Clear Away the Clutter

Palm Sunday

Opening: the custom of “holding a wake”

Text: John 1: 19 – 23 NLT

19 This was John’s testimony when the Jewish leaders sent priests and Temple assistants from Jerusalem to ask John, “Who are you?” 20 He came right out and said, “I am not the Messiah.”

21 “Well then, who are you?” they asked. “Are you Elijah?”

“No,” he replied. “Are you the Prophet we are expecting?” (Deut 18:15 – Moses)

“No.” 22 “Then who are you? We need an answer for those who sent us. What do you have to say about yourself?” 23 John replied in the words of the prophet Isaiah:

“I am a voice shouting in the wilderness, ‘Clear the way for the LORD’s coming!’”

John was quoting the prophet Isaiah 40:3 – John knew who he was and what he was supposed to do!

The people of John’s day had been waiting for the Messiah, a savior to deliver them from Roman oppression

John knew it was his calling to proclaim that the time of that promise had arrived

John 1: 26 John told them, “I baptize with water, but right here in the crowd is someone you do not recognize.” NLT

John’s Message … Clear away the things blocking God’s path to your heart.

The time in now … The Messiah is here!

The window of opportunity is open … get ready don’t miss it!

Daily Bread – “Son Reflector”

Jesus generated extreme excitement, He spoke like no one ever did before, He did what had never been done before, because He was the one - He was the light and the moment had arrived

John The Baptist was the opening act for Jesus’ three year ministry which would reach its pinnacle in the space of a week with his triumphant entry, his death on the cross and Resurrection three days later
In His three years of ministry, Jesus generated incredible excitement

- Teaching about God in a way no one ever did before
- Doing incredible miracles — opening blind eyes — deaf ears — healing paralyzed limbs
- Curing blood disorders and leprosy
- Casting out demonic powers
- Calming wind and waves with a spoken word …. Prompting his own disciples to ask *who is this guy that even the wind and waves obey him?*
- Bringing a little girl and young man in the middle of funeral procession — and a dead and buried friend back to life
- In three years time hundreds of prophecies were fulfilled and centuries waiting was over.

A **window of opportunity**, it would not remain open indefinitely — a shelf life for the nation of Israel — Judea and they missed it …

**A curious contrast on Palm Sunday**

See **Luke 19: 28 – 44**

29 As he came to the towns of Bethpage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives, he sent two disciples ahead.
30 “Go into that village over there,” he told them. “As you enter it, you will see a young donkey tied there that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If anyone asks, ‘Why are you untying that colt?’ just say, ‘The Lord needs it.’”

32 So they went and found the colt, just as Jesus had said. 33 And sure enough, as they were untying it, the owners asked them, “Why are you untying that colt?”

34 And the disciples simply replied, “The Lord needs it.” 35 So they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their garments over it for him to ride on.

36 As he rode along, the crowds spread out their garments on the road ahead of him. 37 When he reached the place where the road started down the Mount of Olives, all of his followers began to shout and sing as they walked along, praising God for all the wonderful miracles they had seen.

38 “Blessings on the King who comes in the name of the LORD!
   Peace in heaven, and glory in highest heaven!”

39 But some of the Pharisees among the crowd said, “Teacher, rebuke your followers for saying things like that!” 40 He replied, “If they kept quiet, the stones along the road would burst into cheers!”

**You wonder** … did he mean that literally?

41 **But as he came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city ahead, he began to weep.** 42 “How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes. 43 Before long your enemies will build ramparts against your walls and encircle you and close
in on you from every side. 44 They will crush you into the ground, and your children with you. Your enemies will not leave a single stone in place, because you did not recognize it when God visited you.

40 years down the road Jerusalem would be destroyed sacked and burned its people slaughtered or carried off as slaves … Just as Jesus said … we get a sense of his grief.

But on that day … Jesus literally fulfills ancient prophecy.

- **This is the Day that the LORD hath made …** Psalm 118:24
- “Rejoice ... Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! ... your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet humble... riding on a donkey's colt.” Zechariah 9:9
- **Daniel 9: 25, 26** Famous 70 weeks prophecy (anointed one means Messiah)
  Jesus rode into Jerusalem 483 years after Daniel’s prophecy to the day (If you chase it down the starting and ending points and the entire math is there for you.

Jesus allows himself to be hailed as The One – The Promised Messiah!

The Pharisees knew they’d lost control … their power deal with Rome was hanging by a thread … they implore Jesus to rebuke the people … tell them to stop shouting Hosanna (Save now!)

Yeah like that’s gonna happen!

Jesus who’s gone out of his way to conceal his identity up to this point tells them … *If these were to be quiet, the very stones would cry out!*

It all comes together just as God’s Word said it would … Its Passover and the entire city of Jerusalem is in an uproar with anticipation and excitement!

**Crowds of people** jam the streets of Jerusalem, literally making a path … clearing the way for Jesus to enter. They drape their clothes and cast palm branches in the street for Jesus to ride over them – red carpet treatment.

You see John the Baptist’s words being fulfilled here in a literal sense.

Clear the pathway make His way straight … but not what God wanted.

In the middle of all of this Luke records that Jesus wept over the city.

**Luke 19: 41** But as he came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city ahead, he began to weep.

In the middle of mass jubilant hysteria – at an incredible moment of triumph – Jesus weeps declaring that they missed their opportunity.

What does He mean? They are acknowledging Jesus as Messiah!
When it comes to God, it always has to do with Faith and believing!

“For without faith it is impossible to please God …” Hebrews 11:6

Did these people believe he was the Messiah? Yes – But just believing isn’t enough!

James 2:19 “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder.”

- John 12: 37 37 But despite all the miraculous signs Jesus had done, most of the people still did not believe in him.

They failed to do what John warned them about …– clear away the clutter from your heart

**Hoardding** is now a defined psychological sickness –

Hoarders continue to collect more and more stuff filling their homes, garage, attics and available space until they cannot get to their kitchen sink, bathroom, bedroom – the clutter has taken over their lives and they can’t see it. What they hold as valuable is literally garbage, and they cannot see it or get rid of it!

Krystn and Rob’s neighbor – had to the Y to shower – stacks of newspapers ceiling to floor while the rest of the house goes to ruin.

Spiritual hording is no better.

We can get so caught up in our daily lives even as Christians that we can’t see the clutter that is blocking a healthy relationship with God … not a stagnant religious existence

**Lenten season** - Traditionally it’s a six week period of preparation, prayer and fasting.

Clearing away the clutter the junk that’s keeping you where you are instead of where God wants you to be. Clearing away starts by way of sacrifice – that’s what repentance is

If you think you are not cluttered it’s a sure sign you are

My personal struggle this year …

What are you limiting God from doing in your life because of clutter?

Jesus wept – they couldn’t – wouldn’t see it …Unbelief and rejection breaks God’s heart

He wants to give you what really matters – a heart that’s unfettered – free
Psalm 24:3-6 (NKJV)

3 Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD?
   Or who may stand in His holy place?
4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart,