

## WEEKEND Edition 09/10 April "Alive – Palm Sunday" Matt. 21:1-11; Luke 19:39-44

Hello my "Walking with Jesus" friends on this Palm Sunday weekend.

*Yesterday I left you holding your nose, standing in a crowd, outside a dead man's tomb... the tomb of Lazarus.* Jesus was there with His disciples. Lazarus had been dead at least five days, Martha and Mary were confused and heartbroken that Jesus had not come immediately when they sent word to Him that Lazarus was very sick. In response Jesus had said, **"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me will live, even though they die; and whoever believes in ME will never die."** (John 11:25,26) Then Jesus had asked Martha to lead Him to where they had buried Lazarus. She led him to the little cave/tomb cut into the hillside. Jesus had asked them to remove the stone which covered the opening. Martha had objected, saying there would be a stench since Lazarus' body had been in that place already 4 full days. But Jesus insisted. That's why everyone is holding their nose.

Then Jesus did the unthinkable. He lifted His eyes and voice toward heaven, and He prayed, and then shouted at the cave/tomb: **"Lazarus, come out."** (John 11:43) What sound did the people hear? What sight did they first see? John describes it for us like this: **"The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and cloth around his face. Jesus said to the people, 'take off the grave clothes and let him go.'" Lazarus, dead five days, was fully alive and healthy!** With the grave clothes removed he looked around, smiled, breathed some deep breaths, and stepped toward his sisters, taking them in his arms! The people shouted and cheered, many embracing Jesus... and then Lazarus turned to Jesus giving Him a huge embrace, 'thank you, thank you, thank you' was all I can imagine Lazarus could say! Look around at the people. How do you celebrate a resurrection that you've seen with your own eyes?

John's record says: **"Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and Martha and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in Him. Some of the people told the Pharisees what Jesus had done. Then the chief priests and Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin... and from that day on they plotted to kill Jesus."** (John 11:45-53) Look closely my friends, at the dramatic and opposing responses to this remarkable, life-giving miracle of Jesus. Now, look at our world as we approach Easter 2022. *Do you see the very same contrasting responses to Jesus & Easter in our world?*

Now we understand the dinner party I told you about yesterday, that John records for us in John 12. A dinner held in Jesus' honor. John describes it like this: **"Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with Jesus."**

***Then Mary took a jar of pure nard, an expensive perfume, and poured it on Jesus' feet, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume." (John 12:1-3)***

Around the room there were confused looks. Why did Mary do such an outrageous thing? What could it mean? Jesus amazed everyone by saying: ***"It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of My burial..."*** For those who had been at the cave/tomb that day holding their noses when Jesus called a man dead five days back to life, the power of the statement was almost overwhelming. Rather than the smell of death, there was the beautiful fragrance of life at this dinner party where Lazarus was at the table! Rather than weeping in sorrow, great joy in Jesus' defeat of death for Lazarus. ***But what only Jesus knew in that room that day... it was an omen, a prediction that in only one week's time, Jesus would be dead and buried, and some of these very women would be preparing perfumes to anoint His dead body!!***

How long into the night this glorious dinner party continued I don't know, but what I do know is the next day when they all awakened, ***they experienced a day which has reshaped our world. We know it as Palm Sunday!*** All four of the Gospel writers give us a perspective of that remarkable event. Jesus sent two of His disciples into town telling them they'd see a donkey & colt tied. They should untie them and bring them to Jesus! They went to that place and the owner of course asked why they were untying his donkey and colt? Their simple response was: ***"The Lord needs them"***, evidently satisfied him and they brought the animals to Jesus. (Matt. 21:1-7).

Jesus then led His group of disciples and friends, walking with these two animals, toward Jerusalem, just over the hills between Bethany and Jerusalem. It was a short walk, less than two miles. Once they reached the ridge of the Mount of Olives, they could see the city and the great Temple rising from the highest point of the city. The entire hillside was full of people and the city overflowing with people for this was Passover week, the most significant of all Jewish festivals and people had come from all over Israel. ***Passover celebrated their uniqueness as a people of God rescued from Egyptian slavery by God's power. Passover also pointed forward, imploring God to soon send their long-promised Messiah!*** The disciples put their cloaks on the donkey and Jesus sat on it and a spontaneous festival procession began. Matthew who was there, an eyewitness to this historic day, describes it this way: ***"A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the ground, while others cut branches from trees and spread them on the road. The crowds shouted, 'Hosanna to the Son of David, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD.'" (Matt. 21:8,9)***

We've all been in crowd situations when suddenly a wave of energy sweeps through the crowd and people start cheering and shouting and waving. That's what happened here. It was contagious. People running from all directions shouting their celebration of Jesus. Some in the crowd asked, ***"Who is this?," "This is Jesus of Nazareth."*** others answered. John tells us ***"The people who had been with Jesus when He called Lazarus from the tomb continued to spread the word. Many people, because they heard about Lazarus, went out to meet Jesus."***

***So, the Pharisees said to one another, 'see this is getting us nowhere. Look at how the whole world has gone after Him.'***

*What the crowd shouted was significant. "Hosanna" means "God, save us", it was a cry for God's deliverance of them from the iron fist of Rome. The people had seen Jesus' many miracles. If anyone could deliver them from Roman domination it would be this miracle worker! The title "**Son of David**" of course celebrated that Jesus was born into the royal line of King David. The phrase '**blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD**' was a great declaration that the people recognized Jesus as a prophet of God, a man sent by God to Israel. Oh my there was great hope spreading through the crowd that day! Maybe, just maybe, the centuries old hope of Passover was about to be fulfilled in this miracle man of God, some thought.*

Dr. Luke, however, gives us one other very important insight into something special which happened that Palm Sunday. ***"As Jesus approached Jerusalem and saw the city, He wept over it and said, 'If you, even you had only known on this day what would bring you peace - but now it is hidden from your eyes... because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."*** (Luke 19:41-44) Jesus knew the hearts of the people... those who'd been traveling with Him, those who'd seen the miracles and listened to His teachings, those who had come for Passover and never seen Him, those who didn't know anything about Him, and those who had no interest at all in Him. Emotions welled up in Jesus as He looked down the corridors of time to the future, and He wept as He saw the horrible demolition of this city Jerusalem which would occur in the year 70ad, by the Roman army, including destruction of the great Temple.

God had come to earth in the person of Jesus, He was the Jewish Messiah, the Christ. Few believed or accepted Him as Messiah or Savior. Most had far more interest in a political deliverer from Rome than a spiritual Savior who would save them from their sin bondage. *As we'll see over this next week, almost everyone who celebrated Jesus that Palm Sunday, either abandoned Him or turned against Him calling for His death.*

So, on this Palm Sunday weekend, 2022, I invite us to look at our own hearts, each of us. How are we responding to Jesus and Easter this year? What do you and I most desire Jesus to do in our lives this year? Perhaps the far more important question is, *what does Jesus desire to do in your life and mine this Palm Sunday which will bring HIM the greatest glory and make Him famous where you and I live?*

Let's put ourselves on that hillside, in that festival procession. Who's walking near you? One of the disciples, Martha, Mary, Lazarus, Mary Magdalene? What do you see as you look around this remarkable scene? And then I urge you to have a chat with Jesus about all this and here's a song to help you consider the remarkable miracle of Lazarus, the festival of Palm Sunday, and the hope of heaven:

**Today's Scripture is Matthew 21:1-11; Luke 19:39-44.**