

Holy Monday
St. John 12:1-23
April 11th, 2022
Sts. Peter and Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

The House Was Filled with the Fragrance

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

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

During Holy Week the Church follows her Lord + Jesus to His cross. We follow our Lord and Savior through His suffering and death as He atones for our sins and wins for us forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. This procession to the tree of the holy cross by the Church—by us—began yesterday as we processed with palms in our hands to meet our Lord + Jesus as He entered triumphantly into Jerusalem. He rode in lowly, and humbly on a donkey, the colt a foal of a donkey. We heard the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew's account of our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The Apostle and Evangelist St. John shares his account of those events with us today. This is where we began our journey to our Lord's cross.

Today, the Apostle and Evangelist St. John takes us back one day before the events of the first Palm Sunday. We are taken back to six days before the Passover—six days before our Lord offers Himself for the sins of the whole world on the tree of the holy cross. On this day we find our Lord + Jesus in Bethany in the home of Lazarus, Mary and Martha. These events are recorded in the twelfth chapter of St. John's Gospel.

In the previous chapter, chapter eleven, of St. John's Gospel we are given the account of the raising of Lazarus. In other words, not much time as passed since our Lord + Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, foreshowing His resurrection from the dead after three days. He revealed His power and authority over death by raising Lazarus from the dead. Remember that Lazarus had been dead for four days. The Jews did not practice the embalming methods of the Egyptians, nor did they have the embalming methods that many people use today. Therefore, after three days the natural decay of the deceased body would have begun in Lazarus. His sister Martha, as much as she would love to have her brother back alive again, even cautioned our Lord saying that since Lazarus had been dead for four days he would have begun to stink.

The Jews knew what death meant. There was no coming back from death; it was the end of life. There were very few cases in the Old Testament Scriptures where someone was raised from the dead. Even our Lord during His lifetime only raised three people: Jairus' daughter, the son of the widow of Nain, and Lazarus. Only two of those resurrections had occurred prior to our Lord coming to the grave of Lazarus. Jairus' daughter had just died before the Lord raised her from the dead. Our Lord was on the way to heal her, and as they were on their way some had come and told Jairus that his daughter

had died. So, she had only been dead for a little while before she was raised from the dead. The son of the widow of Nain also could not have been dead long for they were on the way to grave when our Lord + Jesus met the grieving widow. The Jews did not wait long to prepare the body and bring it to the grave to be buried. They would anoint the body with fragrant oils and spices and wrap it in strips of linen, and place in the grave. This would happen the same day.

In other words, both of the two previous resurrections that our Lord + Jesus did during His life the deceased person was not dead very long. Lazarus, however, had been dead for four days. When the Lord + Jesus asks for the stone to be removed from the grave, Martha and those with her, did not believe that the Lord could raise someone from the dead who had been dead for four days and had begun to decay and stink. Our Lord raises Lazarus with just His Word. "Lazarus, come forth!" was all He needed to say, and Lazarus had come forth from the grave alive again. The Lord + Jesus had showed His power over death. This was just prior to the events from today's Gospel reading; the events that preceded our Lord's own death and resurrection.

As one can imagine there was much joy at having received Lazarus back from the dead again. The beginning of chapter twelve of St. John's Gospel begins with a feast in honor of Lazarus. The Lord + Jesus, Who had raised Lazarus from the dead, was there with His Apostles. We receive two reactions toward this raising of Lazarus: those who were glad of the event, and those who scoffed at it.

Those who rejoiced over this event are embodied by two events. First, Mary, Lazarus' sister takes a pound of very costly oil of spikenard and anointed the feet of our Lord + Jesus. As was the custom to anoint dead bodies with fragrant oils and spices in preparation for burial, Mary prepares our Lord for His burial, which she probably did not realize would take place six days later. But our Lord + Jesus knew that His suffering and death was quickly approaching, and saw this act of love as a preparation for His burial. People knew that death was final, but in the raising of Lazarus people began to believe that the Lord + Jesus had great power over death. He would show that power over death in nine days, just three days after His death, which would occur in six days.

