

HOW WILL YOU WELCOME JESUS?

Good morning! Today is Palm Sunday. And today of course is the day we celebrate what we traditionally call the Triumphant Entry of Jesus. So we're taking a break from our series "The Seven Greatest Words of Love". We will resume our series on Good Friday, this coming Friday, which is also the last part of series. It's entitled, "The Word of Trust". And I trust that you'll come on Friday, 7:30 PM at the library, Amen? You give me your word? Is that a word I can trust? So, today's message is entitled, "How Will You Welcome Jesus?"

Today we're going to examine the entrance of Jesus in Jerusalem that we'll never forget but not what anyone expected. And we're going to take a look at three major players in this story and then three lessons we can take from this when Jesus makes an entrance into our own lives.

Question: Have you ever planned on doing something expecting a certain result but after you did it the outcome was not the one you expected?

You see, sometimes things happen in life and we just don't expect it. Things sometimes just don't go the way we expect them to.

I remember years and years and years ago, I was in Grade 5. You know how some memories still stick with you even after all these years? It's because they're either embarrassing or traumatic. In this case, it's both. So, I was in Grade 6 and I have a subject called Gardening. In that subject, our teacher taught us how to plant and grow various kinds of vegetables like tomatoes, pechay (bok choy), mustasa (mustard greens), ampalaya (bitter melon), etc. We did this in the back of the school where there was a large uncultivated land and we cultivated it and each student created his own garden plot.

Now, it so happened that there were a lot of students and only a few implements or tools.

We didn't have enough shovels, hoes, pick axes, or steel rakes. So, our teacher gave us an assignment. He divided our class into groups and instructed each group to produce a particular tool. To our group, I don't remember how many we were, but I'm sure less than 10, was assigned to produce a hoe. You know what a hoe is, right? It looks like **this**.

I think our teacher expected us to ask our parents to buy a hoe and donate it to the school. But we were all from poor families and we didn't tell our parents. We brainstormed and I came up with a brilliant idea. Why not cut a piece of iron and a long steel tube, weld them together, and voila, you got a hoe. My classmates liked the idea. And right there I was voted the class president. Just kidding 😊

Anyway, we all walked to a nearby shop where they did all these kinds of metal work and we asked a guy who gladly helped us. Now I don't remember whether we paid him or he did it for us for free seeing that we were just a bunch of kids. But I remember he was very helpful. So, I asked him to cut us several pieces of square-shaped iron sheet. He didn't ask what it was for. Now, the problem is, he ran out of iron. So, I said why not use a G.I. sheet? And you know what a G.I. sheet is, right? Galvanized Iron or Yero in Tagalog! I think you know now how my story ends, right? But you know, I was 11. I had no idea really how weak or strong yero was. All I know is that it was iron. So the guy cut for each one of us a square-shaped G.I. sheet then welded each one to a medium-length steel pipe. And we all went home happy and I went home proud of myself.

The next day, we showed it to our teacher who had poor eyesight and gave each of us a grade of O for Outstanding. Then he told us to put our tools inside the garden shed.

And the next day again, when we attended the class, everyone was looking at me. And then they also looked at the hoes we donated. They were all bent and crumpled.

Apparently, the class ahead of us used the hoes and found out they were fake hoes. As soon as they hit the soil, the G.I. sheet bent. I was really so embarrassed. Well, all of us in our group were.

Sometimes that's what happens in life. Sometimes we have the grandest plan and we think this is what's going to happen. I have it all worked out. Then it doesn't turn out the way we think.

Now, with this triumphant entry of Jesus, when he came into Jerusalem with all the crowds and people waving the palm branches and shouting hosanna, three groups in this story – the crowd, the Pharisees, and the disciples – they were all a part of this event. But this grand entrance didn't turn out quite the way they expected. They missed the significance of it.

Let me ask Ally to read from John 12.

So this is the big day. Jesus is making his grand entrance into the city. Just a little background. As the people would wave their palm branches and they would shout Hosanna, you need to understand that's not the first time this had happened. In fact that was a traditional greeting. The people were very accustomed to getting a national hero or a conquering king that would come into the city. When they knew that person was coming they would often gather at the entrance and wave palm branches. The palm branch was a national symbol of victory. They would shout, "Hosanna" which means "Save us." The crowd was shouting and chanting, "Save us! Save us!"

