

Be Hopeful (The King Has Come)

Mark 11:1-11

I read a story about a plainly dressed man who went into a church in the Netherlands one Sunday and took a seat near the pulpit. Soon, a woman came along and curtly told the man that he was seated in her seat. She then asked him to leave the seat. The man apologized and apparently moved away to a pew reserved for the poor, from where he took part in the service.

When the service ended, a friend of the woman came over and asked her if she knew whom she had ordered out of her seat. The woman replied casually that she didn't know who it was. To her great dismay, she was informed, "It was King Oscar of Sweden!"

Similarly, many people turn what could be a life-changing moment into a possible negative situation because of bad choices. How often do we hear statements such as, "You blew it," or, "How could you mess it up like that"? In Tagalog, we say, "Sayang!" In English, you can roughly translate it as "It's regrettable".

Truly, it's regrettable when you are not able to seize a great opportunity. It's regrettable when you miss the train, so to speak. It's regrettable when you could have improved your lot in life and instead just waste it away.

Many people living today are in such a situation. Many people have regrets. Some of us wish we could turn back the hands of time. Some people could not just get over a bad decision they end up taking their own lives.

That is fear of the past. There is also fear of the future. Billions of people are now living in that kind of fear. They're not sure of what the future holds for them.

Especially at present, we're living in uncertain times. There's not only the fear of the coronavirus, you know, "Am I safe? Will I get it? Should I even go out?" There's also fear of your livelihood. "Will I lose my job? Will I be able to pay my rent, my mortgage? Will there be enough food and water? Will I run out of toilet paper?"

It's hard to make wise choices, wise decisions when you're fearful. It can be paralyzing, right? You see, our fear of the past and fear of the future can affect our present. When we let our fears overtake us, they can make us unstable and we become helpless and hopeless. But we just have to put everything in the right perspective. Then and only then can we live in the present standing strong.

But how do you accomplish that? How can you stand firm when your personal world collapses around you?

That's the question I'd like to answer this afternoon. I believe the Bible has the answer to that question. That's why I have entitled this message, **"Be Hopeful (The King Has Come)"**. This is the third part of our message series, "Standing Strong". I intended this message to be an independent message which means we were going to take a break from our series. But as I worked on it last night, as I was going through my usual Saturday Night Fever routine, I realized it can become a part of this series. First, was "Be Still", second was "Be Not Afraid. Be Not Very Afraid." And today, the third one is "Be Hopeful". And next week, being Easter Sunday, can you guess? The first one to type the correct answer on the chat room, gets a special gift. So, let me look at the first correct answer.

"Be Alive!" Great! You get the gift of eternal life. Although I hope you already have it. If not, in the end of this message I'll tell you how to receive the

gift of eternal life. Seriously, I'll mail you the gift once I'm able to get out of the house.

So, this afternoon, I'd like to tell you there is hope. And that hope came when Jesus Christ came as King. Of course, we know that we can go back as far as Genesis 3:15 when God uttered a prophecy concerning the coming of the Messiah, the seed or offspring of the woman who will crush Satan's head. But I'd like to put this message of hope in the context of the triumphal entry of Jesus to Jerusalem, an event which we now call Palm Sunday. And that is today.

Please get your Bibles and turn with me to Mark 11. Please follow along as I read from verses 1 through 11. We find this event, the coming of Jesus to Jerusalem, also in Luke 19 and Matthew 21.

Folks, I want to greet you "Happy Palm Sunday" but I don't think anybody does that. They say just save the "happy" for next week. So, instead let me greet you, "Hosanna".

What does "Hosannah" mean, btw? The meaning is in the song we sang earlier. "The God who saves us." Actually, that's not the exact meaning although it connotes the meaning of salvation. Hosannah is a Hebrew phrase that literally means, "Save, please". In the Old Testament, this was the constant cry of the Israelites, like in Psalm 118:25 where it says, "Lord, save us!" As you know, they have been conquered by various enemies. So, "Hosanna" was an appeal for deliverance. Then, in the New Testament, the meaning shifted. It became a shout of praise, an expression of joy for deliverance granted or anticipated. And so, when Jesus came to Jerusalem, the crowd shouted "Hosanna", expecting Jesus to deliver them from Roman oppression. In short, they put their hope in Jesus to save them. They recognized Jesus as the coming Messiah.

