

ALIVE: PALM SUNDAY
ALIVE...RSVP Luke 19:28-44
March 24, 2024

INTRO.: Good morning and welcome to Palm Sunday and our continuing Easter series, **ALIVE**. Praise God that Jesus is alive! He is risen! Last week our theme was *ALIVE in the beginning*, and we looked at how Adam and Eve had the best-case scenario for honoring and pleasing God. When God finished creating mankind (Adam & Eve) he said: "It was very good." Mankind, created in the image and likeness of God was the apex of God's creation. At this point in time, God walked with them, they had the ability to choose to obey or not to obey God because they had no sin nature. God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden, a place with all kinds of trees, trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden there was the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There were rivers, gold and other precious stones. Adam was given the job to work the garden and take care of it. This was before there were weeds and challenging weather conditions since sin had not yet come into the world. Then we read that God commanded Adam. It's the first time the word *command* is used, and this lets Adam know that God is the ultimate authority. This command was two-fold: First, "You are free." What was he free to do? "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden.... Secondly, "you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." God's commands are given to provide for and to protect us. What did God say were the consequences if they ate from this tree. "You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will surely/certainly die." This is a promise of spiritual death, separation from God. Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden, along with many other consequences. Most tragically, they were immediately spiritually separated from their Creator. Not only that, but every human being born after them was born with a sin nature: sinners by birth and sinners by choice.

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—

Praise God the story doesn't end there for Genesis 3:15 is the promise of a deliverer to come, one who would defeat Satan and provide the way for people to have their relationship with God restored, being reconciled to our Creator. This is why Jesus Christ came into the world!

Romans 5:6–8 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

This brings us to this morning: the triumphal entry. **ALIVE...RSVP**. What does RSVP mean? It is French: Répondez s'il vous plait: "respond if it pleases you" or "please respond" You see this on wedding, shower, and birthday invitations. God gives various invitations in His Word:

Proverbs 3:5–6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Romans 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

John 3:16–18 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

What is your response to the invitations the Lord gives to you? What is my response? No response is a response. In the Scriptural account of the triumphal entry (Palm Sunday) we have several responses to Jesus. As we read through this passage together concentrate on the different responses.

Luke 19:28–29 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." As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it **42** and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

Jesus sends two of the disciples to go ahead, telling them they will find a colt, which has never been ridden. They were to untie it and bring it to Him. When asked by the owners why they are taking it, their response is to be, "The Lord needs it," and the owners are going to be okay with that explanation. Everything happens just as Jesus says it would and they bring it to Jesus. This reminds us of the sovereignty of God and the deity of Jesus Christ. They threw their coats on the colt and put Jesus on it. This is reminiscent of the coronation of Solomon.

1 Kings 1:33–34 he (David) said to them: "Take your lord's servants with you and set Solomon my son on my own mule and take him down to Gihon. **34** There have Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king over Israel. Blow the trumpet and shout, 'Long live King Solomon!'"

This event is predicted in the Old Testament by the prophet Zechariah.

Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

So, we see the first response:

THEY PRAISED

Luke 19:35–36 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.

This is like the *red-carpet treatment*. The placing of their coats on the road is an act of homage, an act of submission to Christ's rightful authority. In the accounts of this event in Mark (11:8); Matthew (21:8); and John (12:13) they tell of people putting down palm branches as well as their coats. Palm branches symbolized victory, joy, and celebration.

John MacArthur; "By doing so they were expressing their eager submission to Him, symbolically placing themselves under His feet as their King."

This was a royal profession, for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The Apostle Paul tells us that some day:

Philippians 2:9–11 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, **10** that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The crowd of disciples doesn't stop with just throwing their coats and palm branches on the road.

Luke 19:37 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:

This was not some quiet procession. They were joyfully and loudly praising God, recollecting all the miracles they had seen. Included in that was the raising of Lazarus from the grave in nearby Bethany, after he had been dead for four days. There was Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, that Jesus healed, restoring his sight. The crowd would have heard and known about many other miracles. Some were attracted to Jesus because of His miracles and within this crowd there were some who, less than a week later, would be yelling, "Crucify Him!"

It was more than Jesus being a miracle worker as the loud praise continues.