Now, let's look at **how different groups of people reacted at the coming of Jesus**. First,

1. THE CROWD

Interestingly, the thing about this crowd is they had a perspective of **"What's in it for me?"**. "How do I benefit from this?"

Folks, they weren't looking for a Savior from their sins. They were simply looking for someone who could get the Romans off their back because they were under Roman rule and they didn't like that. They heard about this guy Jesus who raised Lazarus from the dead. So a lot of them heard the news: Jesus is coming into the city with an entourage that had already gathered outside the city. People see him coming, they get excited – This is the guy that raises people from the dead! And if he can do that surely he can handle the Romans.

So they grab palm branches and they start waving. “Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” And some, the Scripture says in John were asking the question, “Who is this guy? I don't know! But he's our meal ticket! He can handle the Romans. He raises people from the dead.”

A lot of them didn't really know who he was. One thing was for sure – they were just looking for what they wanted. In fact, when they thought Jesus was there to fulfill their wishes John 12:13 says, *“They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, ‘Hosanna!’*

‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ‘Blessed is the king of Israel!’”.

Here's the sad thing. When they realized a week later that Jesus was not going to do what they expected, the same group of people shouted in John 19:15, *“Take him away. Take him away! Crucify him!”*

Folks, my tendency to be self-centered leads to self-deception. We all have a tendency, a propensity, to be self-centered. It's called human nature. But we have to fight against it. The Apostle Paul said that our flesh and spirit are in constant odds. They both live in us and they war against each other.

So we see the reaction of the crowd. Second, let's look at the reaction of the **2. The Religious Leaders**

Look at the religious leaders. These guys, the Pharisees, they knew this prophecy.

The Old Testament tells us that it was prophesied by Zechariah that Jesus would come, the Messiah would come into Jerusalem riding on the colt of a donkey. How did they miss this?

Their perspective was simply this. **"I'm in control here.** Not you, Jesus. I am."

The religious leaders didn't want Jesus to mess it up. They were living in their comfort zone. The Romans pretty much let them do what they wanted. They had some control over the Jews and the Romans kind of left them alone to govern things. But the religious leaders were scared of Jesus. They were intimidated by him because they thought he was going to attempt a political coup.

So they thought, "He's going to mess up our good thing. And we're in control here. And we're not about to let that go." The Pharisees say in John 12:19, **"So the Pharisees said to one another, 'See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!'"** They felt defeated. They felt they were losing ground. So, soon after, they found ways to make the crowd go against Jesus.

Folks, my desire for control creates an unteachable heart. Even though they knew the law, even though they knew the Scripture, the Pharisees missed it. Because they wanted to be in control, it produced an unteachable heart in them.

Finally, we look at the reaction of

3. The Disciples

Now, let's look at the disciples. These guys, they had walked with Jesus, they had been with Jesus, they made a commitment to follow him and his teachings and his work. But all through their experience with Jesus, Jesus has been holding them back.

Let me tell you what I mean. When Jesus healed the 10 lepers as the New Testament story goes, he told them, *"Go tell the priests but then say nothing to*

anyone else.” When Jesus healed Jairus’ daughter earlier in the New Testament he told everyone who was there, *“Shhh. There’s no reason to talk about this. Be quiet.”* When Jesus came down from the mount of transfiguration, he told the disciples that were with him, *“Say nothing to no one. Do not talk about what you’ve seen this day.”* He held them back. Because in John 8:20 he says, *“My time has not yet come.”* Jesus was telling them, “It’s not time yet. My time has not yet come.”

But they come walking into Jerusalem, with people waving the palm branches and shouting Hosanna, the disciples looked around saying, “What’s going on?” In v. 16, it says, *“At first his disciples did not understand all this.”* They thought Jesus wanted to have a low-key approach to things. But now, Jesus was didn’t want to stop people from praising his name, from proclaiming him as their Savior from Roman rule. Jesus was putting him and them in a dangerous situation because for sure the Romans would know about this and they all could get arrested. They didn’t want their master to die. So, they were kind of confused. Because they didn’t understand. They, too, missed it.

