

March 20, 2005
Palm Sunday
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“We Want To Meet Jesus”
John 12:12-27 NLT

12 The next day, the news that Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem swept through the city. A huge crowd of Passover visitors 13 took palm branches and went down the road to meet him. They shouted,

"Praise God! Bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hail to the King of Israel!"

14 Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, fulfilling the prophecy that said:

15 "Don't be afraid, people of Israel. Look, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt."

16 His disciples didn't realize at the time that this was a fulfillment of prophecy. But after Jesus entered into his glory, they remembered that these Scriptures had come true before their eyes.

17 Those in the crowd who had seen Jesus call Lazarus back to life were telling others all about it. 18 That was the main reason so many went out to meet him--because they had heard about this mighty miracle. 19 Then the Pharisees said to each other, "We've lost. Look, the whole world has gone after him!"

20 Some Greeks who had come to Jerusalem to attend the Passover 21 paid a visit to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee. They said, "Sir, we want to meet Jesus." 22 Philip told Andrew about it, and they went together to ask Jesus.

23 Jesus replied, "The time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory. 24 The truth is, a kernel of wheat must be planted in the soil. Unless it dies it will be alone--a single seed. But its death will produce many new kernels--a plentiful harvest of new lives. 25 Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who despise their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 All those who want to be my disciples must come and follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And if they follow me, the Father will honor them. 27 Now my soul is deeply troubled. Should I pray, 'Father, save me from what lies ahead'? But that is the very reason why I came!

1. Jesus

Palm branches were symbolic of victory and triumph, the welcoming of a hero, a King. The people were even shouting, "Praise God! Bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hail to the King of Israel!" Yet, a hero or King would have come riding into Jerusalem in a chariot not on the colt of a donkey. Did you notice in vs 17 –18 that the main reason so many went out to meet Jesus was because they had either seen Jesus call Lazarus back to life from the dead or heard about this mighty miracle from those who had seen it. They wanted Jesus the miracle worker. They wanted a Lord who could make their life comfortable and make all things convenient.

In v20 Some Greeks who had come to Jerusalem to attend the Passover paid a visit to Philip, and said, "Sir, we want to meet Jesus." (For, Jesus came not only for the Jews, but for all people). In v22 we read that Philip told Andrew about it, and they went together to ask Jesus. Jesus' reply seems awfully strange at first. Phil and Andrew come and say some Greeks want to meet you and (v23-24) Jesus replied, "The time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory. The truth is, a kernel of wheat must be planted in the soil. Unless it dies it will be alone--a single seed. But its death will produce many new kernels--a plentiful harvest of new lives." Don't you think Phil and Andrew had to be thinking, "What in the world does that have to do with these people wanting to meet you?"

But it has everything to do with it, if these Greeks, like the others, only wanted to meet the man can call a dead man back to life. Did you ever notice that Jesus never put up a large tent, advertised He was coming for a week of granting miracles, then sold tickets and /or took a large offering for people to come and see Him perform?

Jesus said the time had come for Him to receive glory, but not because of His miracles, rather because of His suffering, death and resurrection. A kernel of wheat must die to produce new kernels. Unless you plant a seed it remains a single seed. But if you plant it then it can produce more of its kind. Jesus is using nature to provide a parable about Him. Apart from death His life stands in isolation, with no power of increase. By His death and resurrection He would produce other "kernels." Those who put their faith in Jesus, who believe in His death and resurrection for their sins receive new life, spiritual life, His life, and then have power to continue the work He began, sharing the good news that Jesus gives eternal life to all who repent and believe in Him. Death is the key to spiritual fruitfulness.

2. You

(v25-26) The same principle applies for His followers. "Those who love their life in this world will lose it. Those who despise their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. All those who want to be my disciples must come and follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And if they follow me, the Father will honor them." If you want to gather around yourself things, which are perishable, things that will not last, then you will perish with them. But if you live not for the things that are of this world, but for God, then you prepare yourself for the higher life. (v26) If you want to be like Jesus and one day be with Jesus then you must follow Him and His example. That involves following Him by dying to self and allowing Him to direct your life. It means living for God and others first, putting them before yourself. It will mean sacrificing for others, like Jesus did for you. This will be rewarded by sharing a glorious future (not here on earth) but with Him, including being honored by the Father in Heaven. This prospect is open to any person, Greek or Jew or anyone else.

