

## A Familiar Path, A New Walk, A Spirit-Led Journey

### Sermon for Palm Sunday: Matthew 21:1-11 - The Triumphal Entry

Please stand for the reading of God's Word in Matthew 21:1-11 (NIV) - *The Triumphal Entry*

<sup>1</sup>As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup>saying to them, *"Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. <sup>3</sup>If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."*

<sup>4</sup>This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

<sup>5</sup>"Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

<sup>6</sup>The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. <sup>7</sup>They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. <sup>8</sup>A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup>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 heaven!"* <sup>10</sup>When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" <sup>11</sup>The crowds answered, *"This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."* -

As we go forward in life, we travel many roads along the way. Some streets and highways that we travel become so familiar we lose sight of the journey that grows from them. For many of us here today the message of Christ's Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem is a familiar path, for others this may be a new road for you.

The Lord has blessed Debi and me with the journey to St. Timothy's and He has filled us with joy to be joining you this Palm Sunday. We look forward to the wonderful voyage ahead as the Lord has called us to come alongside this vibrant house of worship and fertile ground for discipleship. We are excited to walk with you as together we look to "Know the Father, Grow as disciples of Jesus and Go in the Spirit" to reach and serve the San Jose communities that surround us. While we look to the familiar path of Christ to lead the way, we are very much aware that this is a new passageway for us and a continuing part of the Spirit-led journey the Lord has laid out before us to join with new friends to make disciples.

The ministry the Lord has called us to anchors on the verse from 1 Thessalonians 2:8 (NIV):

<sup>8</sup>*"so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well."*

We feel encouraged to begin this voyage together with you as we move through life together, living Christ-centered and growing to become more like Him. As we reflect on Jesus path to Jerusalem this Palm Sunday, we too can rejoice and celebrate as Christ awakens us in the same way he did the Jews and Gentiles of His time to His Father's plans for His destiny as our Lord and Savior.

We can begin to see our own entrance into life with Christ as an expedition that will take us together from one experience to the next, through triumph and tribulation, from sacrifice to significance.

For now, let us take ourselves back to Jerusalem on this Palm Sunday and see ourselves among the crowd. Can you picture yourself, your neighbors, and your family members shouting “Hosanna in the Highest”? For His disciples, they found themselves on a familiar road that first Palm Sunday - the road to Jerusalem. They knew, as they drew closer, they would soon be coming around the Mount of Olives, and see the city of Jerusalem suddenly spread out before them. They had traveled this way before many times. They are again making this trek to the city. Jerusalem would be swelling with millions ready to celebrate the Passover.

Jesus knew the road as well. He had traveled it before, from his childhood on into adulthood. Mary and Joseph took the passage to Jerusalem to join the festival and to fellowship with others. Living in this time and seeking the Lord, we can experience a glorious road and a stirring fellowship on the pilgrimage to celebrate together. For all of us, we would be awe-inspired to see the city; anticipating its glory recognizing what the Lord had made!

This was a familiar road, an inspiring and love filled road. However, the journey this Palm Sunday is about to take a completely different turn. The path would not be any different, but the events that would unfold along the way and the outcome each of us would experience would be different from any other trip we ever made to Jerusalem.

On this day, the disciples would listen to Jesus and prepare a donkey’s colt to serve as a mount for Him to enter Jerusalem. On this day, you, and the many others surrounding you, would see Jesus and begin shouting, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

The road was familiar, but the walk would change, and the journey would be spirit-led. For us and for the disciples, we know the road; all the while Jesus knows the journey. Only He knows what would unfold along the way. He instructs the disciples, *“You will find a donkey with her colt by her, untie them.”* He knew how they would respond in obedience, further instructing others: *“the lord has need of it, and will bring it back shortly.”*

In many ways, as I have followed Christ in my journey to St. Timothy’s, I feel very much like the colt that Christ used to bring His glory to Jerusalem. Only a few years back, the Lord called me to pastor a church in Clearwater, FL, known as Dream Center Metro, He began to train me and grow me to lead a congregation into Word and Sacrament. Teaching them to see the power of His Word to bring about life transformation and grow a body of fellow believers into disciples who responded in obedience and out of love to see God’s purpose played out in their everyday lives.

The Lord enlarged my heart to reach the lost and guide men and women throughout the community into a deeper relationship with Him. We took joy in baptizing them into a new life with Christ at the center!

As Debi and I move ahead from our 12 year calling in Clearwater to walk this new journey into St. Timothy’s. The Lord had me reflecting on Christ’s entry into Jerusalem. I now ask you to join me in taking an even closer look at Christ’s journey into Jerusalem and what he would ride this Palm Sunday.

It was a young donkey colt. In the Gospel of Mark, Christ makes good use of an “untested, untamed” animal; He does this throughout His ministry calling those He chooses to serve a simple role that becomes significant in moving His story forward.

He accepts and uses the little, the small, even the insignificant, but He gives them a new identity and new destiny. Most would only use this young colt simply to carry their baggage. Not many would trust this untamed animal to carry a person. None would have rationally chosen this donkey to carry the Lord.

Much like this colt, the Lord did the same with a young man named Timothy, who led the church of Ephesus. Timothy felt very much like this young beast still learning to develop in the purpose God had given him in life. By God's grace, Paul saw great potential in Timothy. Paul demonstrated great confidence in Timothy entrusting him to shepherd the flock and become a light for the Ephesians to see Christ in His fullness. He made himself available to God to serve the purpose God had called him.

