

Palmarum
St. Matthew 21:1-9
April 5th, 2020
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

When They Drew Near Jerusalem

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Almighty and Everlasting God, Who hast caused Thy beloved Son to take our nature upon Himself, that He might give all mankind the example of humility and suffer death upon the cross for our sins: Mercifully grant us a believing knowledge of this, and that, following the example of His patience, we may be made partakers of the benefits of His sacred passion and death, through the same, Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

We have come to the second Sunday of Passiontide and the beginning of Holy Week. These next few days we will spend together hearing over and over again the Passion History of our Lord + Jesus Christ; we will hear about His suffering and death on our behalf. He bore our sins, He took upon Himself our punishment, He endured the cross that we deserve, He endured the shame and beating that we deserve, and He endured the wrath of the heavenly Father which we all deserve on account of our manifold sins and trespasses with which we draw forth the Lord God's anger on a daily basis. Therefore, Holy Week begins with the proclamation of our Lord entering into the holy city of Jerusalem. The Evangelist and Apostle St. Matthew leads us into Holy Week with these words, "Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives."

With these words, our Lord + Jesus begins the consummation of our atonement from sin, death and the power of the devil. He has come into the holy city to win for all mankind redemption for their sins. We who cling in faith to the promise of redemption that He won for us are made righteous before the Lord God Almighty. Our Lord + Jesus begins the completion of our atonement in a remarkable way. At His trial and on the holy cross our Lord + Jesus humbles Himself under the weight of our sin. He endures the mockery, shame, spitting and beatings in silence. He does not present Himself in any other way than as a regular man condemned to die; condemned to die for crimes He did not commit.

Not so on this day, this day of Palmarum—the Sunday of the Palms. On this day, the beginning of our Lord's final week leading up to the holy cross and the completion of our atonement for sin, our Lord + Jesus enters into the holy city of Jerusalem with all due pomp. He rides into Jerusalem as a king triumphantly returning home from victory. This is significant because the final battle has not yet been fought. The nails of the cross have not yet been driven into His hands and feet. The spear has not yet pierced His side. The stone has not yet been rolled over the door to His tomb. But even so the victory is already assured. And so, our Lord + Jesus enters into Jerusalem as a victorious King.

The devil, the world, and our flesh, which the Lord + Jesus has taken upon Himself, will soon be defeated once and for all. They will no longer have any more power over those who cling to the Lord +

Jesus in faith. Their accusations and lies will no longer hold force against the work of our Lord + Jesus Christ. His suffering and death on the tree of the holy cross will erase the sentence that they charge against all believers on Christ. When we cling in faith to the atonement that He accomplished for us on the holy cross, our sins are no longer credited to us; the accusations of the devil, the world and our sinful flesh are no longer held over our heads as a debt to pay, for the Lord + Jesus has paid those debts, and given to all those who believe on His Name the righteousness that is His through His victorious suffering and death.

Our Lord + Jesus draws near Jerusalem to win salvation for all mankind. He draws near Jerusalem for us. He draws near Jerusalem to defeat the enemies once and for all. He draws near Jerusalem to claim the victory for us and for all those who believe on Him. For through faith we are justified, that is, made righteous before the Lord God.

Therefore, it is right that we celebrate this day. We celebrate by reenacting the events of that day. The people of Israel laid down palm and olive branches before the Lord. Symbolizing the victory that He has come to win for His people. We also carry palm branches, and go before our Lord + Jesus in procession, to proclaim that our Lord + Jesus has indeed won the victory for us from sin, death and the power of the devil. In our procession we heard the Gospel of what our Lord has done for us, and we sang of all the wonderful works that our Lord + Jesus has done for us.

This celebration is a foreshadowing of the heavenly procession of the saints that we will enjoy in our eternal home in Heaven. Today we carry our palms and sing of the good things that our Lord + Jesus has done for us; that He has drew near to Jerusalem to win for us redemption from our sins and trespasses. This celebration—this procession that we enjoyed—of our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, is quickly doused when He heard the Passion of our Lord + Jesus Christ according to the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew. The celebration and triumphant entry of our Lord is tempered with the realization of why He draws near to Jerusalem. He comes to suffer and die for us. This contrast between the celebratory beginning of the service, and the rest of the Divine Service is brought to its conclusion when we end our liturgy by singing, "O Dearest Jesus, What Law Hast Thou Broken." Our focus is directed straight towards Good Friday and the cross of our Lord + Jesus Christ.

This is how it is for us in this life: our celebrations are always tempered with the realization of the penalty for sin. We may celebrate, but our Lord + Jesus suffers shame and death. We may rejoice that our sins are forgiven. We may rejoice that the pastor has pronounced to us that our sins are absolved and forgiven. And rightly we should! But the trials and tribulations of our sinful nature and this sinful world, will drive us again into despair and shame over our sins, if they do not drive us into the pride of thinking that we are not all that bad of a person. This is life is a continuous picture of Holy Week: celebration is soon turned into death.

Our life in Heaven will not be that way, however. In Heaven the celebration will not cease. The saints of Heaven—all of us who believe on the Lord + Jesus—will forever carry their palm and olive branches and proclaim as our Lord + Jesus draws near the New Jerusalem and shout "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord!" Even as we rehearse every time we gather for Divine Service when we sing the *Sanctus*. The victory parade in Heaven will not cease. The feast of our Lord's triumphal victory will never end. Forever we will enjoy the marriage feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom as the Bridegroom is joined to His Bride the Church—to us.

Over the next few days, the cross our Lord + Jesus Christ will be put before our eyes more than at any other time in the Church's year. The cross is an instrument of death. It is a picture of the death that we deserve to suffer; the wrath of the Lord God which we deserve to endure on account of our daily and often breaking of God's Law and will. We deserve the cross and punishment, but our Lord + Jesus draws near to Jerusalem to endure the cross and punishment on our behalf. Therefore, the cross

may be an instrument of death; an instrument of the punishment that we deserve, but on account of our Lord + Jesus, the cross becomes for us a source of joy. For He has endured what we could not even hope to bear, and He gives us the victory and the reward through faith.

Our Lord + Jesus has drawn near Jerusalem to win for us a crown of eternal life. Therefore, my dear friends, let us hold high our palms, and rejoice this day that our Lord has come in victory for us. He is worthy of our praise. He is worthy to be crowned King. He is worthy to sit at the right hand of the heavenly Father and reign over us, for He has won for all mankind salvation from their sins, so that all those who cling to Him in faith will enjoy an eternal celebration with Him in Heaven. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty and Everlasting God, Who hast led Thy dear Son Jesus Christ through sufferings and death to Thine eternal glory, and hast exalted Him at Thy right hand to be Lord of lords and King of kings: we beseech Thee, grant us Thy good Spirit, that with willing hearts we may receive Him as our King, and follow His example of true humility, that, being made perfect through sufferings, we may enter into eternal glory; through Thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!