

April 2, 2023 Palm Sunday

“PURPLE”

Luke 19:38

“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

Special Music: “Hosanna” Saddleback Worship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5m-QB5hgMSE>



THE NATURE OF A KING

The king stood on the terrace wall
And perused all the lands he saw
Each living soul and precious thing
His eyes lit up as he began to sing
“I am the master of it all.”

He had pushed his border to beyond his sight
So many good soldiers lost in the fight
But it was worth it as he viewed
The land his kingdom had accrued
The fields were ripe and the future bright

His vaults were filled with precious gold
Having grown o’er a hundredfold
Precious jewelry, incense, gems
Every room filled to the very brim
Far more than he could ever hold.

And then his face began to frown
Heavy on his head, his crown.
No lands left for him to take
No more kingdoms to claim and stake
Silence hung inside his brow.

So, he sat alone on his hand carved throne
Hands on his head he, let out a groan
Quite unsure of what to do
Knowing his life could not be through

No longer king but merely drone

He left his throne of royal stone
And stepped out of his comfort zone
Into the streets where the commoners keep
Their chickens, cows, and sheep
And life became real with a different tone.

The rags they wore left him confused and puzzled
They were silent in his presence as if muzzled
Obviously underfed and overworked
Nary a smile but hidden smirks
All leaving the king somewhat befuddled.

And then came a man from out the woods
Carrying neither weapons or goods
He seemed out of place
Common but not commonplace
He wore neither robe nor hood.

When the king asked from where he's strayed
He replied he had come from far away
That he too was king of where he reigned
But his people were not poor and drained
And the king moved close to hear him say.

In my land my people love me, and listen as I speak
They search and find the joy they seek
Not in the treasures of this world
But in watching the truth unfurl

As they realize God's presence, they are weak

**For those who tend to be observant
They know that I am their both king and servant
I wash their feet, give them bread to eat,
I make them whole, safe, and quite complete
And teach them the ways of a leader servant.**

**If you want to fix the mess you've made
Take your crown and put it away
Reach out to those within your reach
Use your outreach to bless and teach
Be their servant and preach the way.**

**And with that the man walked away
I found myself wishing he would stay
And teach me about this new look on life
To end my kingdom's pain and strife
And take away this heavy weight**

**Then it hit me, I had the answer
The people were the cure and I was the cancer
The kingdom does not belong to me
I'm the one that needs to set them free
And wash their feet as I begin to whisper**

The new message.

This is the day that we celebrate Palm Sunday. What does that really mean? Yes, we start every Holy Week with Palm Sunday; the day Jesus entered Jerusalem on the back of a borrowed donkey and a huge number of people who were following him laid palm branches and robes on the ground for the donkey to walk on. He was being heralded as a king entering the Holy City. He was arguing with the chief priests because they wanted him to get his followers to stop shouting “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” And Jesus is responding, “Even if I did, the very stones would cry out instead.”

In their defense, the religious leaders believed that the Romans would see this event as an uprising, as rabble rousing. This kind of activity was strictly forbidden, and it was going to look very bad for Jewish leadership. But Jesus and his followers could not, would not, be contained.

But what was going to be accomplished by this demonstration? They didn't anoint Jesus king. The Roman government made sure they had the king that they could trust in their back pocket, Herod Antipas. Replacing Herod was not going to happen. Besides, in Jesus' day, if a new king was to be crowned, the new king would be wearing a purple robe, purple being the color of royalty.

It was a very difficult, painstaking, and expensive process to dye fabric purple. Mucus had to be taken from specific sea snails and it took a lot of snails to make even a little bit of purple dye.

Now one, might believe that Jesus' followers would have been able to come up with a purple robe for him at this time, but we need to remember that most of

Jesus' followers were the poorest of the poor. So, Jesus enters Jerusalem dressed in white. Was that the way it was supposed to be? Or just the way it worked out. Most of the people in the town believed He was the next king. Many of them still believed that there would be this miraculous moment when Jesus would fling off his earthly attire and be covered in armor ready to take on the Roman Empire. They still had not come to grips with the type of kingdom that Jesus was about to usher in where instead of changing governments, borders, politics, and economic systems, He had come to change us from the inside out with the free gift of the Holy Spirit. But, hey, it was an exciting day, none the less.

But, I ask you again, what was this day all about? Why did Jesus allow this day to go down the way it did? Isn't it contrary to everything He taught us? Where was the picture of the servant in all this king stuff? We talk about the donkey, the palm branches, the robes and blankets, the excitement, but we get a little conflicted when it appears that Jesus may have lost a little of His humility. Why allow all these people to believe one thing when something completely different was about to happen. In just a few days, these same people would be calling for His head on a platter.

But right this moment, right at this point in history, at the intersection of the Old Testament and the New Testament, right at this moment, there was outlandish, uncontrollable, undeniable, undefeatable, undefinable, dancing in the streets, music, singing, praises, shouts of JOY. The Joy of the universe, of the heavens, of all things created by the Father are bursting out. If ever there was a

purple robe moment in history, this was it. So, why don't we have one? Where is our purple robe for our King?

We do have the donkey that Zechariah prophesied in Zechariah 9:9:

9 Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!

Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!

See, your king comes to you,

righteous and victorious,

lowly and riding on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

And then peace for the nations in 9:10

10 I will take away the chariots from Ephraim

and the warhorses from Jerusalem,

and the battle bow will be broken.

He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea

and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Surely, that makes Him worthy of a purple robe, doesn't it?

What about what He has done for the last three years. He's healed those who were sick and suffering. He has forgiven the sins of those who the religious leaders thought were unforgivable. He has taught a new way of living where

people serve their brothers and sisters. A culture of lifting people up rather than pushing them down. A standard of turning the other cheek. Of standing up for those who are unable to stand up for themselves. Feeding the hungry. Giving water to the thirsty.

And most of the people on this road to Jerusalem, involved in this celebration, had experienced His message in some way. They had seen first hand Jesus' example of how to live a life of fulfillment. They had seen the rhythm of His ministry. And now, they see him riding into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, fulfilling yet another prophecy. But still, no purple robe. While the expectation they had of a king was there, the stature of a warrior that would vanquish their enemies wasn't there. Instead, even among all the joy and praises, there had to be a tinge of doubt about this man who claimed to be God's son, the Messiah. In so many ways, He just didn't measure up to their standard of what a King amounted to. He did not look like someone who could lead an army.

What I see happening here is Jesus continuing to example faith in God by showing up as the savior of all people, rather than a divider of nations. The expectation that He is meeting, is not the expectation of people, but the expectation of God. Just where do we find humility in expecting Jesus to meet our expectations? Who do we think we are? We are sitting here throwing Him a ticker tape parade expecting certain things from Him, "Hail the conquering Hero!" Our lives are about to get so much better. Better hide, Roman Empire, Jesus is here!

Instead we are in for a week of blood, hiding, Jesus being beaten and flogged, walking the streets of Jerusalem with a cross on His back, a crucifixion that we ourselves called for, crown of thorns, torture, torment, scourging, more blood, nails in hands and feet to hold Him on the cross as it was dropped into a hole in the ground, wrenching His muscles and tearing His tendons, vinegar for thirst, spear in the side to make sure that He is done, more blood, death, and a very rushed burial.

“But there is a purple robe in there, preacher!” That’s right, brothers and sisters, but we didn’t give it to Him. Pilate himself made a sign for the cross that read “This is the King of the Jews” and he put the message in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew just so everyone could read it. The purple robe was mockery, a prop, a sarcasm set aside just for Jesus. I can hear Pilate say, “So, you thought you were going to replace Herod? You are too weak to replace anyone. You thought you could reign here? That seat is occupied by my peon. Dance like a puppet, Mister Jesus of Nazareth. Hit Him again, boys. Make Him dance. Make Him bleed.”

And the Crown Prince of the Universe, the son of the Creator Himself, that was there in the beginning with His father and the Holy Spirit, allowed us to humiliate Him because He had the audacity not to meet our expectations. As far as anyone could tell, He was just as fragile and insignificant as any other person on this planet. Jesus allowed us to torture Him until He was dead and could be buried. He never lifted a finger to stop the abuse.

What Pilate and everyone involved did not know, was that Jesus could have put a stop to the whole thing at any time. He could have just said, “I give up. I can’t do this, Father. Please send the angels.”

But, you see, if He did that, He would not have been able to accomplish what He had set out to do. He would have failed His Father. He would have failed Himself. He would have failed all humankind. He would have left the most significant work of grace and mercy the universe has ever experienced, unfinished.

When we look back on Palm Sunday with these thoughts, we begin to realize that by wearing white, Jesus was perfectly prepared for what was ahead of Him. He entered Jerusalem not as a liberator of the Israelites from Rome, but a liberator of souls from sin. He knew that He came as a sacrificial lamb. White was the perfect choice for placing himself on the altar. And yes, He placed Himself there. No one forced Him to do it.

So, purple was not the color of the day. And yet it was. By choosing white, the color of purity, for presenting His sacrifice, He also received the color of royalty, purple.

Throughout history, royalty has considered themselves as privileged. They still do. But Jesus lays His robe of purple aside in order to wash feet, heal the sick, eat with prostitutes and sinners, and sacrifice Himself for even the worst among us.

As we enter into Holy Week, let's ponder that fact. Let's remember Jesus washing all of His disciples feet before bringing us that first Communion, built from the remnants of the Passover table. Let's remember a tormented savior praying in anguish to his Father in the garden while His friends slept. Let's remember how a friend's betrayal led to an arrest. Let us remember all the horrors of the crucifixion as Jesus took all of our pain and sin upon Himself and cleansed us from our unrighteousness. Let us remember Him on the cross having been beaten and publicly humiliated as many of his friends deserted Him. Let us remember Him begging His Father to forgive those who had performed these horrible acts. Let us remember that there wasn't even enough time after His death for a decent burial as He was laid in a borrowed tomb.

We have to take time this week to remember all those things, because next Sunday we are on the other side of it. Without spending time in the grief of the crucifixion, the joy of the resurrection seems somehow smaller than it should. So, this week, let's spend some extra time in conversation with Jesus to thank Him for all that He has done for us.

God bless you all,

AMEN

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