Jesus was making a grand entrance but it wasn’t quite what they expected. Because the crown that Jesus was going to wear had no jewels on it. The throne that he was going to take was not on this earth. The disciples’ perspective was *“Not like this. Not like this!”*

Like in Matthew 16:21-22, where Peter couldn’t accept what was prophesied already. *“From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ‘Never, Lord!’ he said. ‘This shall never happen to you!’”*.

So now, when I look at these three situations, these three groups. I can see myself in each of them.

You see, the result of a lack of trust in God's plan leads to blindness. A lack of trust in God's plan produces blindness. Blindness to what really matters, blindness to God's big picture. And the disciples were right. Jesus was the King of kings. But not the way they expected. Because much like the crowd they thought Jesus was there to take up an earthly throne. That wasn't the point. They were thinking, "Not like this!"

I know that our difficulties in life, our obstacles, our trials, they produce the character traits that are necessary for us to live a fruitful productive Christian life. But a lot of times I don't want to have to go through what's necessary to gain those character traits. I'd rather God just insert them in me.

It's like going through a spiritual drive through. Wouldn't that be cool? If you could drive through a drive through and they'd say, "Welcome to Spiritual Growth. How can I help you please." "I would like patience and grace but please put in only 25% of problems and difficulties. No, no, make that zero per cent. Thank you."

No! It doesn't work that way. But a lot of times in my own life I'm like, "Okay, God, I want to grow. I want to be close to you. I want these things to happen. I want the full life that you promised. But not like this. Not like this."

All three of those groups – the crowd, the Pharisees, the disciples – they all experienced that entrance. They were there when Jesus came in. But they didn't quite understand what it was. It wasn't quite what they expected.

Do you see yourself in any of these three groups? I do. I can see myself in all three of them on any given week. But there's something special that happens when Jesus makes an entrance into your situation.

What happens when Jesus enters your life or situation:

1. He creates a beautiful disruption.

When Jesus enters your situation, he creates a beautiful disruption.

One time, Jesus had a conversation with Peter and Andrew when they were fishing on the Sea of Galilee before they had joined Jesus. Jesus is walking along the Sea of Galilee. These guys had a great business. They were doing fine. But Jesus knew that they wanted more out of life. They wanted to do something significant. And Jesus created disruption.

Here's what he says in Matthew 4:19. *"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." At once they left their nets and followed him.*"

They left their nets at once and followed him. They were willing to put it all down and go because they knew there had to be more to life than what they were doing. The same old routine, over and over, the same old pattern. Jesus comes into their life and says I will offer you an opportunity to do something significant.

Would you like that? They wanted it so badly they left everything at once and followed Jesus.

Maybe some of you are stuck in a rut. When Jesus makes an entrance into your situation, you basically invite Jesus to be a part of the obstacles, you invite Jesus to be a part of your problem, a part of your life. He comes in and he disrupts things. He shakes it up. There have been many, many times in my life I needed God to shake things up to break me out of the rut I was in.

When Jesus enters your situation, when Jesus makes an entrance into your life, he creates a beautiful disruption that leads to a new perspective.

2. He brings a new perspective.

Your perspective is your reality. Your perspective is the framework through which you view the world and you interpret everything that happens.

Lots of things go into the creation of this perspective – your background, your childhood, your education, travels.

All of these things and lots more they contribute to the construction of this perspective, the framework through which you see the world. It's amazing how that framework has such a massive impact in our thinking.

Let me give you an example. The **Durian fruit**. When you look at it and smell it, would you like to taste it? Its smell has been described as pungent and overly musty resembling dirty gym socks, rotten egg, cut onions, manure, and road kill. If it's your first time to see and smell it, you'd never want to taste it. But lo and behold, it's got a taste that is described as sweet and custardy with the taste of creamy cheesecake. So, your perspective about the Durian fruit changes once you taste it.

Listen, our perspectives should develop as our relationship with Jesus deepens. In John 12:16 it says, *"At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him."*

So, now, they get it! After Jesus had completed his mission then their perspectives changed. Their perspectives developed as it deepens. Now they get it. Now they understand what was going on. Now they understand what Jesus was really there to do.

