the Lord. When we are distressed we turn to the Lord in prayer and so honor His name. When our conscience, or the conscience of a friend needs comfort and assurance we point to the cross where our King served as our Champion and secured for us the victory over sin, death, and the devil. People see us and our manner of life, so let us strive to honor

Jesus before the world. May all that we do, and all that we say be heard by the world as: “**Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who 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.