

“Rejoicing in God’s Greatest Work”

Text: Mark 11:1-10

What is our reason for joy? It isn’t found in living in the way we want. The French philosopher, Voltaire, an acknowledged unbeliever, wrote: “I wish I had never been born.” American millionaire Jay Gould said: “I suppose that I am the most miserable man on earth.” Alexander the Great was possibly the greatest military leader of all time—in his 20’s he had conquered the known world of his day. Still he lamented: “There are no more worlds to conquer.”

The answer to the question of finding joy is in the coming Savior Jesus Christ. That is the real reason for the Advent and Christmas season, but one that can become clouded, as we all know. C. S. Lewis wrote a story about this entitled: “Exmas and Christmas”. A fictitious people of the island of Niatirb (Britain spelled backwards) celebrated this holiday of Exmas by shopping, celebrating and overindulging. It really wore them out. There was also the celebration of Christmas at the same time. It was a holy day, but often went unnoticed because of the distractions of Exmas.

As the Grinch found out, Christmas and its reason cannot be stolen. The real purpose of the season is not in happiness and merriment but in rejoicing. The promised Messiah our Savior Jesus Christ is about to come into the world as the baby born in the Bethlehem manger. I was listening to the Calypso Carol, “Mary’s Boy Child” the other day on the radio. Its refrain says: “And man will live forever more because of Christmas Day.” That is the true reason for joy in our season of rejoicing for we are-

REJOICING IN GOD'S GREATEST WORK

I. It comes about in an unexpected way

II. The Savior of the world is coming

I.

A. You may recognize our text and understand that it is St. Mark's account of Palm Sunday. It may seem to have nothing to do with Advent and Christmas. That's only on the surface; the coming of the Savior is the reason for our celebration and rejoicing. Actually, Advent has three purposes-

- The coming of Jesus into the world
- The return of Jesus
- The coming of Jesus in word and sacrament

Jesus entrance on this day was promised in the Old Testament by the prophet Zechariah: "Rejoice 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." (Zechariah 9:9) His coming in not only mentioned here, but many other places in the Old Testament.

Salvation can only come in God's way and as it happens it is an unexpected way. How could those disciples have known what they were preparing for that day when they went to get the colt. Certainly by Jesus' instructions there would be confusion about these actions.

B. Jesus had an answer for those who would ask. He told the disciples to say: "The Lord has need of it and will send it back immediately." It was a temporary use of this beast of burden by the Lord of all creation, and of all things to use! No great steeds, no trumpet fanfare, the Messiah humbling riding upon a young donkey.

I wonder what the people thought? Their reaction was immediate and one of joy and celebration, surprised as they were. President Franklin Roosevelt once tried to break the monotony of a gala ball by greeting people and saying that he had murdered his grandmother that morning. He received the usual responses: “Good, wonderful, congratulations...” One diplomat who had heard him correctly said, “I’m sure she had it coming.” Something greater was happening on this day, God’s salvation was coming to them as promised.

II.

A. From Genesis to Malachi, the promise of a Savior had been made to God’s people. This is time in history that he desired for this promise to be fulfilled. This is a reminder to us all that God always keeps his promises to us in his time and in his way.

The people were correct in their excitement. Something wonderful was passing before their very eyes. In a few days they would forget its significance, as they would get caught up in the throngs around them and call for the crucifixion of the Messiah. As we know that was all part of God’s plan for our salvation. Jesus himself spoke to those two disciples following his death and resurrection: “Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and then enter his glory?” (Luke 24:26) St. Luke tells us that Jesus interpreted in all the Scriptures the promises about his life and work.

B. On this day the disciples were taking part in something greater than they had imagined. They were simply following the words of Jesus. St. Luke adds a detail about this colt: “Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here.” (Luke 19:30) This was a ride with a sacred purpose and it would be important

to have such an animal for Jesus' ride. See God sees to every detail of your salvation. Jesus in requesting this animal for temporary use gives us an example in stewardship. There is one difference however, since the animal as a creature is still his, but he understands who is the earthly owner and gives the example to us as he does in all things-

- In worship
- In prayer
- In giving

As he used this colt for his purposes so he has a purpose for us as well. As unimportant as this animal was in the scheme of things, God used it for the purpose of announcing his Son as the Savior of the world. God uses us and the gifts he gives us for his purposes. This morning (tomorrow) we will receive new members among which are five baptisms, three of them adults. As these people join our fellowship they are here to serve God's purposes with us and as they have been led here it is by God's purpose as well as it is for all of us.

On this Palm Sunday long ago, the people praised the coming of David's kingdom. Many were expecting an earthly kingdom, but this was not the purpose of King Jesus and his rule among us. God has eternal purposes for all of us and we rejoice in our coming king who has come and will come again, even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.