(v27) By speaking of these things, Jesus was made more intensely conscious of the price he would soon be paying for the fulfillment of His office as Redeemer, or Savior of the world. "Now my soul is deeply troubled. Should I pray, 'Father, save me from what lies

ahead'? But that is the very reason why I came!" He came to die, to give His life as a sacrifice for sin.

The turning point for us is Palm Sunday. It is our moment of triumph. It was a triumph because God through Jesus decided to ignore our miserable state and act on our behalf. He chose to ignore the crowd's version of Palm Sunday and go with His. Do you want to meet Jesus? Then you can't go with the crowd; you can't demand a life of ease, convenience and comfort. You must put your trust fully in Jesus and follow Him in giving yourself for God and others.

In the other Gospels (Matt., Mark, & Luke) we are told that when Jesus was on the Mount of Olives, He sent two disciples ahead. "Go into that village over there," he told them, "and as you enter it, you will see a colt tied there that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks what you are doing, just say, 'The Lord needs it.' " So they went and found the colt, just as Jesus had said. And sure enough, as they were untying it, the owners asked them, "Why are you untying our colt?" And the disciples simply replied, "The Lord needs it." And the owners permitted them to take it.

Jesus could have worked this out with the owners ahead of time, or because Jesus had been through that area so many times before, He knew a donkey and it's colt would be tied up there. But, either way a person's donkey and colt were very valuable. It would be like someone asking to borrow your car. Yet, the owner was willing to give the Lord what they had. We must be willing to give the Lord all we have so that Jesus can be brought to the people and do what He needs to do in our lives as well.

3. You Meeting Jesus

On Palm Sunday Jesus made up His mind that He would give His life so that you could have life, real life, spiritual life, eternal life. You do not deserve what He did for you, but He saw the potential in you. Jesus died to give you life and you must give your life for Him. To meet Jesus you must turn from a sin / selfishness and believe in Jesus. To meet Jesus you must surrender to Him and allow Him to have His way in your life.

When my son, Jesse, and I were in Florence, Italy we went to the museum where the statue of David by Michelangelo is on exhibit. I heard a story recently about Michelangelo. It's reported that he created that beautiful statue of David from a piece of stone that had been discarded. When asked how he managed to carve such a masterpiece from the rough ugly stone, he replied, "I did not carve David. I saw David in the stone and I simply let him out." God sees the potential in you, the trials in your life are to carve away the rough ugly stone and let you out. We have to die to live, it is a spiritual principle. Death is the key to spiritual fruitfulness.

I also recently heard a story about the bristlecone pines that grow on top of mountains in the western United States at elevations of more than 10,000 feet. They are believed to be the oldest living trees in the world, with some estimated to be 3,000 to 4,000 years old! In order to live this long, they've had to survive some of the harshest conditions on earth: arctic temperatures, fierce winds, and little rainfall. Ironically, though, the brutal

environment is the reason they've survived for thousands of years the extreme conditions have produced extraordinary strength!

God calls you to come and die. God uses adversities, failures, and disappointments to grind off our rough places and "let Jesus out" in us. And like the bristlecone pines that grow stronger in their harsh environment, so God uses our afflictions and calamities to strengthen us.

If we want to meet Jesus it will not mean an easier life. It will mean a life of sacrifice. It begins by turning from sin in our life and then living for God ...only, trusting Him with our lives. To meet Jesus is to follow Him and become like Him. We learn from the things we suffer, we meet Jesus and grow spiritually through the dark times of our life. We learn through discipline. That's not how we would like it, but that's just how it is in this fallen world; just look at your own children, how do they learn?

(v19) The Pharisees said to each other, "We've lost. Look, the whole world has gone after Him!" If that is true why did these same people go against Him after Palm Sunday?

Three reasons:

1. Jesus began to talk about commitment (we must give our life completely to Him).
2. Jesus said all people are worth loving (we must give our life for others).
3. Jesus began to talk about a cross. (there was a cross for Him and we will have crosses too)

These are not popular topics, but it will take commitment to God, love for all people and willingness to take up a cross, denying ourselves and following Jesus if we want to meet Jesus.