

Now Is Your Time!

Palm Sunday Message – March 24th, 2024

- **Matthew 21:1-9 – The Triumphal Entry**
- *Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² 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. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them. All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: “Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.’” So, the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: “Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ Hosanna in the highest!”*
- **Luke 19:41-44 – Jesus Weeps Over Jerusalem**
- *Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, “If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”*

Introduction – The Coming Prince

- Jesus’s words – Jews should “know the time of their visitation.” How? The book of Daniel.
- **Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918)**
 - Assistant Commissioner at Scotland yard 1888 – 1918 (death).
 - Wrote "The Coming Prince"; addressed the issue of Daniel's 70 weeks.
 - **Daniel 9:24-27** - *Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. “And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.*
- **Sir Robert’s Calculations**
 - Decree of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah = starting point of the 69 weeks
 - The first of the month of Nisan 445 BC = *14th March 445 BC*
 - Daniel’s 69 weeks of years (483 years) with each year having 360 days. The total period being 483 years x 360 days which equals 173,880 days to Messiah’s “cutting off.”
 - Brings us to 6th April 32 AD, the date of Christ's entry into Jerusalem.
- Reasonable for Jesus to expect the Jewish people (especially scribes and pharisees) to know the time of His arrival based on the prophetic message of Daniel.
- The same expectation is for us, to know the times and the seasons.
 - *He answered and said to them, “When it is evening you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red’; ³ and in the morning, ‘It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. (Matt. 16:2-3 NKJV)*
- The signs of the times are all around us! Now is your time to act upon them and be ready for the coming Prince!

- Jesus said, *“If you had known . . . in this your day, the things that make for your peace! The crowd hailing Jesus as King were cheering a political Messiah. They missed the fact that Jesus came to save them from their spiritual bondage, to offer them real peace!*

Now is your time to walk away from the things that steal your peace!

- Not necessarily about getting away from “toxic” people.
 - Jesus hung out with tax collectors, prostitutes, sinners.
 - Be *in* the world, just not *of* the world.
 - *For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved (John 3:17).*
 - Don’t put yourself into tempting or harmful situations!
- Walk away from sin. Sin separates us from God and steals our peace!
 - Do we want to be slaves to sin or walk in freedom with Jesus?
 - *Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore, if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. (John 8:34-36 NKJV)*
- We have to make some hard decisions.
 - *“Put to death . . . whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. (Colossians 3:5-8 NIV)*
 - *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell. (Matthew 5:27-30 NIV)*
 - *“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.” (Ephesians 5:3NIV).*
- Do your choices (i.e., movies, music, entertainment) give the devil a foothold?
 - The “hint” comes with a “hook” that is hard for us to throw off once it’s there. Jesus asked the paralytic, “do you want to get well?” He didn’t really answer with a yes. Was he too comfortable with how things were? Are we like this with sin? Do we want victory over it?

Now is your time to walk into a full commitment to Jesus!

- God is a jealous God (Exodus 20:5). He wants your whole heart.
- He knows that you won’t really be fulfilled unless He is your all in all.
- Psalm 42:1(NIV) says, *“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.”* Webster’s Dictionary (1828 edition) defines pant as, “to palpitate; to beat with preternatural violence or rapidity, as the heart in terror, or after hard labor, or in anxious desire or suspense.” To pant after God is to literally long for Him as a matter of life or death.
- How about your spiritual walk? Is it bearing fruit? Jesus says, *“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5 NKJV)* Abide – the Greek is men’-o, which means to stay or remain. It signifies a truly committed relationship. We need a connection to Jesus to accomplish anything for His Kingdom.
- How can our lives show this commitment? Stay in His Word to not be easily swayed by the so-called “wisdom” of the world. Joshua 1:8 tell us to *“meditate on it day and night so that we can be prosperous and successful.”* Jesus tells us, *“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.” (John 8:31 NKJV).*
- If you draw near to God, He will draw near to you (James 4:8).

- The question: Is Jesus your primary focus and at the center of everything you do? What are your children learning about how important He is to you?
- Don't flirt around the edge on this, dive in! You are either all in or not in at all. Remember Lot's wife? She looked back and became a pillar of salt! Jesus said that *"no one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."* (Luke 9:62 NKJV).
- *"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"* These were never truly committed to Jesus.
- It's hard and costly, but what Jesus did for you cost Him His life! The price was high, but you were worth it!

