

“The Greatness of the One Who Serves”

“In Like a Lion and out Like a Lamb”

Matthew 21:1-11 and Luke 22:24-30

March 28th, 2010 ❖ Passion Sunday ❖ Year C

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My Dear Brothers and Sisters and Christ; Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

A common expression used to describe the month of March is “In like a lion and out like a lamb.” The idea expressed in this little is statement is that March usually comes in like a lion – meaning, the weather is often harsh and cold and then towards the end of the month it goes out like a lamb meaning, weather is supposed to be fair and mild. Living in Buffalo of course, this idea doesn’t always work out that way, does it? In fact, as we consider this month the middle portion has been sort of “lamb like” and in these last days probably it more like the lion. Either which way, we should probably leave working the weather out to the highly trained and accurate meteorologist. What is significant for us however is that this statement is also very fitting to our Jesus and his “march” in and out of the city of Jerusalem. What we learn from the various for today is that Jesus entered Jerusalem like a lion- triumphantly and king like, only to leave like a lamb; a silent servant lamb led to the slaughter.

Hosanna to the Great and Long Anticipated King”

It doesn’t take a great deal of reflection to grasp that the first Palm Sunday was a great day of joy for the people, and yet something quite different for Jesus. You see, the people were preparing to celebrate the Passover and it always brought about the reminder of their longing for the Messiah. Now, many people thought Jesus was just that; he was the One who would save and restore them by fighting against political enemies and bringing final victory. After all, he had already done some marvelous things which pointed to his power; teaching, healing, and even raising the dead to name a few. And so it was with hope on their minds, when Jesus made his way into the city in royal fashion they were the welcoming party waving palm branches as a sign of anticipation and cheering making clear their belief that he would save them. **“Hosanna to the Son of David, Blessed His He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”** Indeed, Jesus entered the city like a lion, not harsh and cold, but with great gust receiving the welcome he deserved!

Sadly however, their motive was all wrong. In essence, they weren’t praising him for who he truly was, but for what they wanted him to be. But it didn’t take too long for the Hosannas to be silenced after the people thought Jesus turned on them, Sure, Jesus was easy to listen to and follow when it agreed with their ideas or stroked their ego, but when his true identity and mission was revealed and the realization that he would suffer and they would subsequently suffer- the deals was off. And lest we get to judgmental about the Israelites of Palm Sunday.

When it comes down to it, Sometimes we are “good weather follower” welcoming Jesus with open arms and a royal parade in our hearts so long as he fits the mold we have given him and so long as our hopes are being fulfilled according to our terms. Ah, but when his ways don’t agree

with our ways, when his plan doesn't line up with what we have planned for ourselves, or when our disobedience is laid before us, how quickly we jump in front of him taking the lead, filling our minds with the foul perceptions of this world and not having the mind of Christ. In like a lion and out like a lamb, literally. How those Hosanna turn to crucify!

The Greatness of a Suffering Servant

Well, thankfully, Jesus' mind is that of the Father's and even though rejection was thrown right in his face, he willingly went on as that lamb- for our sake. Indeed, much like the Israelites, Jesus had warfare on his mind when he entered Jerusalem, but it wasn't political rather spiritual. Yes, Jesus was looking to defend his people but not against Rome for worldly liberation rather against Satan for true liberation against sin, death and the devil. This Triumphant Jesus who was praised and had palm branches waved in his midst had the plan of doing what every good leader ought to do; looking to the best interest and needs of the people he served. And what that meant, is that Jesus wasn't looking at the rebellion of the political powers that were oppressing Israel, No, he was looking at the rebellion of ALL people against the Father and what needed to take place to bring reconciliation.

And so, to the surprise of the people on that first Palm Sunday, the King Jesus would in fact receive his crown and would in fact SAVE but that salvation would come none other than on the cross of Calvary. On that cross, he hid what was rightly his and took on the disobedience of the people he came to serve. Yes, Jesus was fully obedient to the Father and he carried out the plan by marching into Jerusalem to become the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Even though Jesus had every reason to be pride filled, he emptied himself setting aside his kingliness to become our servant. The Good News, is that Jesus did fulfill the plan of liberation and freedom, but the plan was much different than the people of Old had envisioned... it involved serving, suffering and dying and rising on the third day proving to the world that he is King of Kings and Lord of Lords! Because of Jesus' victory, we who repent and confess him as Lord and King are restored to God forgiven, free, and given the power to set ourselves and our selfish ambitions aside to follow where our King leads us- no matter the circumstance. Having the same mind of Jesus, with contrite by faith, we then, can "get out of the way," seek to obey the will of the Father and model our Lord's servanthood in our lives. And the best part is, we never do it alone!

In just a few minutes you and me and along with seven young people for the first time will join our voices once again to sing Hosanna as we prepare to receive our Lord's true body and blood in Communion. Today my friends, what are reminded of is that Jesus hears our cries just as he did on that first Palm Sunday, and comes into our midst triumphantly in a most intimate way, offering us forgiveness, life and power...and that's really something to be excited about!

My friends, Palm Sunday is the day when we are reminded of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and the sequence of the events that followed; events that changed the lives of every repentant sinner in every age; and that's why we hear both the Palm Sunday Gospel and the Passion Gospel- they Go together so wonderfully! The Lion who is the Lamb is our Lord and HE SAVES US! **"Hosanna to the Son of David, Blessed He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"**