In a similar way, I come to St. Timothy's, much like your namesake, identifying with the young colt who is carrying Christ into Jerusalem. In my early life, many along the way served as prophets predicting I would amount to nothing more than an untamed donkey as I many times showed my mule-headed arrogance. Little did they know... the glory that would come with the truth of their prophetic words.

I humbly begin this journey simply as one called along with the staff at St. Tim's to carry Christ further into your community. I welcome the guidance and direction that Pastor Dan, much like Paul, will provide helping us to learn to shepherd the flock who has been in His care for so many years. Last week, Pastor Dan spoke of God honoring transitions and the journey that Christ took from sacrifice to death to resurrection and new life.

Together, we walk the path just as the disciples did, looking to raise up Christ and make His glory known. He enters the city as Our Lord, Our King and Our Savior. Jesus knew how the journey would unfold: On Palm Sunday, crowds shouting Hosanna! By Good Friday morning, crowds yelling "crucify Him!" On Palm Sunday, we see crowds laying palm branches before him. On His walk to Calvary, women follow behind him crying, looking on as his blood and sweat dripped and as he struggled under the cross. Jesus knew the journey. Still, he went forward.

So let us shift our focus to our current day, what does Christ's journey on Palm Sunday have to do with us today?

For each of us, as we travel this road this morning, we start to understand that all of us walk down the road of life. For each of us, the roadways we take may be slightly different. We come to realize that even though we know the various paths of our lives, only Christ can reveal to us the journey He has planned.

We may know the pathway, but our Lord knows for each of us the journey. You see HIS journey will guide you; HIS journey will refine our hearts, and HIS heart will reflect from us into the lives of others. We begin to understand we are but a small part in His Kingdom coming and He will define our steps we take along the way.

If you are like me, you like to be in control of the steps and most of us center those steps on our own wants and desires. We start early in life as teenagers shouting to our parents, "It's my life! Leave me alone; let me do what I want!" We face a battle or time of crises and begin to ask the Lord, "Why me? Why am I struggling?" We quickly forget that our lives are not our own, that we are simply one actor in a bigger story that needs to unfold. We do not like to think that the Lord will direct our lives. That He alone works in concert with our family, our parents, our spouses, our children, our neighbors, our coworkers, our acquaintances. We begin to see that our lives are never disconnected from one another – our lives are never about simply about you or me.

In our human nature, we strive through life - self-centered and selfish. We act out daily in our sinful human nature. Instead of looking at others, we turn inward and fail to see the truth that God desires us to look upward and outward. The truth is our lives belong to Jesus Christ. Each of our lives should center on Christ who died for us. We need to see our lives as a life that is about what the Lord will do in us and through us. Wanting to be in control, we may take action to put ourselves on center stage but let us be honest with ourselves: Are our lives really our own? Is my life really my own?

In our humanness, we take our lives down the paths of destruction. Christ redeemed us through this journey; each one of us. He brings us back into alignment with His will. As the Bible says (1 Corinthians 6:20): *“<sup>20</sup> you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.”* Each of our lives, every single one, Jesus paid for it. He paid for our wrong actions; he sacrificed to give us the blessings that come our way. In response, we should strive to be a disciple, His followers, a lamb, one of His sheep, a young colt ready to carry the Savior into our everyday lives!

We may often look at life as a journey, a series of roadways. Along the way, we have roads we know well. We travel them each day, each week, each month, year after year. Most of those roads will continue to travel repeatedly. However, we fail to realize at times that Jesus has gone with us every step of the way. Christ alone knows about the journey. He alone knows what unexpected potholes may come and what dangers we may face along that road. Only He knows what detours may take place. No matter how much we think we know the roads; only Jesus knows our journey.

As followers of Christ, in San Jose, the Lord calls us to play our part. We must give fully of ourselves to clear the way for Him. Jesus does not need our money, our time, or talents, yet He has given these to us so that we may honor Him, so that we may help give others a smooth path as they journey forward in life.

Jesus may give us a humble ride into the heart of one of someone else – a friend, a family member, a co-worker. He may look for us to go ahead of Him, or ask us to follow behind Him to make a difference in someone else’s life. Jesus brings a humility into our hearts and prepares our hearts and minds for those simple conversations about faith, forgiveness, and perseverance.

These simple conversations happen every day. Jesus knows how the road needs to be paved, when the direction needs to change and will guide us to the destination. Christ develops us into humble, never-before used vessels and gives us the gentle answers we will need to claim a ride for Himself into the heart of another.

As we reflect on Palm Sunday. I pray you see a new path for yourself. Let your life be the vessel Christ tames and humbly rides each day into the hearts of others to live out His Word and reflect His character in all you do.

Have courage to share His Word with others. Remind yourself, the journey you will take may not center on the destination you may have in mind. I pray we venture out each day making our lives about furthering His Kingdom and becoming difference makers in the world around us.

For each of us, we should not desire to be the main character in our lives, rather you and I can strive to be central characters used by the Lord to carry Christ into the lives of others. We can take an amazing journey that we can see through His eyes as we take the journey He desires for each of us on the road to a New Jerusalem! Praise Him – Hosanna in the highest! Amen.