Jesus warned the Jews about a coming time of devastation. Jesus's warning is just as relevant to us now!

Today is not only Palm Sunday, but also the Jewish celebration of Purim.

- Another time in Jewish history when a plot to destroy them by the evil Haman during the reign of King Ahasuerus (Xeres), from 486 to 465 B.C., was exposed and thwarted, resulting in Haman's own demise. Queen Esther was prompted by her uncle Mordecai to approach the King to tell of Haman's wicked scheme, but going to the King without being summoned could result in her death!
- Mordecai's challenge: *"Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"* (Esther 4:13-14 NKJV)
- Her reply: *"Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so, I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!"* (Esther 4:16 NKJV) She took a stand to save her people at a potentially great cost to her!

Now is your time to stand!

- Christians face a coming storm, one that has been building for centuries!
 - The Apostle Paul: *"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come. (2 Timothy 3:1 NKJV). He also warns us that, "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."* (2 Timothy 3:12 NKJV)
 - Jesus warned that we would have trouble but reminds us that He has overcome the world (John 16:33).
- How then do we take a stand for Him?
 - The first place to start is at home. We can stand for our families! Parents, are you leading your children in the fear and knowledge of the Lord? The Jewish people were admonished to *"teach [the laws] diligently to your children, and [you] shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."* (Deuteronomy 6:7). Are we standing up against the lies the world is trying to sell our families? Are we willing to risk the eternity of loved ones for the sake of "getting along?" Wives and husbands, are you actively fighting against the forces that seek to separate you?
 - We can also take a stand for our church. Start by showing up! Hebrews says, *"and let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."* (Hebrews 10:24-25 NKJV) Be there, be present, join a team and serve! Pray! Give of your time, talent, and treasure! BE the church, not just to go to church!
 - Stand for the lost! Reaching the unsaved for Christ is why we're still here! Our one mandate from Jesus: Matthew 28:19 (NKJV) – *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."*

- Another way we can make a stand is in society. Knowing that moral decay was coming does not give us an excuse to sit back and do nothing! Sir Edmund Burke - "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." There is plenty that we can do, and a big part of it is just showing up! Show up to vote, township or schoolboard meetings, rallies, etc. Contact your senator or congressperson. James 2:17 - faith without works is dead! If you don't show up, those that are fighting against the Word of God most definitely will!
- A word of caution. Don't get caught up in the trap that you've got to constantly do more. Be obedient to what He has you doing now and leave the results up to him. Dare to be bold, but don't be abrasive. Jesus admonished His disciples to be *"as wise as serpents and harmless as doves."* (Matthew 10:16) Be a stealth fighter, not a tank!
- Keep in mind, that God can accomplish whatever He wants with or without our help. As Esther was told, deliverance for the Jews would come from somewhere else if she didn't get involved. You won't enjoy the blessings God has in store if you don't step up and step in. *"Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."* (Galatians 6:9) If we use the talents and gifts that God has provided to advance His Kingdom, we will one day hear, *"well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your lord."* (Matthew 25:21)

Now is your time to get saved!

Don't enter into eternity without Jesus. Romans 3:23 says *"all have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God"* and Romans 6:23 tell us *"the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus, our Lord."* We need to repent, which comes from the Greek word "metanoia", a nautical term that means to completely change course. Romans 10:9-10 (NKJV) - *"that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."* As the one thief crucified next to Jesus found out, it's as simple as saying "Remember me." (Luke 23:42-43)

Conclusion

The signs of the times are obvious and all around us, and while they seem to spell defeat, they actually point to the coming King (Matt. 24:29-30). The palm branches waved towards Jesus when He rode into Jerusalem on the donkey were a symbol of victory. While the crowds then were misguided in why they were cheering for Him, one thing is for certain: Jesus did win the victory, the victory over sin and death! Jesus suffered and died and rose from grave to guarantee those who believe in Him an eternity of peace and joy! He conquered death to give us life! He gave us the victory! Regardless of what's going on, regardless of what you may be going through, you can claim that victory now! Paul tells us in Philippians 4:4-5 to *"Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness to be known to all men. The Lord is at hand!"* Jesus is coming! Are you ready for your time of visitation?