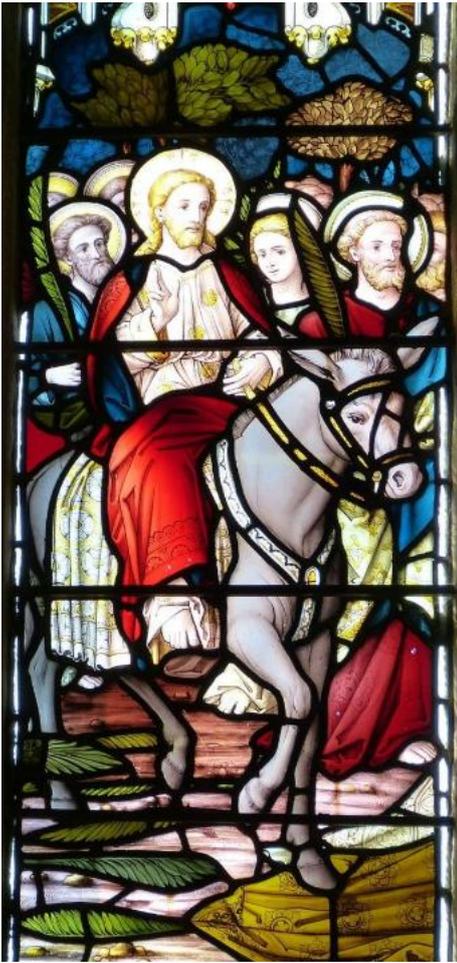


Children's Sermon for Palm Sunday

John 12:12-19



¹²The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” ¹⁴And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, ¹⁵“Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!” ¹⁶His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. ¹⁷The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. ¹⁸The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. ¹⁹So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.”

I once tried to break off a palm branch. Believe me, it’s hard work! The branches of a palm tree are fibrous and tough. It takes hard work, scraped up fingers, and a lot of time to break off a branch like that. That’s how I know that when the people in Jerusalem back then scattered palm branches along the road and started shouting, they didn’t just do it out of boredom. Something pretty big must have happened for them to start doing such things. Yes, something big *had* happened. We must first carefully think over what must have happened before we can understand why the people did something so crazy like that.

Not long before this, Jesus had raised his dead friend Lazarus from the grave. In front of many witnesses, the stinking shrouds were torn from his body so that he could once again see the light of day. Just imagine: There’s someone who’s really dead. He’s so dead that he’s been stinking for days. But suddenly, he’s sitting there with his friends, telling jokes, and chatting with them as if nothing had happened. I mean, if I had seen something like that, I wouldn’t want to pick just the palm branch but the *entire tree!* Anyone who has seen something like that can now truly tear branches from trees without any trouble and shout as loudly as possible. That’s exactly what the people did back then. They shouted at the top of their lungs, “Hosanna!”

Who knows what that word means? It means, “Lord, help!” The interesting thing is that Jesus doesn’t rebuke them, nor does He get off the donkey to scold the people for causing such a commotion. No, He let it all happen because the people were right. Jesus is the Messiah who came to help. If He can raise the dead from their graves, surely He must be able to solve just about any problem in the world, right? I think we both can and should expect Jesus to help. After all, His very name means “Savior”! We can all line up and tell Jesus what we need. There are so many situations where Jesus can help. For one person, it’s an important test they must take. For another, it’s a serious illness.

Do you know where you want to ask Jesus to help you? In Jerusalem, there were more than enough reasons to shout “Hosanna!” and “Lord, help!” and then, Jesus came to help! Jesus helped them by making His way to Jerusalem. When we look at Jesus now, I am struck by something special: He walks His path straight ahead. We don’t see Jesus standing by the roadside, scratching His head and asking, “Should I do this or not? Is it same to go to Jerusalem now?” Nor do we see Jesus hesitate, thinking, “Shouldn’t I wait until the political situation has cooled down a bit?” No, Jesus walks straight to Jerusalem. He doesn’t just want to go to Jerusalem, but He has a very specific place there in mind.

Does anyone know what this specific place is called? Yes, but now I may have to scare you. Nothing good happened there on the cross. The story of Easter wasn’t some big party. Things didn’t just get better and better for Jesus. No, it went in a completely different direction. The people had torn branches from the trees because Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. And now Jesus Himself is supposed to die? How can that be good? Above all: How can it be that Jesus Himself wants this to happen, and with such great conviction?

Jesus hadn’t come up with a Plan B, C, or D in case the first plan didn’t work out. He always only had one plan, and that plan had been devised long before. The people in Jerusalem had probably expected something else. We, too, are often thinking something else when we say, “Jesus, help us.” But Jesus does not think in the same way as us. He once put it this way: “...Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life” (John 3:14-15). When Jesus says He wants to be lifted up, it is because He did not just want to make a few people in Jerusalem happy, nor did He want to help us just so that we could have a new holiday called “easter” to hunt for easter eggs. No, when Jesus helps everyone, He wants to help us in such a way that the world’s greatest problems are eliminated and we are truly helped.

Now I want to tell you a little story. Once upon a time, there was a rich man. He had many big, beautiful houses, and many shiny, fast cars. People said, “What a lucky man!” But then came the first bad day. He lost a house. And then another, and another. “It doesn’t matter,” he said, “I still have plenty of houses and I still have my cars.” But then he lost the cars too, one after another. “It doesn’t matter,” he said, “I still have one house and one car. That’s enough for me.” But then he lost the last house and the last car too.” He sat there alone, but then he looked at his dog. “It’s ok,” he said, “I still have my dog. He is with me, and that is enough.” Then his dog got sick and died. The man cried. He looked down at his hands. “It doesn’t matter,” he said quietly, “I still have my health. As long as I’m healthy, I’m fine.” But then he himself fell ill.

Now he sat there: no house, no car, no dog, no health. He no longer knew what to say. Then an old woman came along. She walked slowly but looked at him kindly. She sat down next to him and didn’t say a word. Then she took something out of her pocket—a small cross—and placed it in his hand. The man looked at the cross.

Then the old woman said, “You see? You can lose everything. Your house. Your car. Your health. Even the ones you love. But this”—she pointed to the cross—“no one can take that away from you. Because Jesus died and rose again. For you. That remains. That endures. In the end, only the cross remains, and that alone truly helps. The man held the cross tightly in his hand. For the first time in a long time, he was not alone.

Hosanna. Praise be to Jesus Christ. Amen.