

“The way to the cross” Matthew 21:1-9 **Palmarum 2021**

Grace and peace in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

So, we finally begin Holy Week. This is the oldest festival of the church. Before Christmas and all other special days, Christians celebrated the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ during Holy Week. And Jesus began Holy Week with a triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Jesus was sitting on a donkey and the crowds threw their cloaks and palms in His way.

Our text says that in this way the prophecy of our Old Testament lesson was fulfilled (Zechariah 9-12):

"⁹Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
behold, your king is coming to you;
righteous and having salvation is he,
humble and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

At that time, when the king went out to make war, he was seated on a strong and fast horse. But, the prophet said that the Messiah, the promised King, the King of kings, would come on a mission of peace and reconciliation, sitting on an donkey, with a colt of a donkey.

All the people knew this prophecy. But they did not think of a humble king on a mission of peace and reconciliation, but a superhero who would conquer the Roman empire and restore the kingdom of Israel to its glory in the days of the kings David and Solomon. Maybe others had heard of the miracles of Jesus and come to see more wonders at His hands. Therefore, everyone greeted Jesus as "Son of David," a title of the Messiah. And our text says, the whole city was

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moved, but they asked, Who is this? And the multitude said: This is Jesus the prophet, from Nazareth of Galilee.

One question: Where were all these people on Good Friday when Jesus died on the cross? They were not at the foot of the cross. Nor were most of the disciples, only John and the Virgin Mary. Jesus knew that this triumphal entry was only the first stage of Holy Week. His destiny was on the cross, abandoned by the multitudes, his disciples, even God. The words of the psalm were some of the last words of Jesus on the cross: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? We deserve God to turn his back to us, but Jesus suffered the wrath of God in our places.

By His death on the cross, Jesus did not overcome an earthly empire, which then fell as all the kingdoms of this world will fall. Through His blood shed on the cross, Jesus defeated forever the power of sin, the world and the devil over our lives. The will of the Father for Jesus was the way to the cross and Jesus did not deviate from this path. Neither the admiration of the multitudes nor the abandonment of His disciples mattered, He continued towards the cross.

Today, the church has the mission to proclaim the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ to all nations. Like Jesus, our mission is not for the glory of this world. We do not have a guarantee of avoiding the sufferings of this world, nor to avoid the mockery and hatred of non-believers. We only have the promise of eternal life with Christ in heaven.

Sometimes we find success in our ministry when many people confess faith in Christ and attend services in the church. Perhaps in difficult times, people will seek God's help. Other people look for a more comfortable way. And many times, when life in general is comfortable, they forget God completely. They think, everything is fine,

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so why do we need a Savior? In any case, the church must continue in its mission to proclaim the Word of God to all nations.

Well, then, there are many people in this world who say, we have the Word of God, we have the Holy Spirit among us, But they have a different concept from us. Our concept of the church and the worship of God is for the faithful to receive the gifts of God in the preaching of the Word and the sacraments with reverence and gratitude. What God has done for us does not depend on our feelings.

For example, in the baptism of a baby, when he receives water on his forehead, sometimes the baby is happy and calm. Other times, the baby cries. In both cases, the baptism is valid. We have the sure promise that the Holy Spirit is always active in the means of grace, preaching and the sacraments.

But, there are some who say, we are Christians but we do not believe in visible means of grace. The sacraments are only ordinances of the Lord. There is no spiritual regeneration in baptism, nor is the body or blood of Christ present in the Holy Supper. For them, the security of faith in their hearts depends on their feelings. However, emotions come and go, they are not a sure base of faith.

Our worship consists in receiving the promises of God in the preaching and the sacraments. The rites and customs associated with this serve to teach and fix the doctrine of the church in our minds and hearts. Our faith is not a show. It's not for fun. We gather in adoration not only with those present at this moment, but with all the believers in the past, also with the believers in the times to come. Our order of service has its roots in the cult of the Old Testament and in the worship of the church of all ages.

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It does not matter how many people are in the church, shouting "Jesus." If we remain in the doctrine of the Lord, we only need two or three and Jesus is with us. The mark of the true church is the preaching of the Word in its purity and the administration of the sacraments according to the command of the Lord. Faith does not arise within us, but it is a gift of the Holy Spirit through the means of grace. That is why we have the peace that surpasses all understanding. Amen.