

Weeping & Singing

Psalm 126 & Matthew 21:1-11

“He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.” Psalm 126:6

The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

Matthew 21:9

During this 2020 season of Lent, we have been climbing up the mountain to Jerusalem for the Jewish festival of Passover and for all of the events that will lead us through Holy Week to Easter and the empty tomb!

Today is Palm Sunday! Jesus is now concluding His three years of ministry by riding into town on a donkey among shouts and cries of “Hosanna!”

One Palm Sunday a 5-year-old sat on her mother’s lap as everyone was intently listening to the pastor’s sermon. Pastor described Jesus’ approach to Jerusalem and how the crowds cried, “Hosanna, Hosanna!” At the sound of those words the little 5-year-old perked up and began to sing, “Oh, Hosanna, now don’t you cry for me!”ⁱ

Today we begin HOLY WEEK—today we begin to celebrate the final week of Jesus’ life and ministry. This is one of the most important weeks in our Christian year. Jesus lived thirty-three years, His ministry lasted three years. Here’s a great question: Why do the Gospel writers write extensively about the last week of Jesus’ life? Matthew devotes one-fourth of his 28-chapters to Jesus’ last week (8 chapters, 21-28). Mark devotes one-third of his Gospel to the last week of Jesus’ life (6 chapters, 11-16). Luke devotes one fifth of his writings to the last week of Christ’s life (5/24 chapters, 19:28-24). What I find most remarkable is that John devotes half of His Gospel to recount the story of Jesus’ last week of His life (10 of 21). Let’s think about this for a moment. There are 89 chapters in the four Gospels. Over a third of them (29), are given to tell the story of Jesus’ last week of His life! A third of the Gospels are dedicated to telling the story of Jesus’ last week on planet Earth—His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, washing the apostles’ feet, His high priestly prayer, His promise of the Holy Spirit, His arrest, persecution, crucifixion, death and resurrection! Put it in terms of your

own life: 1/3 of your story boils down to the last week of your life. WOW! Lord, give us YOUR 2020 vision as we gather together today.

It was Palm Sunday and because of strep throat, Tommy, a three-year-old, had to stay home with a babysitter. When the family arrived home carrying palm branches, Tommy asked what they were for. Tommy's mother tried to explain to him, she said, "The people in church held up the palm branches and waved them over Jesus' head as he walked by." Little Tommy, excited and a little mad jumped up from the couch and shouted, "Wouldn't you know it --- the one day I don't come to church and Jesus shows up."

This Palm Sunday morning, we may not be gathered together in our church buildings, but we are still having church because the Bible teaches that wherever two or three are gathered in Jesus' name, He promises to be with us. As we are gathered, we are the church. We are the body of Christ. It is my prayer that we will experience the PEACE of God during this time of uncertainty, confusion, crisis, shutdowns, slowdowns, fear, doubt, anxiety and panic. Before Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane where He would be betrayed, He said, ***"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*** John 16:33

REPEAT: Did you hear that? ***"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*** John 16:33

We have trouble in our world today. What are we to do? We are to take heart! Why? Because Jesus has overcome the world. With all the worlds' wars, famines, earthquakes, fires, hurricanes and pandemics, Jesus has overcome the world. In the midst of this pandemic, Jesus is our hope and anchor. Listen to John in chapter 16:33, ***"Jesus has told you these things, so that in Jesus you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! Jesus have overcome the world."*** (Pastor Dave's paraphrase.)

Today we turn to the Gospel of Matthew. Listen to Matthew's account of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. As I read, close your eyes, try to hear the story for the first time and enter in. Are you one of the disciples walking beside the Messiah, or maybe you are the owner of the donkey and colt. Pretend you are a member of the crowd. Maybe you are one of the religious leaders.

Weeping and Singing --- Songs of Ascent

Before we listen to God's word, let us pray. "Messiah. King. Prince of Peace. Lord. Savior. Jesus, blessed are you! We come to hear your Word. May it be alive and redemptive to us today. Hosanna in the Highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Amen"

Matthew 21:1-11

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." ⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: ⁵ "Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.' " ⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. ⁸ A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest!" ¹⁰ When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" ¹¹ The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee." ⁱⁱⁱ

As I read, studied, and prayed for this message, I found it difficult to narrow this message down. What a wealth of information to apply to our lives today!

HOPE IN THE MIDST OF DOUBT

We could talk about how Jesus knows the future, not only His future, but ours. He told His disciples to go to a certain place in a certain city at a certain time and they would "*find a donkey tied there with her colt.*" And...they went and they found exactly that. Having a Savior who knows the future --- His and ours -- is a real comfort to me. Jesus knows that we are locked down, shutdown, and hunkered down. Some of us are locked up in our fear, pain, frustration, doubt and anxiety. Do you feel as if God has forgotten you? Do you feel that where you are is a huge mistake? A promise we find here is that Jesus knows the future. We can have hope amid our circumstances because Jesus knows the past, the present and the future. What if you have entered the story as the owner of the donkey and the colt? Will you gladly loan Jesus what you have?