The second event is the event we heard about yesterday, and hear about again today. The very great multitude gathered to meet our Lord + Jesus Who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of the Passover. The Jews had also come to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast, and on their way and as they arrived, they had heard of our Lord raising Lazarus from the dead. We are given the reason in St. John's Gospel for why the great multitude met our Lord + Jesus with palm and olive branches and shouts of praise as He entered Jerusalem. Someone who could raise a man from death who had been dead for four days must surely be the Messiah, the Son of David Who had come to save them from their enemies. He must be the King of Israel Who had come in the Name of the Lord.

Mary, and the great multitude, who praised our Lord for His power over death rejoiced that He had come. Others, however, were not so pleased with these events. Mary's expression of love is met with scoffing by Judas Iscariot. He believed that the fragrant spikenard, whose fragrance filled the whole house, should have been sold and given to the poor. These are very noble sounding words. People are always more noble with other people's money. People always sound caring when they are imagining other people's things and money being used by them. But St. John preaches the truth of the matter. Judas Iscariot did not care for the poor. He was a thief who had control of the moneybox and would take what was in it for his own use.

Many people sound very noble when it comes to the poor. But just like Judas, they are unwilling to use their own possessions to do anything for them. They would prefer to steal other people's money for the cause. And truthfully, if they had other people's money—if the spikenard had been sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor—Judas, in his greed, would have spent that money on something else to appease his own sinful desires. What St. John, the Apostle and Evangelist shows us is the

cause for Judas' willingness to betray the Lord + Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. First, he was greedy and a thief; he was willing to do anything for his true god, money. This shows us both his sin and unbelief, for he was a thief, and his god was mammon. Second, Judas betrays our Lord because he is publicly rebuked by Him. This is often the response that unbelievers show when confronted with the Law; when confronted with their own sin. Instead of repenting of the sin of which they are accused, they reject the admonition and continue on in their sin and unbelief.

Judas could not however betray the Lord + Jesus if it were not for the unbelief of the Pharisees. Their response to the raising of Lazarus is to complain that the whole world was going after the Lord + Jesus. All their efforts were accomplishing nothing. They would test and question the Lord + Jesus during this final week of His life, until He silences them all with His answers, so that they could not refute Him. Like Judas who was driven further away by the rebuke, the Pharisees also further plotted to put the Lord + Jesus to death, and put out the word that they were looking for someone to betray the Lord. Judas Iscariot began the willing partner for thirty pieces of silver.

Therefore, my dear friends, the stage for our journey with the Lord + Jesus to His cross is set for us. Those who would be influential in arranging for His trial, suffering and death, have revealed their unbelieving hearts. They would accomplish their goal and have our Lord crucified on the tree of the holy cross. He would suffer and die.

But His suffering and death would be for the atonement of the sins of the whole world, so that all those who believe on Him might not see or taste death. Like He raised Lazarus from the dead, and showed His power over death, He would rise again on the third day, and reveal to all those who cling to Him in faith, that He has power over their death, too. He will raise us all up on the Last Day. We will not die but live eternally in Heaven. This promise has been sent out into all the world after the Holy Ghost was gifted to the Church on Pentecost.

The Pharisees would prove to be correct; the whole world is going after Him. We see a glimpse of this at the end of the Gospel reading for today, for certain Greeks had approached the Apostle Philip to see the Lord + Jesus. This is a foreshadowing of the good things to come. The things which we now enjoy as we have also met our Lord in His Word and Sacraments, and He has given us faith in which to cling to Him by the working of the Holy Ghost. Like the Jews, and the Greeks, in today's Gospel reading we have also heard of our Lord's power over death, and have believed and rejoiced that He promises to do the same thing for us. Therefore, my dear friends, let us follow our Lord + Jesus this week to His cross and death, for by His Passion He wins for us all eternal life with Him in Heaven. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

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

Soli Deo Gloria!