

Palm Sunday 2025
A Sermon by Chris Hensley
Based on Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 & Luke 19:28-40
Presented to Sardis Baptist Church
April 13, 2025

There is much going on in our passages for this morning. Primarily it is worship of God in both the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Testament. The Psalm is actually a royal song of thanksgiving and one of the most frequently quoted psalms within the Christian Testament. The 118th Psalm follows the anointed one of God as they process into the Temple and testifies upon arrival in the Temple, joined by the worshipping community at large. The testimony is to the salvific work and power of God. This is clearly a passage from the Hebrew Bible which Jesus and the Gospel authors were familiar with through the recreation of the event with Jesus' arrival into Jerusalem in preparation for the coming Passover Feast celebrations.

Moving ahead to our Christian Testament reading, we have the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. This is one of those scenes or instances which is found in all four of the Gospel accounts, however, they all slightly differ in some of the finer details of the passage. A careful reading of Luke's account will find a smaller crowd of people surrounding Jesus and the

mention of palm branches to be wanting. There is significance here in the size of the crowd. It would appear that the author of Luke's account is reserving this episode of Jesus' life and ministry for those closest to him, those already in and among the number of his disciples. As we look into this we must pause and more clearly define what it means to be a disciple of Jesus for Luke's author. These are the people who have both been named specifically as among the twelve disciples or apostles. Also mentioned by name is a closely knit group of women who funded much of Jesus' ministry in Luke – Mary Magdalene who is not a prostitute according to the scriptural accounts, Joanna, and Susanna. Luke also mentions that there are enough disciples to send 72 of them out in pairs and we see still others named or mentioned in Luke's account include Joseph of Arimathea and the disciples on the road to Emmaus. All of this to say that there are more than the twelve at this stage of Jesus' life and ministry.

For Luke, this group of followers appears to be the only ones who are paying any mind to Jesus' entry into Jerusalem through their worship, singing, and recognition of the scriptural connections of Jesus' riding on a donkey into the City of David. There is also something of note in the language which they use in their praises and excitement. They announce that Jesus is a King of

Peace. The historical Jesus and the events which are recorded within the Christian Testament took place during a nearly two century period within the Roman Empire known as Pax Romana, or Roman Peace. This peace provided stability, safer travel, and surer communications. All of this allowed the Gospel of Christianity to spread more easily and eventually get into bed with the Empire itself – another topic for another day. However, this Roman Peace was a peace which was secured at the point of a sword and was maintained by militaristic control of government. Essentially, this peace came about and was enforced by anything but peaceful means. Jesus' given title in the entry is that of the King of Peace, a stark contrast to the political leaders of his day, and throughout human history collectively.

So, practically speaking, what does any of this have to do with us? We are a community of faith or spiritual expression which exists within the larger Christian tradition which means that we find something significant and worth following when it comes to the person and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Within both of our readings for today there is praise and worship offered to God and a hope found in the Messiah or the Anointed One of God. That said, we are coming to the conclusion of the season of Lent, a time of reflection contemplation, and a lack of overt praise within many Christian

denominations and traditions. We have also been reconsidering what salvation means in relation to the Kin-dom of God in the here and now here at Sardis Baptist Church. My invitation to you this morning is that you continue to reflect this week on the significance of the person of Jesus of Nazareth in light of this coming week traditionally known as Holy Week or Passion Week. It all centers on the final days of Jesus before his betrayal and crucifixion. What does it mean to receive salvation in the name of this Jesus? What does it mean to offer salvation to others in the name of this Jesus? What about this Jesus stirs you to worship, to reflect, to work for salvation in the here and now even still on this day and in light of all that goes on in the world around us?

Bibliography

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“Pax Romana”

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