

Palm Sunday Sermon

Sermon by Pastor Diana J. Perkins

March 20, 2016

This is an interesting year to be celebrating the final stretch of Jesus walk on this earth before He returned to his heavenly Father. The political powers that were in place at the time of Christ were determined that their stronghold would not be broken. To silence His voice of truth, they killed Him!

From the time of his birth, Jesus suffered rejection and though a few select sought him, worshipped Him and heralded Him in with joyful anticipation, the majority refused to believe that He was the Messiah. King Herod, when approached by the wise men travelling from the east who had followed his star seeking the new king, was greatly distressed when he was asked "Where is the child born to be the king of the Jews? We have seen his star and have come to worship Him." The Bible says that he wasn't the only one troubled about the news of a new king, but that all Jerusalem was troubled with him. See Matthew chapter 2. Herod brought in the chief priests and the teachers of the Law of Moses and asked them where the Messiah would be born. They answered "in Bethlehem according to the prophets". (Micah 5:2) Herod secretly brought in the wise men and asked them when they had first seen the star. Herod told them that the child would be in Bethlehem and he urged them to go and search for the baby and return with the report of where they located him so he could also go and worship him. The wise men continued on the journey following the star and it led them to a house where Jesus was being cared for by Mary, his mother. When they found Him, they knelt down and worshipped Him and gave gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to him. Being warned in a dream not to return to the king, they went home by another route. Herod's words didn't coincide with his actions. He had no intention of worshipping the new king for as soon as he learned that he had been tricked by the wise men, he became enraged and ordered all baby boys from the age of two years and younger who lived in the region of Bethlehem to be killed. Jeremiah's prophecy was fulfilled (Jeremiah 31:15. It reads: "In Ramah, a voice is heard crying and weeping loudly, Rachel mourns for her children and refuses to be comforted because they are dead." An angel of the Lord warned Joseph to take Mary and the baby Jesus to Egypt and stay there until the danger of death had passed. After King Herod's death, Joseph was again visited by an angel and instructed to take Mary and Jesus back to Israel for the people who wanted to destroy him were dead. Joseph took his family and they settled in the town of Nazareth fulfilling the prophecy that said, "He shall be called a Nazarene." (Isaiah 11:1)

In John 6:8-14, there is a very interesting story. It was almost time for the yearly Jewish festival of the Passover. Jesus and his disciples went up into a mountain and sat down. Jesus saw a large crowd of people coming towards them and he asked Philip, "Where will we get enough food to feed these people?" He asked this question as a test to Philip for He already knew what He was going to do. Philip was overwhelmed as he said, "Don't you know that it would take almost a year's wages to buy enough food to feed this crowd a portion of what they would need to satisfy their hunger?" Andrew spoke up and said, "There is a lad in the midst that has five barley loaves of bread and two fishes, but what good is that among all these people?" Jesus ordered everyone to sit down and there were approximately 5000 men

plus women and children. The lad gave his lunch to the Lord and when Jesus had prayed giving thanks to his Father, He broke the fish and bread in pieces and the disciples distributed to the crowd. Everyone had plenty to eat and there were 12 large baskets of fragments left over that the disciples gathered so none would be wasted. After the people had seen Jesus work this miracle, they began saying, "This must be a prophet who is come into the world." Jesus realized that they would try to force him to be their king so he went up on a mountain where he could be alone.

The time for Jesus to offer himself as the Jew's king had not come. He must finish his work before He would reveal himself to the world as the Savior sent by God to be the King of the Jews.

John 12 records the events of Jesus as He walked across a stage of history on earth for the last time. His earthly ministry was nearly done, and He was determined to go into Jerusalem to face death. Six days before the Passover, He travelled to Bethany where Lazarus lived who had been raised from the dead by Jesus. Martha, Lazarus' sister served supper to Jesus and Lazarus sat at the table with him. After the meal, Mary took a pound of costly oil of spikenard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped them with her hair filling the house with fragrance. Judas, who would later betray Jesus, exclaimed, "Why was this fragrance oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" Others had come to Jesus feet expecting to receive from Him, but Mary came with a grateful heart to give him worship that was due. She gave something very valuable to honor him and to anoint him for burial. Jesus spoke of the fact that the poor will always be with us, but Mary deserved honor. Her act of love would forever be remembered. Judas followed Jesus, was called a disciple, had gone out in ministry with the other disciples to perform miracles, yet his words and actions didn't coincide. He was not concerned about the poor; he was a thief who stole money from the money box that Jesus had entrusted to him. The name "Bethany" means house of the miserable or house of the poor." History tells us that when pilgrims came to Jerusalem for great celebrations, each region had a designated area around Jerusalem where they camped. People from Galilee camped on the southern side of the mountain ridge known as the Mount of Olives. To get from Bethany to Jerusalem, Jesus would have to move throughout the camp of Galileans. These were the people who were most familiar with Jesus for he had spent most of his earthly life among them.