PROMISES FULFILLED

Weeping and Singing --- Songs of Ascent

We could talk about the significance of fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah. Our king comes to us gentle and riding a donkey. What kind of king comes riding a donkey? Is that the kind of king you are looking for? There's a prophecy in the Book of Daniel: the coming of the Anointed One would come in seventy sevens or 490 years? In the book of Daniel, it is predicted that in 490 years the Anointed one, the Messiah, would come into the city of Jerusalem. Several scholars, historians and mathematicians have worked on the formula given in Daniel and they have come up with this date being between the springs of 30-33 A.D.! Jesus knowing the future and fulfilling the future are amazing thoughts for us to ponder as we prepare our hearts for HOLY WEEK—Palm Sunday, the Last Supper, the arrest, the trial, the Crucifixion and the empty tomb.

Do you believe that God knows your future and will fulfill all of the plans He has for you? Jeremiah 29:11, ***“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*** The people were taken captive from Jerusalem and held in Babylon for 70 years. I love Jeremiah 29:11, but look at verses 12-14 ... ***“Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.” Jeremiah 29:12-14***

Six months ago, the Lord put it on my heart to do a Lenten series based on the Psalms of Ascent, 120-134. These are the Psalms the Israelites sang as they journeyed to Jerusalem for their three holiday feasts: Passover, Pentecost, and the Day of Atonement --- Yum Kippor.

So far we've looked at Psalm 120, 121 and 125. In Psalm 120 we learned to call out to God in our distress. We also learned that we are pilgrims on a journey; this home is not our eternal home. In Psalm 121 we learned to sing, ***“I lift up my eyes to the hills— where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”*** We are reminded that our help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. God watches over us and will not let our foot slip. God daily watches our going out and our coming in.

We've looked at Psalm 125. The Psalmist sings, ***“Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people both now and***

Weeping and Singing --- Songs of Ascent

forevermore.” We may be surrounded by this outbreak of a pandemic. Psalm 125 is telling us to trust in the Lord because we will not be shaken.

This morning’s Psalm of Ascent was written after the Israelites returned from their captivity in Babylon. This Psalm is the fulfillment of the promise of Jeremiah 29. Listen to their Psalm of joy:

Psalm 126

When the Lord brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed. ²Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, “The Lord has done great things for them.” ³The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. ⁴Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the Negev. ⁵Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. ⁶He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.ⁱⁱⁱ

We are going to find ourselves in this Psalm as we study today. The world has been taken captive by a pandemic. The Israelites had been in captivity for seventy years; they longed to be home. (We can identify with longing for the way things used to be.) They Israelites had heard over and over the prophecies and promises of Jeremiah. They believed God had plans for them. They knew being held captive was not the plan forever.

Psalm 126 is a song of joy and remembrance. The people sang this song and declared joy and laughter because God had brought them out of captivity. *“The Lord has done great things for them. The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.”*

They sang despite their circumstances: they were under the oppressive hand of the Romans. They cried and sang, they asked God to restore their fortunes. They felt like a dried-up wasteland or desert, yet in this Psalm they are begging God to bring streams of living water to restore their souls. *“We are like those who sow in tears but we wait upon the promises of God: we will reap with songs of joy.”* There is a great principle for us here: we may be in captivity; we may be weeping. We may be carrying seed to sow but one day...we will return with songs of joy. We must trust that the maker of heaven and earth will see us through to a better day...to the plans He has for us.

You may, or may not, know that each new year my wife and I pick a word of intention. We pray about it. We read scripture. We ask the Holy Spirit to impress

upon our hearts a word for us to carry with us throughout the year. My word was HEAR. Jac's word was WAIT. I'm listening. Jac is waiting. The Lord has done great things for us! We are filled with joy.

