

Praise the Lord. This is Dr. Dana Gillon. I give honor to God, to Pastor Renée and to all of you my brothers and sisters in Christ. Happy Women's History Month. I want to talk to you today about what we call **Palm Sunday** and **What God Provided** in the days that followed.

But first, let me just say, it is a challenge to compress the details of what happened into just the few minutes that we have together. Let me start with **Matthew 20:17-18**.

<sup>17</sup> Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, <sup>18</sup> "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, <sup>19</sup> and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again."

This is not the first time Jesus predicts His death and resurrection. However, Jesus makes this declaration as they are travelling to Jerusalem and He separated His disciples from everyone else to prepare them for what was immediately to come. This message is not for the crowd but for those who will be most impacted by what will happen to Jesus in the moment that it happens. I wonder what we talk about when we are travelling with others. Are the conversations preparation for what Jesus will do when we reach our destination?

### **Matthew 21:1-3**

<sup>1</sup> Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose *them* and bring *them* to Me. <sup>3</sup> And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them."

This is fulfillment of messianic prophecy recorded in **Zechariah 9:9**. That verse reads: "*See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*" You see, historically kings rode on the backs of donkeys when they came in peace. Jesus presented Himself as a king whose kingdom was not built by military might. This Jesus is what God provided. But the people wanted a political revolutionary who would overthrow the Roman government. It is this tension

between what God provided and what the people wanted that led to the events of the week following Palm Sunday, Holy Week or Passion Week.

**Matthew 21: 8-9** teaches us that the crowds took branches from palm trees and their clothing and spread them on the road as Jesus entered Jerusalem. This is treatment reserved for kings and for victory. Jesus riding on the beasts of burden and the people casting palm branches and clothing symbolizes the kingship of Jesus.

The people cry Hosanna and are expecting liberation from Rome, but Jesus went to the temple. Jesus did not go to the courts or to the palace as an earthly king might do to address secular leadership. Jesus went to the temple of God where He exercised authority.

In the temple, Jesus overturned the tables, drove out the buyers and sellers and purged the temple of those who would abuse the people. And then, in **Matthew 21:14**, the blind and lame came to Him and He healed them. This is what God provided in His temple, but Jesus first had to drive out what the people had made room for.

This was Palm Sunday. The triumphal entry of Jesus, the Christ, into Jerusalem—celebrated as king. The juxtaposition between what the people wanted and what God provided. The beginning of Holy Week, Passion Week.

The next day, Jesus cursed the fig tree. Jesus was just in expecting fruit from the tree—whether green or ripe. But, the fig tree did not produce, so Jesus cursed the tree in the presence of the disciples. This was a lesson in faith and power for the disciples then and for us today. Then, we find Jesus teaching in the temple engaging the chief priests, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and teachers of the law in a series of debates recorded across Matthew 21:23 through chapter 24. They sought to lay hands on Jesus and Jesus ends that time describing the destruction of the Temple.

The next day, we have limited information about Jesus' public ministry, but we do find Jesus at the home of Simon the leper in **Matthew 26:6**, where He is being anointed by a humble woman with costly tears and expensive oil from an alabaster box. While the disciples were indignant over this woman's waste of the expensive oil, Jesus informed them that we would remember this woman and her kind expression of love for Him

always. And, we do. Also of note, Jesus and the disciples would not have been in the home of Simon the leper had Simon not been healed of leprosy. Yet, so often that which God has forgiven, what God has healed, people will remember.

We also find during this time that Judas was busy negotiating his fee for betraying Jesus. In **Matthew 26:14-16**, Judas settled for 30 pieces of silver.

Later, Jesus and His disciples come together for what we call the Last Supper. Jesus humbly washed their feet, memorialized the breaking of bread and sharing the cup as his body and blood. Following their last meal together, Jesus and His disciples went to the Garden of Gethsemane, where He was betrayed by Judas and arrested. And then, Good Friday. Good because it's holy. Good because of what the crucifixion accomplished. Good because He is good. But, that day, marks the trial, crucifixion, death and burial of Jesus the Christ.

This is a synopsis of what we call Holy Week, Passion Week. The week the love of Christ for us was on full display for all to see. How did we move from the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem to death by crucifixion? Crucifixion, this brutal method of death reserved for the worst of offenders. In **Matthew 27:29**, the Roman soldiers called Jesus, King of the Jews, mocking His triumphant entry into Jerusalem. How did we get here?

Palm Sunday is the day we remember why we hope. Today, many feel that our government deserves to be overthrown—some might disagree. But, He did not come to overthrow a political government. On this Palm Sunday, as in times past, He is pulling us aside and speaking to us and reminding us about what is to come. He is in the temple, He is concerned about the people, He is speaking healing. He is also encouraging us to strengthen our faith for the days to come and He is expecting us to bear fruit. He also calls us into worship and fellowship with Him as well as deep reflection in His Word. And, let us never forget His ultimate sacrifice so that we will be with Him evermore. What God provided was just what we needed. May the triumph of Palm Sunday carry us through the reverence of Good Friday and the resurrection of Easter Sunday. In Jesus name, Amen.