

A Most Remarkable Procession.

Text: Mat 21:1-11
Suggested Hymns:
733, 603, 87, 113, 4

- 1) A very great multitude
- 2) The Disciples
- 3) Your King

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 21:1-11, ¹*Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. ³“And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.”*

⁴*All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: ⁵“Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.’”*

⁶*So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. ⁷They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. ⁸And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: “Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ Hosanna in the highest!” ¹⁰And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, “Who is this?” ¹¹So the multitudes said, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.” (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Most of us have seen remarkable processions. It may have been a procession after the athletes returned from the Olympic Games or maybe some other sporting procession. Or it may have been on one of the Queen’s visits to Australia that we saw a great procession. Other processions include victory in war, and remembrance of wars such as we see on ANZAC day.

In about 60 B. C. Pompey entered Rome in a most magnificent procession with spoils from every land. Captive princes and kings were chained to his chariot. Bronze tablets, engraved with the names of the conquered nations, proclaimed Pompey the conqueror of the whole world.

We remember the historic procession of Joshua and the Israelites that laid flat the walls of Jericho. Yet there is no procession better known and of greater consequence than the one of which our text speaks. Of Jesus entry into Jerusalem on which we now call Palm Sunday. Let us remember this most remarkable Procession. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. A Very Great Multitude

Pilgrims by the tens of thousands from the Mediterranean world were gathering in Jerusalem for the Passover. The whole nation was deeply stirred by the teaching and the miracles of the young Prophet from Galilee. A number of times His fame had spread through the entire land.

Just recently He had been in near-by Bethany at the grave of Lazarus, who had been dead four days. “[Jesus] *cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth!”*”⁴⁴ *And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth.”*¹

This miracle caused such a sensation that the chief priests and the Pharisees called for a meeting of the Sanhedrin and said, as we read in John 11:47-48 “*What shall we do? For this Man works many signs.*”⁴⁸ “*If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.*” When those pilgrims came to the Holy City to purify themselves before the Passover, “*they sought Jesus, and spoke among themselves as they stood in the temple, “What do you think -- that He will not come to the feast?”*”²

News spread through the city that Jesus was on His way from Jericho, where He had opened the eyes of the blind. He was lodging in Bethany, where Lazarus lived whom He had raised from the dead. There they had given a dinner in His honour. “*Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead.*”¹⁰ *But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also,*

¹¹ because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.”³

“The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ¹³ took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him.”⁴ What an opportunity!

These religious people did not merely crave to satisfy their curiosity. They wanted to honour their great Rabbi and wonder-working Prophet from Galilee. When they met Jesus as He was coming to the city, *“a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: “Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ Hosanna in the highest!”*

Here they gave a religious expression of the hope of Israel. They were chanting their pilgrim psalms as they approached the holy city. They knew the ritual of their Church. As we stand on the side line, observing that procession, we are inclined to admire the religious fervour of these multitudes. Church-membership, church attendance, and church interest, are distinct blessings.

There was something desperately wrong, however, with those people who so enthusiastically welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem. They knew the routine of the Passover celebration. They were, vaguely at least, acquainted with the symbolism of the Passover lamb, which pointed to the coming Lamb of God that would take away the sin of the world. They sang hosannas to the Son of David, the coming Messiah. They were religious people.

But they missed in that very procession the one great opportunity. They failed to see that in that very moment Old Testament Scriptures were being fulfilled. They failed to recognise that this Jesus of Nazareth was the very Messiah, the Christ, David’s Son and the Son of God, the only Saviour of mankind. ¹⁰ *And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, “Who is this?” ¹¹ So the multitudes said, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.”⁵* Consequently they were an easy prey of their leaders on the following Friday when their hosannas were changed into *“Crucify Him!”*

Their blindness to the Scriptures and the facts before them brought them to invoke the curse of Jehovah, to call the blood of the Son of God, upon themselves

and upon their children. The destruction of Jerusalem with its horrors, the dispersion of the Jews, the calamities that follow this marked race to the present day, can be traced back to its unbelief as manifested in the blunder of the multitude on that first Palm Sunday.

