

Palm/Passion Sunday Bible Study Notes (NRSV)

3/31/20

Texts for today:

- Matthew 21:1-11
- Zechariah 9:9-10

I would like to take a change in direction for our Bible studies the next two weeks. We are going into Holy Week and Easter which is a time that merits a different pace.

First, let's consider our schedule:

- Today's Bible Study
preparation and study for Palm Passion Sunday. We will focus on the "Palm Sunday" aspect of Holy Week.
- Palm/Passion Sunday
This Sunday has a dual focus:
 - Palm Sunday which is the triumphant entry by Jesus into Jerusalem and the various themes around that event.
 - Passion Sunday which is about Jesus being arrested, His suffering and ultimate crucifixion.
 - the subject of "The Passion" is more properly covered in Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services. The "Passion theme" was incorporated into Palm Sunday in part because many people were not attending the Thursday and Friday services and so were missing out on critical Scriptural content.
- Next week's Bible Study
is our opportunity to focus more closely into the "Passion" aspect of Holy Week.
- Good Friday
is a worship service conducted at the side of the grave. Life is dark and cold. The Light of the World is temporarily gone, evil has triumphed!
- Easter Sunday
The Light of the World overcomes the forces of evil and the world and triumphant and glorious!

In our study today we need to slow down a little and focus on "The Story". Think about what happened. What are the key elements and themes which are interleaved into this story.

Please read Matthew 21:1-11. This is the story of Palm Sunday. Then read Zechariah 9:9-10. This is the prophecy that Jesus was intentionally fulfilling.

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As you reflect on what happens in the story, consider these points:

- One custom at the time was for kings and VIP's to arrive in a procession on the back of a donkey. The donkey was a symbol of peace. The palm branches were a symbol of victory.
- What do you think was the image that God/Jesus was trying to project by having Jesus ride into Jerusalem on a donkey in a procession?
- In what ways did this image conflict with the thinking of the time that the Messiah would be a warrior-savior who would overthrow the hated Romans with great force and protect them from any other attack?
- Reflect on how this conflict "set the stage" for the people to reject Jesus' peaceable approach and judge Him to be a traitor.

During our last worship service, I suggested that our next Scripture would be John 18. John 18 focusses on the five stages of Jesus' trial. I would like to also suggest that you read Matthew Chapters 26-27. These tell the full story of Jesus' trial, suffering and crucifixion.

Until next time...

May the peace of Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in His love!

Pastor Jerry