

Palm Sunday
March 24, 2013
Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Chip Wilke

Luke 19:28-40

After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.'" Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They replied, "The Lord needs it." They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." (NIV)

When is the last time you cried out for something or someone? Crying out is something we do all our lives. As infants we would cry out when we were hungry or tired, or perhaps even when we wanted some attention. Even as older children there are occasions to cry out. A child who has a nightmare might cry out for mom or dad. Children get hurt or excited about something and they cry out. Even as adults there are times we cry out. Sometimes people will do things (even strange out of the ordinary things) that are called a cry for help. Perhaps we have cried out to our spouse, a relative or friend when we have been troubled. It is now March Madness for college basketball and people from all over the country are crying out for another reason. They cry out, often loudly, to cheer on their favorite team. Perhaps some of us are just crying because our teams are out or our brackets are busted.

In every stage of life there are all kinds of reasons people will cry out. As Jesus rides into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey there is a whole crowd of people who cry out. My prayer this morning is that we join them. Not just on this Palm Sunday, but my prayer is that on all kinds of occasions we: **Cry out to the King!**

Before we listen to the cries of the crowd that lined the streets of Jerusalem, before we consider the reasons they cried out, we turn to God's Word as Luke sets the stage for us. *"Jesus...went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.'" Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They replied, "The Lord needs it." They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it."*

Bethany is the home of Mary, Martha, & Lazarus and is located about three miles from Jerusalem and Bethphage was a small village on the Mount of Olives. As one approaches Jerusalem from the east you cross over the Mount of Olives which rises some three hundred feet above Jerusalem. From here Jesus makes preparations to enter Jerusalem. Jesus plans this entry into Jerusalem very carefully. He plans it in fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah which had promised a King coming gentle and riding on a donkey. Jesus wants this to be a triumphal entrance into the city.

And this is exactly what happens. ***“As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices.”*** People were already in a festive mood as the Israelites were getting ready to celebrate their greatest festival. Remember Jews from all over made the trip to Jerusalem. Now many were just waiting for Jesus to arrive. The buzz about Christ was bigger than ever as word had spread about how Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. So when Jesus arrives people spread their cloaks on the road and wave palm branches. They joyfully praise God in loud voices.

In short, they cry out! Listen to some of their cries: ***“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”*** The people acclaim Jesus as king. Using words from Psalm 118 they acknowledge Jesus as one who comes from God – in the name of the Lord. They use words here similar to what the angels did on the night of Jesus’ birth. The other Gospels reveal that they cried out ***“Son of David”*** (a reference to the Messiah). They also cried ***“Hosanna”*** which means ***“Lord save.”*** I think I would have enjoyed being one of Jesus’ disciples on this first day, this Sunday of Holy Week. This had to be a pretty awesome scene. Think of the excitement and celebration. It was like a parade with only one main attraction – and that was Jesus.

And while we can’t look into the heart of every person along the road lying down their cloaks, waving palm branches, and shouting praises, Luke does give us a pretty good indication of why the crowds cried out to Jesus. He writes ***“for all the miracles they had seen.”*** We also understand what many here in Jerusalem wanted from Jesus. If this man can heal the sick, feed the thousands, and even raise people from the dead, surely Jesus can free His own people from the Romans. Surely, the Messiah can return Israel to glory. Surely now Jesus will set up His kingdom for them, and earthly kingdom. ***“Hosanna, Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”***

Yet, I have often wondered how many, if any, of these same people who praised Jesus as He entered Jerusalem were crying out something much different the following Friday. Were there some here who would change their cries of ***“Hosanna”*** to ***“Crucify, Crucify,”*** after realizing that Jesus didn’t come to provide them with a miraculous meal of bread or free them from the clutches of Rome? How many people I wonder called out to Jesus as king on Palm Sunday but, after not liking the kind of king they saw in Jesus, changed their tune on Friday to ***“we have no king but Caesar?”*** We can only wonder about these things because we are not told how many, if any, changed their cries.

But we are able to examine our own hearts and consider our own words and actions. With our lips that praise God does there ever come out of that same mouth cursing? Are we ever more concerned with what Jesus can do for our earthly needs that we lose focus on His far more important spiritual and eternal kingdom? What do we cry

out to the King? Why do we cry out to Jesus? For us who know exactly what Jesus came into Jerusalem to do shouldn't our cries of praise be even louder? For us who by grace have had our eyes opened to see the king Jesus truly is how can we not join in this celebration of Palm Sunday and welcome our King with greater cries? How can we not shout "*Hosanna,*" and sing "*Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord?*" Why would our cries to Jesus ever stop – cries of praise, cries for help, and cries for mercy, forgiveness, and strength? Cry out to the King!

Cry out to Jesus for this King came into Jerusalem to save you. And as we follow Jesus this week we see the remarkable way Jesus went about bringing us salvation. Jesus came gentle alright – like a lamb to the slaughter. On His head would be placed a crown of thorns instead of a crown of gold. No army, not even any friends, would fight for Him. Under a sign that would read *KING OF THE JEWS*, Jesus would be nailed hands and feet to a cross. There the blood of the only One who is Righteous would be poured out for all the unrighteous. There the King would die to save His people from sin. And as great as this celebration is today as our King makes this triumphal entrance into the city, come back in one week and see once again why our joyful "*Hosannas*" & "*Alleluias*" will never end!

Dear friends: Cry out to the King today. But don't cry because you feel that Jesus needs us to cry out to Him. Remember Jesus said he could make the stones cry out if He wanted. Cry out because you need Him. Cry out because all glory and honor and power are already His. Cry out and keep crying with loud praises to your King even though the devil and the world keep working to try and silence the cries. In every stage of life may we cry out to our king Jesus at all times and in every place! Because of this King we have forgiveness for all of our sins and every single one of our cries is heard and answered. Because of this King even our cry of "*Hosanna*" (*LORD Save Us*) has been answered! Amen.