That same fatal mistake is repeated by a large section of Christendom, churches, synods and assemblies, congregations and religious societies. Multitudes of them today give the same answer as that Passover crowd. Jesus, bless Him, the flower of the race, yet, after all, only "*the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.*" Spread this conviction, and then hell has conquered.

In Australia it is at present not considered a nice thing to burn Christian churches or to line up their clergy against a wall as targets for the firing squad. But to get rid of the Christian religion all that is necessary is to persuade people to accept the belief of those who marched in that Jerusalem procession, who saw in Jesus no more than the great prophet of Galilee. How many blood-bought souls has this Satanic deception brought to eternal doom!

We are now in the procession with Jesus. The fact that you are in this house of God today is evidence that you are on the way with Him to Jerusalem. You have sung the hymns, said the prayers, listened to His Word. It is of tremendous importance earnestly to examine yourself whether you are really in the saving faith. Prove your own self! What a disaster if you were merely going through a religious routine!

We must be personally well founded on the doctrines of God's Word, especially on those of the person and the work of the world's only Redeemer. If we are not, we are likely to be swayed by popular opinion, by what the elders, Pharisees, and chief priests of our day are saying. We shall be driven about by every wind of doctrine and may in the end be persuaded to commit the damning sin of pronouncing the "*Away with Him!*" on the real Christ, the God-man of the vicarious atonement.

2. The Disciples

Apart from the teeming crowd we also observe marching on the way to Jerusalem the better instructed disciples of Jesus, Peter and James and John, etc., and also other men and women who had come with Jesus from Galilee.

These disciples had a decided advantage. They were “disciples,” pupils in the school of which Jesus was the Master, or Teacher. On the way to the festival Jesus had taught them repeatedly the real purpose of this journey. We read in Luke 18:31-33, ³¹ *Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished.* ³² *“For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon.* ³³ *“They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.”*

These disciples professed the true saving faith, *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*⁶ They gave evidence of their faith in that royal procession. For *when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me.* ³ *“And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.”*

This was a rather unusual request on the part of their Master. The thing they were to do seemed unreasonable. Yet, when the Master had spoken, it was up to them to comply and to obey. Without asking a question *the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them.* ⁷ *They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them.*

Here is the characteristic of every true Christian, *‘Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears.’*⁷ Let the world, even the religious world, scoff at Christian doctrines. If they are clearly revealed in the Scriptures, we must put our faith in them implicitly. And when the call of duty comes to us, we must be prepared humbly to obey our God. No matter how great the sacrifice that may be involved or how unreasonable the order appears to be, we Bible Christians must firmly cling to every word of God with a strong faith and with humble compliance.

No one will question the sincerity of Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, and Nathanael as they marched in that triumphal entry into Jerusalem. With all their devoutness, however, these men failed utterly to recognise the real meaning of that event.

They failed to realise that then and there ancient prophecies were being fulfilled, such as that of their great prophet Isaiah, in Isaiah 62:11, ¹¹ *Indeed the*

LORD has proclaimed To the end of the world: “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Surely your salvation is coming; Behold, His reward is with Him, And His work before Him.’

And that of the prophet Zechariah, ⁹ ***“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.***

St. Matthew years later, in writing this account, states in our text, ⁴ ***All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: ⁵ “Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.’”***

At the time of the entry, however, although Jesus had told them why He was going to Jerusalem, we are told, ³⁴ ***But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.***

St. John in his gospel relates the triumphal entry, but definitely states, ¹⁶ ***His disciples did not understand these things.***⁸

This failure to comprehend the Word of Christ, the proper interpretation of these events, the prophecies and their fulfilment, meant disaster for those disciples in the eventful week that followed. How they blundered! How they slept when they should have been watching! How they drew the sword when it should have been kept in the sheath! How they so shamefully left their Lord in His hour of need! How they denied and betrayed Him! How they brought grief and sorrow and despair upon themselves!