Luke 19:38 "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

Walter L. Liefeld: This is a quote from Psalm 118, one of the Hallel Psalms sung during Passover. It is one of the psalms most referred to in the New Testament. The others are Psalm 2, 22, 69, 89, and 110. It is a distinctly Messianic Psalm, which speaks about the stone the builders rejected and which became the cornerstone.

Psalm 118:26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you.

Luke adds the word, “king.” Many in the crowd were expecting that the Messiah would come to rule, to overthrow the evil, ungodly Roman empire. The peace that Luke speaks of in this passage (peace in heaven) doesn’t find its fulfillment in Jerusalem. Many did not recognize that the Messiah would suffer first before He came again to rule and reign. The suffering Savior was clearly predicted in Isaiah 53. Jesus came to be the sacrifice that would provide for the restoration of our relationship with God. This is an eternal peace that only God can bring to us.

The Apostle Paul speaks of this peace that only comes through Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:19–20 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

The crowd also shouts out, “glory in the highest.” Matthew speaks of the crowd shouting:

Matthew 21:9 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!”

Hosanna means “save now.” *Son of David* is the title for the Messiah. It is clear what they are shouting in their praise of Him. Jesus makes no attempt to stop them because He is accepting rightful praise, worship, and honor as God, the Son. As you can imagine, the religious leaders were not happy as we see in the second response.

THEY REJECTED

Luke 19:39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”

The word, *rebuke*, is a command. They are telling Jesus what to do. This is in the form of an urgent command: stop them now!! There are some who say that Jesus never claims to be God. The Pharisees knew that, by Jesus accepting the praise, honor, and worship of the crowd, that He was accepting the claim of deity. This was revolting to the religious leaders.

We find several other places in the Scriptures where Jesus not only accepts worship, but also claims to be God in the flesh.

John 10:30–33 I and the Father are one.” **31** Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, **32** but Jesus said to them, “I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?” **33** “We are not stoning you for any of these,” replied the Jews, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.”

How would Jesus respond to their outrageous command? They are arrogantly telling God what to do!

Luke 19:40 “I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

“*cry out*.” this can be translated “scream.” You think the crowd’s praise was loud, if they are silenced these rocks will scream out this praise and as we see later, judgment.

As I read this, I conclude that Jesus is saying the rocks are wiser and smarter than the religious leaders. We see responses of praise, rebuke and thirdly:

THEY DIDN’T RECOGNIZE

This is incredibly sad to read. It is not only sad, but also tragic. Jesus has not yet entered Jerusalem (the city of peace: Shalom) but He can see it from His vantage point.

Luke 19:41–42 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it **42** and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes.

“*wept*.” this is the strongest word for weeping in the Greek language.

John MacArthur: "It denotes Jesus' agonized sobbing over their superficiality, hypocrisy, shallowness, and rejection of Him – and the inevitable divine wrath that would follow."

Once again, the peace that is being referred to is the peace that comes from recognizing sin, turning from it (repentance), and believing the message of salvation. Since they had rejected this message, God hid it from their eyes.

We see this in the Old Testament from God in relationship with Pharaoh. The Israelites were slaves to the Egyptians and God sent Moses to Pharaoh to tell him to let God's people, the Israelites go. Pharaoh's heart became hard and he refused to let the Israelites go. Later, we see that God hardened Pharaoh's heart.

Exodus 9:7 Pharaoh sent men to investigate and found that not even one of the animals of the Israelites had died. Yet his heart was unyielding and he would not let the people go.

Exodus 9:12 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said to Moses.

Jesus pronounces the judgment that is going to come upon Jerusalem.

Luke 19:43 The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

Jesus is weeping over Jerusalem for their rejection of Him and the judgment to follow. In 70 AD Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. The inhabitants would be unable to escape. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost, but they refused to see that they were lost.

We see Jesus' sorrow over Jerusalem earlier in the gospel of Luke.

Luke 13:31–35 At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." **32** He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' **33** In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem! **34** "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! **35** Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

When Zacchaeus, a tax collector, came to faith, he was radically changed. He had made a living charging people more than they owed, making himself wealthy. Zacchaeus had heard Jesus was coming, and so he climbed a tree so he could see Jesus. Jesus invited himself to Zacchaeus' house and Zacchaeus welcomed him gladly. Look at the responses:

Luke 19:7–10 All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.' " **8** But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." **9** Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. **10** For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Jesus weeps over Jerusalem because they don't even recognize God's coming to them.

