

Palm Sunday Sermon 2022 MVLC ~ The first Palm Sunday

10 When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"

Matthew 21: 10

When I was thinking about Palm Sunday – the very first Palm Sunday that is, I was reminded of a dinner we had with friends – not that long ago.

Sometimes my wife gets a bit stressed when we have people over for dinner.

She asked me to go to Woollies and get some mayonnaise.

She told me exactly what brand to get – and it had to be “egg” mayonnaise.

Offcourse this is what I did – with no hesitation.

So I went to Aldi - can you sense a problem already?

I went to the mayonnaise section and there were dozens of different brands of Mayonnaise – but I could not find the particular brand that she wanted (Aldi).

But I was surprised to see so many brands and so cheap!

One particular brand said “contains no egg”. It was really cheap.

I thought to myself perhaps they don't have eggs in Hungary.

So, I got 6 jars of this Hungarian mayonnaise – thinking I would be applauded for my astute shopping.

When I got home she looked in the bag and all hell broke loose.

The same woman who promised to love me for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, turned against me.

She called me names I have never heard before.

She told me to do things I have never done before.

Those 6 jars of mayonnaise are still in the pantry and will probably remain there forever.

So back to Palm Sunday. It wasn't the mayonnaise which made me think of Palm Sunday it was the way someone could turn against you in a moment.

You see Palm Sunday as we know is a fabrication, a good fabrication, – it's man made or rather church made.

With the benefit of hindsight the church has put all the prophecies, all the bits and pieces together, to create a celebration, of celebrations: the glorious, victorious, King of life and death riding into town.

Palm Sunday as we know it rightly prepares us for Easter.

This Sunday was not called Palm Sunday back in Jesus day – it was actually business as usual – nothing special.

Isaiah tells us what a ho-hum sort of a day it was going to be 700 years before it even happened.

“No one will believe our message?

No one will see the Lord's hand in this. (Isa 53)

It was not the fanfare we make it out to be.

If we can go back and see what the first Palm Sunday was really like according to the Gospels– we find it was nothing like the day we know and there is a deeper truth which prepares us in a deeper way to receive Jesus' death and resurrection at Easter.

This day, which we call Palm Sunday, was right in the middle of the Passover celebration.

This is the annual celebration of how God's people were saved by the blood of a lamb being sprinkled over the doors of God's people in held in Slavery in Egypt 1000's of years before.

After much misery and abuse of God sent the Angel of Death to Egypt to kill every first-born male – Egyptian and Israelite – in a bid to convince Pharaoh to release the God's people from slavery. Whoever did not listen to God's warning (or invitation) to put the lifesaving lamb's blood above their doorways was killed that night – the others who heard, believed, and obeyed God were saved, as the Angel of Death “passed over” their homes.

Matthew 21

So, Matthew describes this Palm Sunday.

Jesus' entourage enters the Market place of Jerusalem. There are busy shops, and stalls set up inside the actual temple.

Money is exchanged, Passover treats and trinkets are on sale – general business is good.

The CPI is up on this day.

As the entourage enters and disrupts business the leaders turn, irritated, and ask: “who is this?”

In our mind everybody knows it's Jesus coming – but they didn't even know who he was.

Mark 11

In Mark's account the entourage enters Jerusalem, has a good look around, and it's like the Corona virus has hit, nobody talks to them, everybody keeps their distance, it seems that there's nobody even there, so they simply go back home 6 km's to Bethpage.

Mark says that the next day Jesus goes back and tips over the stalls set up in the temple.

Mark's description of “Palm Sunday” is hardly a Hosannah.

Luke 19

In Luke's account the entourage enters Jerusalem and annoyed some Pharisees, perhaps having an afternoon nap. They came out and told Jesus to tell his mob to be quiet.

“Sir” (they didn't know who he was) “Sir” they said, can you shut this mob up.

Luke also says Jesus stopped on the way and cried.

Luke says the business leaders planned to kill him – just because he stirred things up.

There are no Hosannahs in Luke.