TURMOIL OR TRIUMPH

Did you hear about the report taken ten years after Jesus' death and resurrection? There were 260,000 lambs slain on Passover night. The law required one lamb for every ten individuals. This translate into over 2.6 million worshipers in Jerusalem that week. Ten years earlier (when Jesus was entering Jerusalem) there were over 2 million worshippers in Jerusalem. Can you imagine such a crowd? Now imagine Jesus riding into town on a donkey! The crowd starts shouting. The actual Greek word literally means that the crowd is screaming and crying out. It is also an imperfect active verb and that means that they crowd was screaming continually. Picture it: 2 million people are in your hometown. Let's just say 10% are lining the streets, 200,000 people are screaming, shouting, and crying out, ***"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"***

The Rose Bowl stadium holds 92,542 people. Double that! Folks, these people are not shouting for the Bruins of UCLA or the Trojans of USC, they are screaming at the top of their lungs and from the bottom of their toes, they are crying out, ***"Hosanna --- Hosanna --- Hosanna!"***

"Hosanna" is the Hebrew for ***"save us, we pray"***. It is a form of praise. I imagine the USA crowd at the Olympics, "USA! USA!" as they cheer on their favorite Olympians. ***"Save us, Jesus! SAVE US! WE PRAY! SAVE US!"*** They tore off the palms from the trees and they waved them as they screamed! Kind of like when the crowd waves OLD GLORY! Are you following the pandemonium that was happening in Jerusalem on this day? Not only were they waving palms, but they were throwing their cloaks on the street—a sign of submission.

SO WHAT?

"Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna! Save us! Save us! Save us we beseech you. Jesus, we remember the great things you have done!"

Many of you know that last month I sat with my wife and father-in-law at the beside of my mother-in-law as she was dying of cancer. Mom died peacefully after a brief battle. During the final weeks of her life, Mom had been asking Jac for the verse about ***"O death, where is your sting? Where, O death, is your victory?"***

Weeping and Singing --- Songs of Ascent

Mom was excited to go to heaven. She wanted to be with Jesus. Mom asked for that verse all day long. It brought her such comfort as she faced her final days.

“For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?’ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”^{iv} I Corinthians 15: 53-57.

I flew in three days before mom passed. She was unconscious most of the time. I love the Hospice nurses. They were so kind and caring. They were able to let us know when Mom was approaching her final moments. My wife and I had sat at Mom’s bedside and read Scripture to her and played her favorite songs for her. Jac and I prayed for her. Jac asked me to recite I Corinthians. As I did, mom heard me. As I finished quoting the verse, mom lifted her head, placed it square on the pillow and smiled. She was gone the next second. Mom had the victory! I will never forget the smile that lit up her face, and the room.

I don’t know where you are at. I don’t know the captivity that has a hold of each one of us. We all have a Covid-19 story to share.

Here is what I do know. Here is our lesson for today:

- 1. Jesus brings us hope in the midst of our helplessness. We serve a God who knows us. God knows our past, our present, and our future. The Lord has need of us. TRUST Him.**
2. God will fulfill His promises to us. God has plans for us. Jeremiah 29 is true. ***“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”***

Weeping and Singing --- Songs of Ascent

3. In the midst of turmoil.... God promises to bring triumph. We may be sowing in tears...but we are promised JOY. ***“Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping...will return with songs of joy.”***^v

We stare ahead at the peak of the bell curve. There are some dire predictions out there. Last night, Mom and Dad’s neighbor, Carol, died of Covid -19. From the backyard, we heard her only daughter weeping and wailing. I knocked on her door and gave her words of hope. I gave her 1 Corinthians. I told her Psalm 23. I told her that after her mom’s last breath on earth she was present with Christ in heaven. (II Corinthians 5:8) I prayed for her and her husband. I kept my social distance, but I couldn’t just stand outside in the backyard and listen to her cry. We had just gone through this. Carol had come over to visit Mom. She sent cards. She brought banana bread. She knew Jesus and she made sure that Mom knew Jesus, too. Carol had no idea that her going out and her coming in was only weeks away.

That’s my job. I want you to know the peace and forgiveness of Jesus. I want you to know the power and comfort of the Holy Spirit. I want you to know the love and mercy of God our Father.

Promise me one thing, as we travel the path of Holy Week, join the crowd. Let’s shout and scream, “HOSANNA! JESUS, SAVE ME!” Let’s throw our cloaks down in submission ...because we don’t have the answers to this pandemic...but we know THE ONE WHO DOES.

Lift up your eyes to the maker of the heavens and the earth.

Let us pray ...

The Seed Christian Fellowship
Rancho Cucamonga, California 91701

www.theseedchristianfellowship.com

April 5, 2020 Psalm Sunday

Pastor Dave Peters

ⁱ Brenda Fossum, Duluth, MN. *Today's Christian Woman*, "Heart to Heart."

ⁱⁱ [The Holy Bible: New International Version](#). (1984). (Mt 21:1–11). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

ⁱⁱⁱ [The Holy Bible: New International Version](#). (1984). (Ps 126:1–6). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

^{iv} [The Holy Bible: New International Version](#). (1984). (1 Co 15:53–57). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

^v [The Holy Bible: New International Version](#). (1984). (Ps 126:1–6). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.