Sometimes my perspective is somewhat like the crowd or the Pharisees or the disciples. Sometimes my perspective is, Jesus what am I going to get out of this? What's in it for me? Sometimes my perspective is, I'm in control here Lord. I've got pretty good plans. If you could just bless it, if you could just make it happen, that would be great. And sometimes my perspective is, Come on, Lord, really? Not, like this. Not like this.

When my relationship deepens, when my relationship deepens with Jesus my perspective is developed. It grows. It evolves.

Here's something I understand about perspectives. They must be framed with faith not with feeling. Our perspectives must be framed with faith not with feeling because feelings will let us down. Feelings will disappoint us, they will disillusion us. It must be framed with faith.

When Jesus enters your life, he creates a beautiful disruption that leads to a new perspective. Thirdly, when he enters your life

3. He offers you a hosanna moment.

Jesus, when he makes an entrance, when I allow him to make an entrance into my life and situation, he brings a beautiful disruption which creates a new perspective and then Jesus offers me a hosanna moment. Jesus offers me a hosanna moment.

Now, Hosanna is an expression that has somewhat evolved over the years. When the people in Jerusalem were shouting that to Jesus it was just a greeting. It didn't mean much more than "God, save the queen" or "Mabuhay" something like that. It was just a greeting. But when you look at that word in the Aramaic language and when you look at what hosanna really means, it really means "relief from the crushing weight." The word "hosanna" means "relief from the crushing weight." It's a combination of two words that speak to an expansion or giving room or giving space. They said, Hosanna! God save us. But that word means relief from the crushing weight.

In Matthew 26:38, Jesus had gone into the garden and he was praying. This is one of the most powerful verses in all of Scripture. Jesus was praying and he in that moment realized what was about to happen. He, in that moment, realized that the sins of the world were about to be placed upon his shoulders. In that moment he said this. He told them, "*My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.*" (Matthew 26:38)

He knew what he was about to take on. It wasn't the physical torture that had vexed Jesus' spirit. That was not what he was at this moment afraid of. But make no mistake. He was afraid. He knew that when all the sins of the world – my sins, your sins, other people's sins - he knew when he took all of this on himself they would create separation between him and the Father momentarily.

That was new territory for him. And it scared him to death. But he took that weight to create a hosanna moment for you and me. He knew that we couldn't carry it.

The second thing that hosanna moment would do is it gives us room to breathe. It gives us room to breathe. In Mathew 11:28-30, Jesus says, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* He give is us room to breathe.

Sometimes life has the tendency to just gradually start to fall on us. We feel that crushing weight. And we need a hosanna moment. When Jesus makes an entrance into your life and your situation he brings a hosanna moment. He brings relief to all that pressure. He gives you room to breathe.

But here's the key to the whole thing. The key to the whole thing is what you choose to give to Jesus. Jesus doesn't make forced entries.

When Jesus made his entrance into Jerusalem he did so as an act of surrender. We see that in Matthew 26:39 when Jesus was praying in the garden. He said these words: *"Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.'"*

Jesus was willing to surrender himself to the Father because he knew that the Father knew best. Sometimes though what I have the tendency to do is say, "Jesus, I'll give you *this* much. I'll handle *this* if you can help me with *this*."

That's not the way to go. Because now Jesus has *this* to work with. It's not a lot. But Jesus will work with what I give him. He'll work with what you give him. But if I give him *all* of me, if you give him *all* of you, if you surrender all of yourself to him and you invite him to make an entrance into your life, an unforgettable entrance, he'll bring that relief. He'll give you room to breathe. And he'll create something beautiful.

Jesus comes and makes an entrance into your situation. When he does it may not be what you expect but, guys, it's everything you need. When Jesus makes an entrance into my situation, I invite him into those problems, those obstacles, it might not be what I expect but it's everything that I need.

You can invite him in. You can say Jesus I believe you are who you say you are. Forgive me for my sins. I want to be on your team. I want to be a part of you. I commit my life to you. If you pray that prayer and you mean it, Jesus will make an entrance into your life and he will change you forever.

Brothers and sisters who are here who are following Christ, maybe you're facing a trial or difficulty today and you feel that weight and it hurts. It's heavy and you need a hosanna moment. Jesus will bring you relief. He'll give you room to breathe. But you've got to surrender all of yourself to him. Not part of it. He'll make an entrance into your life, one that you'll never forget. It might not be what you expect but it's everything that you need.