In verse 9, we learn that a great many Jews knew that Jesus was there and they came to see Him and also to see Lazarus who had been raised by Jesus from the dead. But the chief priests plotted to put both Lazarus and Jesus to death because of the fact that many Jews went away and believed on Jesus because of this miracle. The religious experts and leaders, chief priests and Scribes were not concerned about knowing truth. They were concerned about their own customs, laws and culture and Jesus posed a threat because He revealed the truth and caused the people to understand the deception that engulfed them.

Historians have said that there may have been as many as ½ million people there in Jerusalem at this event. Every male within 25 miles of Jerusalem was required to be in attendance for the week of the Passover. In verse 12, a great multitude of people who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him and cried out, "Hosanna!

Blessed is He who comes, in the name of, the LORD! The King of Israel!" Jesus entered Jerusalem at the exact time the Passover lambs were chosen. He proclaimed himself to be the Promised Messiah by riding on a donkey. See Zachariah 9:9. Jesus rode into the city on a borrowed donkey. Christ's true kingship was exactly demonstrated when He was sacrificed on the cross as God's lamb.

His disciples didn't understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, they remembered that these things were written about Him in the Old Testament and now had been fulfilled. Therefore the people who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness. For this reason the people also met Him, because they had heard that He had done this sign. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, "You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him." These people envied him and so they were determined to murder him.

Jerusalem has a rich history and is a city that cannot be compared to any other city in the world. In Psalms 87:3, it is called "The city of God." In Revelation, it is called "The city of Gold." Zechariah calls it "The city of Truth." Psalms 48:2 declares it to be the city where God dwells. It is described as beautiful and majestic, the holy mountain, it brings joy to the whole earth and is the home of the Great King. God is there to defend it and has proven to be its protector.

In Chapter 12 verse 37, it is written, "But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him." Isaiah, the prophet, said that the people would have ears, but wouldn't hear; their eyes would be blinded that they would not be able to see. If they had been able to see and hear and if they had a softened heart, they would have accepted His Lordship and would have been healed.

Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. Verse 41-43.

John 13 begins by stating that Jesus knew that his hour had come that he should depart from this world and return to his Father. He loved his own to the end. Jesus desired to celebrate the Passover one last time with his disciples. Supper had ended and Satan had already put it in the heart of Judas to betray Jesus. Yet Jesus, being a humble servant, washed all the disciples' feet and served all of them bread and wine. He revealed that not all of them were clean for He knew that Judas would betray him before the evening was over. In chapter 13 verse 21, He declared that one of them would betray Him. The disciples looked at each other perplexed because they didn't know a traitor was among them. Judas had hidden his evil heart so well that no one suspected him. Jesus revealed it to Peter after Peter asked, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus said "It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it." Then he dipped it and handed it to Judas. After the piece of bread had been given, to Judas, Satan entered into him. Jesus said, "What you are going to do, do quickly." No one at the table knew what Jesus meant by that statement. They reasoned that because Judas had the money box that he was being sent to get some items for the poor. But having received the bread, he immediately went out into the night Jesus then told his disciples that now

the Son of Man will be glorified and God is glorified in Him. Jesus told the disciples that where He was going, they would not be able to follow, but He left them a commandment and that was to love one another. People will recognize his disciples for the love they have for each other. Later in the evening, Jesus led his disciples over the Brook Kidron where there was a garden which He and his disciples entered. Judas also knew the place for Jesus often met there with his disciples. Judas came with a detachment of troops and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees carrying lanterns, torches and weapons. Jesus went forward and met them and asked, "Whom are you seeking?" They answered, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus replied, "I am He". Judas also stood with them. When Jesus spoke the words, "I am He" they drew back and fell to the ground. Jesus asked a second time who they were seeking. They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth". He again told them that He was Jesus and told them to let the others go their way. It fulfilled the words that Jesus spoke, "Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none."

Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus asked him, "Are you speaking for yourself about this or did others tell you this concerning Me?" Pilate answered him with the fact that he was not a Jew but Jesus' own people delivered Him to be tried in his court. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom was of this world, My servants would fight so that I should not be delivered to the Jews, but now My kingdom is not from here." Pilate asked him, "Are you a king then?" Jesus told him that he was speaking the truth, that He was a king. He was born for this cause, and for this cause He came into the world that He should bear witness to the truth Everyone who is of the truth hears His voice. Pilate asked an age old question, "What is truth?"

Pilate told the people, "I find no fault in him at all, but there is a custom that at the Passover, someone should be released. Do you want me to release the King of the Jews?" They all cried out again saying, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Barabbas was a robber. Pilate sought to release Jesus, but the crowd demanded that he was to be crucified because according to their law He should die because He made Himself the Son of God." When Pilate heard that, he became even more afraid. He returned and asked Jesus where He came from but Jesus was silent. Pilate said, "Why are you not answering me? Don't you know that I have power to crucify you and power to release you?" Jesus answered that he would have no power at all unless it had been given him from above. "Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin." Pilate tried to convince the Jews to release Jesus for there was no fault found in him, but the people told him that he was not Caesar's friend because by Jesus claiming to be a King, he was speaking against Caesar. Though Pilate's wife had warned him not to have anything to do with Jesus' trial, he continued on the downhill slope.

It was Preparation Day of the Passover and at the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" "Crucify Him! Away with him" was the cry. Pilate asked, "Should I crucify your king?" The chief priests cried out, "We have no king, but Caesar!" Pilate delivered Jesus to them to be crucified and they led Him away. Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross that read "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews!" It was written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. The chief priests of the Jews--said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews', but, He said, I am the King of the Jews." Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

This year we are expecting to elect a new president here in America. I have listened to debates, radio talk shows and read reports on the internet and it appears to me that the people are divided on many of the issues that concern to threaten our traditional American way of life. There is one thing that I am certain of and that is that many people want to do away with the influence of the Christian faith in our culture. The phone calls that I have received and listened to from both parties concerning candidates have promised balancing the budget, protecting our borders from outsiders, and other concerns such as creating jobs for Americans. Not one of them has said to me, "This candidate will do what he can to turn this nation back to a God-fearing nation. The candidates do their best to tear down the integrity of those who are rivals for the coveted position and they seem to be focused on unseating one party to gain positions for the party that they support. Sometimes they are confused with which party they are affiliated with because whoever is deemed most popular, is the party they associate their name with.

One thing I am certain and that is "America needs Jesus Christ!" The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. We are commanded to pray that God will send out laborers to gather in the harvest. Too many people are double minded. Their actions and their words are not the same. If there is anything that I desire to do to influence the people who read my writings and listen to my sermons it is this: Let your yeas be yeas and your nays be nays! Be honest on where you stand and don't hesitate to declare what you believe and know to be truth. Cowards in the army are not valued! We need men and women who will stand for the truth regardless of the price we have to pay for it. I ask God to fill me with His truth and wisdom and courage so I will stand for His word regardless of what others may do. Judas, the traitor, was blended in with God's chosen disciples who would one day give their lives for the gospel because they would not back down from what they had seen, heard, touched and was convinced was truth. They would not sell out to Satan, but were determined to build on the foundation of Jesus Christ to save those who would be called children of God. See 1 John 1:1-3. Judas betrayed Jesus for a price of a slave, not esteeming the value of His life that was sinless, loving, merciful and full of compassion. Once the deed was done, Judas realized that he had betrayed the blood of an innocent man, a man who had called him "friend" who had fed him, who had taught him, who had sent him out to do miracles and had even trusted him with the bag of money which supported Jesus' ministry. He couldn't handle the guilt; he was a coward and he took his own life not considering that he would face judgment for his evil deeds. I ask God to give us a sensitive conscience that we might stand and declare the truth of the gospel. I pray for God's mercy on a nation that has forgotten who her creator and sustainer is. May we repent of our greed, our materialistic desires and idols and turn our hearts back to God who promises in 2 Chronicles 7:14 this: If my own people will humbly pray and turn back to me and stop sinning, then I will forgive them and make their land fertile once again. Please pray for America and for those who have not known the grace and mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ. May He use each one in this service today to share the gospel with those who don't know Him as their Lord and Savior.

Next Sunday is Easter and we will be having a dinner at the church and fun events for the children. We celebrate the risen Savior and the hope that we have of having victory over death.