

## Men's Bible Study – Wednesday, April 6, 2022 (11am) – Palms & Passion

### TEXT: Processional Gospel: John 12:12-19 — The Triumphal Entry!

1. **John 12:** A meal of thanksgiving is offered in celebration of Lazarus' return from the dead (six days before Passover). Mary anoints Jesus with expensive ointment (300 Denarii) and wipes His feet with her hair. Mary anoints Jesus for his burial. **The PLOT thickens:** Chief Priests make plans to put Lazarus back into the grave, because many of the Jews are believing in Jesus! The NEXT DAY: Crowds meet Jesus with Palm Branches and shouts of "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD, even the King of Israel." Jesus enters on a young donkey. Verse 17: the Crowd continued to **BEAR WITNESS!** Time to throw in the towel? God keeps pressing on! **"Look! The world has gone after Him!"** This text calls to mind Old Testament verses from Psalms 118:26-27 and Zechariah 9:9, as well as Jesus' own words from Luke 13:35. • What do we really mean when we say "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"? How does this point our faith to the ONE in whom our hope is founded? • Do you think all the people who were there **at the parade on Palm Sunday** really knew what they were saying? The HOUR has come for the Son of Man to be glorified! – 12:23. In the cross of Christ I glory!

### TEXT: Deuteronomy 32:36-39 – The Song of Moses. I AM has the Upper Hand!

1. God will judge Israel's enemies and thereby vindicate them when they finally give up their false gods and control over their lives. When we insist upon being in charge of everything in our lives, we fail to let God be in control. The Hebrew word used here for **"power" in verse 36 is YAD**, which literally means **"hand."** When we think of our hands, we think of the part of our bodies that manipulate our environment, work, and well-being. We use our hands for almost everything. **We even say things like, "I've got my hands full," or "I need a hand."** When we see ourselves as having power, we say: **"I have the upper hand."** • Why is it that "true faith" is not possible until we see that we have no "hand" before God (v.36)? No hand in securing our salvation! **Psalm 46:** "Hands Up!" Scripture uses the word "hand" to challenge our assumptions about who is really in charge of our lives. The problem is that we seek to control every aspect of our existence, rather than letting God be in control. But when we let God be in control of our lives, we are trusting that he will take care of us. • In what sense is it both a threat and a promise that "none can deliver out of [God's] hand" (v.39)? **God always has the UPPER HAND**, whether we acknowledge it or not. God is in control! He is our Deliverer (--ance).

### TEXT: Psalm 118:19-29 – His Steadfast Love Endures Forever! Open to Me the Gates of Righteousness

1. We cannot open the gates of righteousness. Their weight and expanse surpasses our combined powers. So **God must open them to us**, if we are to enter. If we come in the name of the Lord, He is our salvation and the opener of the gates. For **He who is the gate** (John 10:9) has become the way of salvation (John 14:6). Psalm 118:1 -- Invitation to praise God (give thanks to the LORD) for His steadfast love (*CHESED*) endures forever. Psalm 118 was **Martin Luther's favorite psalm** ("This is my own beloved psalm. Although the entire Psalter, and all of Holy Scripture are dear to me as my only comfort and source of life, I fell in love with this psalm especially. Therefore I call it my own."—AE 14:45). **Verse 17 was his favorite verse:** "I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the LORD."  
2. This psalm is one of **a collection of HALLEL songs** that were used in ancient Israel as part of the liturgy for the sacrifice of the Passover lambs. Hallel Psalms (113-118) were used as thanksgiving for national deliverance – Psalm 118:26 -- SEE JOHN 12:13—Palm Sunday: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!). The word *hallel* means "praise," as in hallelujah ("praise the Lord"). • In what ways

in Christian tradition do we recite “*hallel*” or give thanks and praise to God in a communal way? • What direct connections or references are there in this psalm to the theme of Palm Sunday? • How are we like the people who praised Jesus on Palm Sunday, and also like the same people who called for his crucifixion later that same week? The rejected stone becomes the cornerstone (vs. 22). “This is the DAY that the LORD has made (ACTED). Let us rejoice and be glad in it!” Aslan is on the move!

**TEXT: Philippians 2:5-11 — The Christ Hymn! Christ’s Example of Humility! Humbled and Exalted!**

1. The Gospel is not wearing chains! Imprisonment has given Paul a pulpit (muzzle versus megaphone). Philippians is a **prison epistle** (AD 57), referred to as Paul’s **epistle of joy**. The word “joy” is found 16 times in 104 verses. How do we understand joy as opposed to happiness? Edna Hong wrote a book on Philippians entitled, “**The Downward Ascent**”. The way up is in fact the path that descends and ends at the foot of the cross (humus – humility). Have this mind – which is already yours IN CHRIST JESUS.

2. Common in literature and folklore are stories of rulers who set aside their royal robes and accoutrements, and walk among their people in disguise. • How was Jesus like a “king in disguise?” Why did God have to hide his true identity (*empty himself*) in this love relationship with humanity? Just think of the advantages that Christ could have used from the many aspects of his divinity for opportunities while walking around as a human on earth. And yet, as Paul tells us, **he put those advantages aside**. Though rich, He became poor so that we might become rich in and through his poverty. Even though he was fully divine, **he did not choose to use or exploit those advantages for his own benefit**. • When have you seen someone be humble as to not take advantage of their position or status? How did that affect you in terms of what you thought about them? • Scripture says that “**every knee shall bow**” and “**every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord**” – “in heaven, on earth and under the earth” (v.10-11). In the end, how will that be true of both Jesus’ friends and his enemies?

**TEXT: Luke 22:1-23:56 – Passover is Near – The END is at hand! What’s Your PASSION!**

1. In the story of **Christ’s passion** we hear at the outset how Judas became a part of the religious leader’s secret plan to arrest Jesus, at the prompting of the devil himself. “The chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people. Then **Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot**, who was of the number of the twelve.” (Luke 22:2-4). The great irony of this story is that Satan, the deceiver, wanted to thwart the power of Jesus and chose to corrupt the religious leaders and one of Jesus’ closest friends to usurp his power. Jesus was betrayed alright, and that betrayal led to **the very death that brought about the devil’s defeat**. Most of us have heard the Pasion Narrative many times. In Luke, what part(s) of the Passion narrative jump out at you as you read or hear it this time? Did you discover anything new? Jesus’ disciples bickered about which of them was greatest. They would be afforded opportunity for greatness, but none would rise to the occasion. **Peter crowed** about his loyalty, but was silent when it mattered most. At a time of prayer, his disciples slept instead of watching with the Lord. **Judas** betrayed him to those who would kill him. What about the repentant thief on the cross? Jesus promises to remember HIM **TODAY** in Paradise!

**Luther:** “*God is not praised if He is not loved; He is not loved if He does not do good; He does not do good if He is not gracious; He neither is nor can be gracious if He does not forgive sins; and He does not forgive sins except for Christ’s sake.*” -- Martin Luther In response to a question, “How, when, and why is God honored and praised?” (January 1, 1532)