This disaster should serve us as a solemn warning. Christians today are flooded with the most subversive literature. Radio broadcasts din into their ears the subtle deceptions of rank heresies. Scribes, elders, religious leaders of eminence, often with choice Biblical phraseology couched in appealing words, play on the emotions and captivate the hearts of the unsuspecting followers of Jesus.

They become confused, bewildered, shaken in their Christian convictions. And blinded by the spirit of darkness, they err from the way, make a shipwreck of their faith, and grieve the Spirit of God so that He departs from their hearts.

While we solemnly warn you against these Satanic deceptions, we appeal to you who are in the way with Jesus to read the best Christian books and magazines that are published for your edification. We plead with you to search the Scriptures daily and to continue in the Word of Jesus, for then are you His disciples indeed. You then shall know the truth which will make you free.

3. Your King

But let us return once more to the Mount of Olives. That great procession marches on. Men, women, and children, citizens of Jerusalem and pilgrims from distant lands, with the disciples, sing the welcome, waving palm-branches. By all means do not miss the matter of the greatest importance. For centuries the prophetic proclamation was, “Tell the daughter of Zion, ***“Behold, your King is coming to you.”***” Now it is in the present tense, “Behold your King!”

We dare not miss our King. We should endeavour fully to know who He is and realise what He means to us. We have seen how utterly the rank and file of those Old Testament church-members failed to realise whom they had in their midst. As a result they disavowed loyalty to Jesus and disclaimed allegiance by publicly shouting, ***“We have no king but Caesar.”***⁹ This renunciation was a fatal mistake.

Even the disciples did not understand the kingship of Jesus nor the nature of His kingdom. They hoped for the honour of sitting on His right and on His left in His kingdom.

Even at the Lord’s ascension they showed notions of a temporal Messianic king when they asked, ***“Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”***¹⁰ Beware of these Millennial, Jewish, and sectarian dreams of Jesus as a visible, temporal king and ruler on this earth. You would be headed for a rude awakening.

Yet, citizens of the realm, you are called on to ***“Behold your King.”*** Behold, look at Him to know Him. This Jesus, the God-man, is the King Almighty, unto whom all power and authority is given in heaven and earth. Learn from His sacred records the person and the work of your divine Sovereign. ***“Behold your King”*** means, Put your trust and confidence in Him, swear allegiance and loyalty to Him alone.

Understand what it actually means when you say, *I believe that Jesus Christ - true God, Son of the Father from eternity, and true man, born of the Virgin Mary - is my Lord.*

At great cost He has saved and redeemed me, a lost and condemned person. He has freed me from sin, death, and the power of the devil - not with silver or gold, but with His holy and precious blood and His innocent suffering and death.

All this He has done that I may be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.

Jesus Christ is with us in every bright and dark day to the end of the world to guide, protect, and comfort us. By His efficacious Gospel His Holy Spirit calls, enlightens, sanctifies, and keeps us, by a living faith, in His Kingdom of Grace on earth and finally ushers us into His Kingdom of Glory.

Fellow disciples and pilgrims, we have on earth no lasting city. We seek the one to come. We are in the procession to the Jerusalem above. We must diligently avoid the disastrous mistakes of the multitude and the disciples. Soon you will see your King face to face. You will see ***“on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”***¹¹ ***Amen.***¹²

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ John 11:43

² John 11:56

³ John 12:9-11

⁴ John 12:12

⁵ Matthew 21:10-11

⁶ Matthew 16:16

⁷ 1 Samuel 3:9

⁸ John 12:16

⁹ John 19:15

¹⁰ Acts 1:6

¹¹ Revelation 19:16

¹² 1 Timothy 6:15-16