We know, however, that many of them were disappointed and turned their backs against him because after a week's time, their expected Messiah did not do for them what they thought he would do for them. Instead, Jesus did something much more than they expected. But they missed it! They blew it! A life-changing event happened before their very eyes but they were blinded by their own wrong attitudes and beliefs. And I'm sure they would be regretting the wrong decision they made for all eternity.

This afternoon, I don't want you to miss a great opportunity that Jesus Christ presents to you. He has come but how will you welcome him? He is giving you hope. He wants to free you from your fear of the past and the future. But how should you welcome him so that this hope will become real in your lives at present?

Let me share with you then how you should welcome Jesus, the King of Hope and Glory, so that you can have hope in this life. (How to Have Hope in this Life)

1. Welcome him by giving your best.

This sounds obvious, but we often miss it. In America, we tend to say to God, "Hey God, here is my calendar, here is my agenda... Now I can squeeze you in here or here." We kind of put him inside a box and then pull him out or turn to him only when it is convenient or useful.

In our passage, the people praised Jesus as He passed by, even giving him their best, it seems. They gave him the colt, they cut leafy branches to wave at him, they laid out their garments knowing that it would be walked on and trampled upon by the colt and the crowd as they followed Jesus. Seems like they were committing their all to Jesus. But many of them praised him for two reasons. First, because of his miracles. He had healed the sick, raised the dead... They praised Him because

he was serving them and Second, because they saw in Jesus a way to be politically delivered from the Romans. To be set free from Rome as Israel was set free from Egypt. Their praise was tempered with the attitude of “Jesus, what can you do for me?”

A few days later at the trial of Jesus after he was arrested, they saw a beaten and disfigured Jesus. A man who no longer looked like a deliverer or a conqueror. And as words were said about him, they bought into all the lies and quickly changed their position. For them it was all about Me, Me, Me.

There is a legend about an ancient village in Spain. The villagers learned that the king would pay a visit. In a thousand years, a king had never come to that village. Excitement grew! "We must throw a big celebration," The villagers all agreed. But, it was a poor village, and there weren't many resources. Someone came up with a classic idea. Since many of the villagers made their own wines, the idea was for everyone in the village bring a large cup of their choice wine to the town square, “We'll pour it into a large vat and offer it to the king for his pleasure! When the king draws wine to drink, it will be the very best he's ever tasted!”

The day before the king's arrival, hundreds of people lined up to make their offering to the honored guest. They climbed a small stairway, and poured their gift through a small opening at the top. Finally, the vat was full! The King arrived, was escorted to the square, given a silver cup and was told to draw some wine, which represented the best the villagers had.

He placed the cup under the spigot, turned the handle, and then drank the wine, but it was nothing more than water. You see every villager reasoned, "I'll withhold my best wine and substitute water, what with so many cups of wine in the vat, the king will never know the difference!" The problem was, everyone thought the same thing, and the king was greatly dishonored.

Are we giving our best to Jesus? Or are we withholding it because we think our good is acceptable to him?

There are two reasons why we don't give our best to Jesus. One reason is our

a. Fear of Failure.

We think we're not good enough. Meaning, we feel inadequate or we think we're not up for the task. Moses had a problem like that. God called him from the burning bush and gave him the task of speaking for him in front of Pharaoh. But Moses was so afraid. He gave a lot of excuses. "Lord, I can't speak. I'm not eloquent. I stutter." What did God tell him?

