

Palm Sunday 2024 March 24

There are so many different angles Palm Sunday.

We've all heard about the mighty, but gentle King, entering on a colt, the foal of a donkey, – the peaceful king.

We've heard elements of triumph – but what is triumph as Jesus suffers and dies?

We've heard that dreadful dirge psalm 22.

Have you you've heard of the "Todah Feast"?

Today is really about the Todah feast and I'm guessing we haven't heard of it. You need Hebrew ears to know Palm Sunday is about a the Todah Feast. The psalms are dead giveaway that Jesus is coming to make a Todah feast.

"Todah" is simply the noun "thanks" in Hebrew.

"Judah" is the same word as Todah but it's verb form.

So Todah = thanks. Judah = the verb -"give thanks"

And Judea is the country of the Jude's, the Jews of course. It's foretold that Jesus will be known as the "Lion of Judah" - the lion of thanksgiving.

This means that the people of Judah, the Jews, are what?

They are "the nation of thanksgiving".

Their capital city Jerusalem which means the city of peace.

God's people, especially those on that strip of land are called "the people who make peace and give thanks". It's not going so well over there is it?

Let's focus on the Lion of Judah and the peace and thanks he brings.

The people who would make a Todah Thanksgiving Feast are people who have literally been brought back from death – people with a story to tell.

Maybe a person who has survived a shipwreck at sea and somehow made it to land.

A person who lost in the desert and was found.

A prisoner on death row, about to be executed, and somehow their death sentence is overturned.

In scripture Jonah, while in the belly of the whale, promises to offer a Todah if he was saved. (Jon. 2:3-10).

King Hezekiah offers up a Todah after he recovered from a life-threatening illness (cf. Is. 38).

David offered Todah feast after defeating the Canaanites – just. These people, offer a Todah Feast, a thanksgiving feast.

They provide the sacrifice – enough for everyone.

They recite certain psalms, which excites and gathers people together.

Most importantly they tell the story of how they were saved from certain death.

Basically, it's a thanksgiving party, somewhere around the temple, with friends.

There is only one rule, same as the Passover: There are to be no leftovers – you make sure you have the right amount of people for the food.

And the Golden rule as it says, “Let all who are hungry come and eat,”

The Todah Thanksgiving – is an individual's story of how God rescued them from certain death.

The Passover Thanksgiving, is a communal story, of how God rescued the Israelites from certain death.

Off course the story we know is Jesus is coming to celebrate the Passover.

The locals pick up on something different. Jesus is here for a Todah – Let's hear his story, has he been lost in the desert, was he rescued from lions?

Let's Todah with him.

They lay out their coats and palms because this is what you do when someone is coming in to give a Todah Feasts.

The instruction is in psalm 118:

“The LORD's right hand has done mighty things!

I will not die but live,

and will proclaim what the LORD has done.

I will enter and give thanks to the LORD

With Palms in hand, join in the festal procession
up to the horns of the altar.

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

This is a classic Todah psalm.

We're in Party mode. But something's not right.

Back in Genesis (22) a man named Abraham was asked to make an offering to God. He took his son Isaac up the mountain. As they were going up the mountain to make this special sacrifice Isaac asks, "Father, we've got the wood, where's the lamb?" Jesus' friends are gathering for this great Todah feast. I bet they're saying, "we've got the wood, where's the lamb?" "Where's the ladies guild – where's the food?"

Jesus sets the scene for the perfect Todah. The people wait, waving their palms, for the story of rescue. They wait for their roast lamb. But Jesus goes behind closed doors – he enters a Passover meal, he reaches across the table, he takes some bread, he takes the cup of salvation. He says, take and eat this is my body, take and drink this is my blood, this is the new covenant, do this as often as you drink it in memory of me. The people outside drop their palms, they go home, they are disappointed.

No story, no lamb! But we know the story is just beginning. Jesus is nailed to a cross and the Todah begins as they walk away.

Only we know it – they walk away.

A classic Todah unfolds.

Jesus cries out his predicament, his certain death – it's from a psalm as the Todah insists: This is all from Psalm 22 – this is Jesus story.

[My God, I am nailed to a cross, I have the pain, and guilt, and humiliation of the whole world on my shoulders.]
Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.
Roaring lions that tear their prey open their mouths wide against me.

*I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint.
My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me.
All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me.
They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.*

My God, my God! Why have you abandoned me?

Jesus cries to be rescued. (Psalm 22:19-21)

LORD, do not be far from me.

You are my strength; come quickly to help me.

Deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs.

Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen.

**Jesus promises to make a Todah to God if he is saved;
(Psalm 22:21-14)**

*Rescue me from the mouth of the lions;
save me from the horns of the wild oxen.*

*And I will declare your name to my people;
in the assembly I will praise [and give Todah] to you.*

*For he has not despised or scorned
the suffering of the afflicted one;
he has not hidden his face from him
but has listened to his cry for help.*

Jesus is rescued (Psalm 22:5)

*From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly;
[My God, What you have done, how you rescued me, is the basis
of this Todah – thankyou].*

Jesus praises God (the high point) (Psalm 22:25-28)

*The poor will eat and be satisfied;
those who seek the LORD will praise him—may your hearts
live forever!*

*All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations will bow down before him,
for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the
nations.*

Jesus declares this rescue will; be told for ever and that that this Todah Thanksgiving meal will last for ever.

Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord.

They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn:

He has done it!

The people are thoroughly confused.

Jesus begins a classical Todah.

- The certain death situation.
- The rescue.
- The promise to give thanks and tell the story.

“We’ve got the wood, Where’s the lamb”

We know it has been shared before at the Passover – the lamb is in the bread – it’s in the cup – they don’t know this.

You know the Greek word for the Todah thanksgiving feast is “Eucharist”.

Have you heard that word before? “Eucharist” It means thanksgiving feast – Todah.

One of the names for Holy Communion is the Eucharist.

We go through the classic Todah/Eucharist every week.

We put it out there:

Our predicament – the wages of sin is death, we are on death row

The rescue - Take and eat this is the body and blood of our lord and saviour Jesus Christ, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of all your sins.

The Thankyou [Todah]– we thank you Lord in thought, word and deed.

You know, the Judeans – would make the best Christians – they know all this stuff, they know the background to everything we do.

They just can't see the Lion of Judah in their midst – they're still waiting for him.

This is one of their key teachings:

"When the Messiah comes all sacrifices will cease, but the thank offering [the Todah] will never cease."

How true – Jesus gave himself up as the sacrifice once and for all.

He has done it – and his very own people the Judeans are still waiting for him.

Father, we have the wood, where is the lamb – they're stuck back there.

Father, we have the wood, we have the lamb, praise be to you. Todah.

Lord lead us to the lion of Judah who surpasses suffering and death for us. Amen.