John 12

John's account is interesting. He says a few Greeks questioned Jesus.

“You say you’re going to die – we thought the messiah would live forever – can you explain that?”

The only Palm Sunday praises were from a handful of misguided people who were excited that Jesus was going to be an earthly king.

These people were outsiders. They had just seen Jesus feed 5000 people, and heal blind people, and take little children into his arms and declare that they believe in him, and most importantly, they had just seen Jesus raise Lazarus from death – yes Jesus is going to be their King on earth for sure.

So, there were Hosannas from these few people, up on the mount of Olives, but no one else and no-where else.

You see we celebrate Palm Sunday because we know what Jesus came and did.

We know that through Jesus suffering, and death, and resurrection we have – life – eternal life.

So, we celebrate with Joy and sing the old prophecies – Daughter of Zion

Zion's daughter, O rejoice!

Shout aloud, Jerusalem!

Lo, thy King doth come to thee,

(I think that means, Our king has come to us)

Hail, hosanna, David's Son,

Be Thou welcome, gentle King!

(I think that means, We welcome you King of Peace.)

That first Palm Sunday was nothing like we know it. It wasn't acceptance and celebration – rather it was betrayal and rejection – but strangely here in lies the gospel – the good news.

Did you know that the day after that first Palm Sunday there were far, far, more people shouting 'Crucify him, Crucify him' than those who shouted, 'Hosanna - praise and honour'?

The people violently turned on Jesus (hence the mayonnaise analogy).

He was not what they expected him to be.

And this is the context for Jesus dying for us: when the crowds were shouting crucifying him; when the crowds were given a choice to release the murderer Barabbas or Jesus, and chose Barabbas; when Jesus' disciple betrayed Him with a kiss and got him arrested.

It's little wonder that when we repeat Jesus words at Holy Communion we begin with a stark reminder of this time of hatred:

“On the night when he was betrayed.....”

It was “on the night” Jesus was hated and betrayed that he died for you and me.... this is Gospel – this is love and grace.

So many people think they have to get their act together before they can accept Jesus – I hear it every day.

Forget it – he has already chosen you – He accepts you as you are.

At the time of the first Palm Sunday when all this began – he died for a fickle, murderous, mob – who killed him.

Why would you? This is grace – undeserved love.

For God so loved the world he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him will not die but have eternal life.

“Get your act together” – know that he died for you as you are.

He accepts you the way you are.

His wish is to take you as you are and bring you into his kingdom as his forgiven son or daughter.

“On the night he was betrayed” he took **bread and wine** and said this is my body and blood given for you, do this – not that – or that Eat and drink his body and blood and be untied with the first Easter for your salvation.

Jesus gave his life,

he was pierced for our transgressions,

he was crushed for our iniquities;

the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. Isa 53;5

Jesus gave his life when humanity was at its worst – that's good news – that's the first Palm Sunday.

If God said that we have to clean our act up before he was prepared to sacrifice his son (which would make human sense) Jesus would still be alive waiting for us – and we would still be carrying our sin, unsaved.

Know the gospel, “while we were yet sinners Jesus died for us”.
(Rom 8)

Betrayal, hate, plots to kill, and greed are the prerequisite for God's grace.

The Palm Sunday Gospel is that despite Jesus being hated, despite him being an annoyance to business, despite him being a disruption to their money-making Passover stalls, Jesus still cried Father forgive them - still died for them.

The palms and coats and Hosannas stopped very abruptly at the bottom of the Kidron Valley – and from then on it was hate and indifference, and annoyance.

So today the real first Palm Sunday gives us the background for those precious words: On the night Jesus was betrayed – he took bread – this is my body - he took wine – this is my blood – given and shed for the forgiveness of all our sins.

The foundation for Jesus to sacrifice his life for us was hate and indifference. That is Amazing Grace.

Lord we pray that ourselves and our friends and neighbors get the fact that Jesus takes us as we are - that the way we live is not an exclusion to his love and grace. Amen.