In Exodus 4:11, God said to Moses, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD?" God is saying, "Moses, you should not be afraid because I will be with you. I will give you the words to say." Well, even after that exchange, Moses cringed in fear and God, ever so faithful and patient, assigned the task then to his brother Aaron and Aaron became the spokesman of Moses before Pharaoh. And that's what I like about God. He is patient and kind toward us. He knows how we feel and, in fact, he can see our hearts. He knew that Moses truly wanted to serve him but he became a nervous guy after running away from Egypt and leaving in isolation in the desert for 40 years. In his fear, he practiced social distancing. But God said, "Moses, it's time for you to go. I'm releasing you." In time, God did release him because after several confrontations with Pharaoh, Moses regained his confidence and trust in God, and he became a courageous speaker and leader of the Israelites.

You know the old saying, “God is not looking for your ability. He is looking for your availability.” In other words, make yourself available to God, and he will enable you.

The other reason we don’t give our best to Jesus is our

b. Fear of Man.

When we have fear of man, then we don’t fear God. We would rather look good in the eyes of people than be pleasing to God. This was the kind of fear that King Saul had that cost him the kingship.

One time, God assigned King Saul the task of killing all Amalekites because of the horrible things these people did to the Israelites. Saul went with his army and attacked the Amalekites and conquered them. The problem is Saul spared the Amalekite king and the best of his livestock. Of course, God knew about this and he sent Samuel the Prophet to confront him. Saul at first made excuses like he really did obey God’s instructions and he wanted to sacrifice the animals he spared but in the end he said, “I was afraid of the men and so I gave in to them.” (1 Samuel 15:24)

Apparently, his soldiers convinced him to spare the King and the livestock. Maybe the soldiers wanted to gloat about their victory and wanted to keep the livestock for themselves. And they demanded Saul to give in to their request. So, Saul, perhaps, afraid that they would revolt against him, gave in to their wishes. Or he was afraid that he would lose their high esteem of him. He was afraid that he wouldn’t look like a real conqueror. Well, God wasn’t pleased with his disobedience so God took the kingship from him. If he obeyed, then for sure he wouldn’t have suffered that humiliation and he would have ruled for a long time.

That's what happens when we want to please people rather than God. When we're afraid, we tend to withhold our best from God.

Today, Palm Sunday 2020 choose to welcome our great King, Jesus Christ by giving him your very best. Withholding nothing... Giving him your all.

To realize hope in your life, the second thing you must do is

2. Welcome him despite your fears, doubts, and trials.

At the parade it was trendy to offer praise. Everyone was doing it. But at the trial of Jesus, to speak out for him was risky. Possibly even life threatening.

Many of us come to Jesus expecting everything to go good. Maybe some slight bad but not too much of it. So when the bottom drops out for us. We often ask God "Why?" Thinking it is not supposed to happen this way.

If our faith is based on our situations or circumstances it will never be committed. It will always be casual. In my life I have gone to many big Christian events. Many packed large stadiums. Where the praises for God rock the entire arena. Where everyone is praising.

When returning home, it's a different story. We're back to reality, so to speak. We're faced with the same old problems. Maybe there's sickness. Maybe there's a marriage problem. Maybe there's bills to pay. And praises are now hard to come by. Instead, fear and doubts unsettle us.

Welcoming Jesus means taking the good with the bad. Knowing that all we are ever promised by Jesus is that in the midst of both our good and bad, he will never leave us nor forsake us. He will stand with us.

There's the story of a little girl who while walking in a garden noticed a particularly beautiful flower. She admired its beauty and enjoyed its fragrance. "It's so pretty!" she exclaimed. As she gazed on it, her eyes followed the stem down to the soil in which it grew. "This flower is too pretty to be planted in such

dirt!” she cried. So she pulled it up by its roots and ran to the water faucet to wash away the soil. It wasn’t long until the flower wilted and died. When the gardener saw what the little girl had done, he exclaimed, “You have destroyed my finest plant!”

“I’m sorry, but I didn’t like it in that dirt,” she said. The gardener replied, “I chose that spot and mixed the soil because I knew that only there could it grow to be a beautiful flower.”

God has placed us exactly where we are. We must trust him. In the trusting We eventually see that He is using our pressures, trials, and difficulties to bring us to a new degree of spiritual beauty. True contentment comes when we accept what God is doing and thank Him for it.