The Apostle John refers to this lack of recognizing Jesus in the first chapter of his gospel.

John 1:10–11 He (Jesus) was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. **11** He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

How many have yet to recognize Jesus, as God come in the flesh, their only hope for forgiveness and reconciliation with God?

SO WHAT??

Walter Liefeld, in his commentary, calls the triumphal entry of Jesus an "event of outstanding significance." He lists the following 4 reasons:

1) By means of it Jesus deliberately evokes a demonstration. He fully realizes that, as a result, the enthusiasm of the masses will enrage hostile leaders at Jerusalem, so that they will desire more than ever to carry out their plot against Him.

- 2) Jesus forces the members of the Sanhedrin to change their timetable, so that it will harmonize with His (and the Father's) timetable. The enthusiasm of the crowds with respect to Jesus will hasten the crisis.
- 3) By means of His triumphal entry Jesus fulfills the Messianic prophecy of Zech 9:9; see Matthew 21:4-5. When people hail Him as the Son of David, the Messiah, He does not try to restrain them.
- 4) However, He also shows the crowds what kind of Messiah He is, namely, not the earthly Messiah of Israel's dreams, the One who wages war against an earthly oppressor, but the One who came to promote and establish "the things that make for peace" (Luke 19:42), lasting peace, reconciliation between God and man, and between man and his fellow man.

Less than a week after the Triumphal entry the crowd was yelling, "Crucify!" That was all part of God's plan from eternity past. Jesus Christ was the suffering Savior portrayed in Isaiah 53.

Colossians 2:13-15 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, **14** having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. **15** And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

God has given us an invitation. It's an invitation written in the blood of Christ. What will be my RSVP? Remember, no response is a response.

Possible responses:

- *Rejection of the message of the cross; saying I refuse to believe
- *Not recognizing Jesus as the One who came to bring eternal peace to my soul
- *Putting off my response for some time later, which may never come
- *Coming to faith in Jesus Christ as my Lord & Savior
- *To tell others of this great invitation

God has waited patiently, but we have no guarantee of any moment past this very one.

Villagers Pray to "the God Who Hung on the Cross"

In her book *The God Who Hung on the Cross*, journalist Ellen Vaughn retells a gripping story of how the Gospel came to a small village in Cambodia. In September 1999 Pastor Tuy Seng (not his real name) traveled to Kampong Thom Province in northern Cambodia. Throughout that isolated area, most villagers had cast their lot with Buddhism or spiritism. Christianity was virtually unheard of.

But much to Seng's surprise, when he arrived in one small, rural village the people warmly embraced him and his message about Jesus. When he asked the villagers about their openness to the gospel, an old woman shuffled forward, bowed, and grasped Seng's hands as she said, "We have been waiting for you for twenty years." And then she told him the story of the mysterious God who had hung on the cross.

In the 1970s the Khmer Rouge, the brutal, Communist-led regime, took over Cambodia, destroying everything in its path. When the soldiers finally descended on this rural, northern village in 1979, they immediately rounded up the villagers and forced them to start digging their own graves. After the villagers had finished digging, they prepared themselves to die. Some screamed to Buddha, others screamed to demon spirits or to their ancestors.

One of the women started to cry for help based on a childhood memory—a story her mother told her about a God who had hung on a cross. The woman prayed to that unknown God on a cross. Surely, if this God had known suffering, he would have compassion on their plight.

Suddenly, her solitary cry became one great wail as the entire village started praying to the God who had suffered and hung on a cross. As they continued facing their own graves, the wailing slowly turned to a quiet crying. There was an eerie silence in the muggy jungle air. Slowly, as they dared to turn around and face their captors, they discovered that the soldiers were gone.

As the old woman finished telling this story, she told Pastor Seng that ever since that humid day from 20 years ago the villagers had been waiting, waiting for someone to come and share the rest of the story about the God who had hung on a cross.

Source: Doris I. Rosser & Ellen Vaughn, *The God Who Hung on the Cross* (Zondervan, 2003), pp. 35-37

We have the rest of the story. As you pick up that palm branch remember what it symbolizes: victory, joy, and celebration. That's exactly what we have in Jesus Christ eternally!