We must learn to welcome Jesus in our lives despite our fears, doubts, and trials. That means trusting him in the midst of all the chaos around us and believing him when he said, “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20)

Finally, to realize hope in your life today,

3. Welcome Jesus because he died for you.

This is where the rubber meets the road. This is what will determine whether you want real hope or not.

The crowd kept praising Jesus because they expected him to become like their old heroes of the past, like David and Samson and Gideon who were valiant warriors and military leaders. Who bravely fought their enemies and won great battles. Now, that they were under the brutal Roman oppressors, their hopes were set high, excited about the prospect of overthrowing the mighty Roman empire. But such was not the case. Because to their great dismay, Jesus talked about love for the enemy and doing good to others. Greatly disappointed, they turned away

from him. And when the religious leaders brought Jesus to trial, they shouted “Crucify him!”

What they didn’t realize was that the death of Jesus was that which gave them freedom. They were so inward focused that they couldn’t see that Jesus came to set them free from the oppression of the real enemy, Satan. What they didn’t see is what many people in the world today don’t see either. People today are as inward-focused as people in the past. People are still people. They haven’t changed since the beginning of time. They still want to do their own agenda. They don’t want to take orders. In fact, we see that in display today in the midst of this health crisis. If you’re watching the daily briefings of the Coronavirus Task Force at the White House, you could see how Dr. Fauci and Dr. Birx are so frustrated already by the fact that many people don’t heed the directives of social distancing or staying at home. This causes trouble. This causes the increasing cases we see today.

People since the beginning of time have been ignoring the directives of God. God has given us his Word, the Bible, so that we may have guidance and direction. It is the manual of life. You see, every appliance, every car, everything you try to assemble comes with instructions. Not following instructions causes trouble.

In the same way, the reason we’re seeing a lot of sicknesses, relationship problems, economic chaos, terrorism, wars, and what-have-you, is because man has not been following God’s instructions in the Bible. Not following his instructions is called “sin”. Since the time of Adam and Eve, man has sinned. This sin is passed on to every human being. That’s why this world is imperfect. That’s why this world is in a mess.

People are looking for the vaccine to defeat Covid-19. It’s taking a long time but scientists assure us it will come. But there is a disease that plagues the whole of mankind. This disease is sin. All people are infected. No one is immune to this

disease. There are about 8 billion cases today. The Bible says, “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God.” (Romans 3:10b-11)

The symptoms of this disease are quite apparent. Lying, stealing, adultery, gambling, indulging in alcohol, disrespect to parents, unforgiving spirit, gossiping, and so on and so forth. Some people think they are asymptomatic. “I’m a good person. I never done anything wrong to someone.” What about your thought life? Jesus said, “I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matthew 5:28)

This disease is so serious, so horrible, so devastating, it leads to death, always, there’s no one who can escape. The Bible says, “For the wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23) The mortality rate of mankind is still 100%. That’s the bad news.

Now, let me tell you the good news. The good news is that there is a vaccine already for the disease of sin. The vaccine was created when one man willingly infected himself with the disease of sin so that he could save us. He was sinless but he became sin for us as the Bible says. He carried the sins of the world on his body to give us life. This man is Jesus who shed his blood on the cross for you and me. The Bible says he died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24)

See that? He died so that we may live. So that we may be healed.

Are you looking for healing in your life today? Do you feel that you have committed a grave sin? Are you afraid of death? Do you feel anxious and afraid of your past or your future? Do you want peace and security? Are you longing for joy and comfort?

Friend, Jesus is your healer. He is your hope-giver. He can make you whole. He can give you eternal life. The Bible says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

Today is the day of salvation, the Bible says. Don't waste this opportunity. This is a life-changing moment that Jesus is presenting to you. He wants you to welcome him. So, why don't you welcome him into your heart by giving him your all, despite your fears, doubts, and trials, because he died for you?

I hope you'll do that today, my friend. I want to see you in heaven someday. I don't want you to say “Sayang”, “It's regrettable”, when you find yourself somewhere else instead.