

Mark 11:1-11

As they approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, on the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ² and told them, “Go into the village ahead of you. As soon as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it, and he will send it back here without delay.’”

⁴ They left and found a colt on the street, tied at a door; and they untied it. ⁵ Some who were standing there asked them, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” ⁶ The disciples answered them just as Jesus had instructed them, and the men let them go. ⁷ They brought the colt to Jesus, threw their garments on it, and Jesus sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their garments on the road. Others spread branches that they had cut from the fields. ⁹ Those who went in front and those who followed were crying out, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!

¹¹ Jesus went into the temple courts in Jerusalem and looked around at everything. Since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve. ¹¹ Jesus went into the temple courts in Jerusalem and looked around at everything. Since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

Dear dearly loved by God,

Some people are so afraid that heaven is going to be boring that they’re not interested in going. Children are shocked when you tell them there won’t be cellphones or the Internet there. When you say that there are no videogames in heaven, you hope that sarcastic eye rolls are all you get. Grown-up children and even many adults have the same kind of problems with heaven. They hear from their Pastors and read in their Bibles that heaven is a place where we praise and worship God with singing, where we stand before our Creator and thank him for all the wonderful things and the great love he has shown to us. Worship? Praise? Singing? They doesn’t sound fun at all. No thank you.

Unfortunately these are the same ideas that keep people from praising God on earth. It doesn’t take much of an excuse for a weak soul to stay away from God’s house. All a weak soul needs to hear is that church is boring, and he will have all the reason he needs to stay away. All a fearful sinner needs to know is that there are some bland religious people at a church, and he will be condemning them all as hypocrites before he meets a one.

Today is Palm Sunday. It is one of the greatest days of worship and praise of the whole year! It is not only a day in which we join in praise, but also a day on which we learn how to praise God and why we praise God. Jesus’ triumphant march into Jerusalem is the backdrop for praise. His humble and royal entry on a donkey draws all attention to him as King. The clothing and the palm branches encourage our gifts. And the singing of the children and the crowds of people draw out our hymns of praise. Though many in our world would rather go to hell than to find joy in worship and praise, today we will learn to find joy in raising to Jesus our . . .

Sermon Theme: Hands Of Praise – The Disciples and The Crowds

Many people think that praising God is something that can only be done on a hard pew with organ music. The reality is that most of the praising of God that happens on earth takes place outside of the church building. All the Palm Sunday praise of Jesus Christ took place outside of God's house. Some of the greatest praise of Jesus took place before the triumphal march, the singing, and the spreading of the palms. The first praise came from the obedient hands of the disciples. Jesus asked them to go and get a colt, a young donkey. Jesus told them that they would find the colt tied up in the town ahead of them and they should just take it. If anybody said anything, they should simply say that Jesus needed it. Not only did the disciples do what they were told without question, but the men to whom the animal belonged would raise their hands in praise by giving the colt to Jesus without question.

The obedience of the disciples equals enthusiastic praise of Jesus! Unquestioning obedience to God is the kind of praise the Lord needs more of today. Praise of Jesus means more than saying and praying, "Your will be done on earth," while we are in church or kneeling at our bedside. It means voluntarily doing Jesus' will on this earth without questioning the Lord's wisdom or his love. Obviously Jesus' instructions were unusual. Obviously the disciples who were told to get the donkeys had questions. "Jesus, how do you know the donkey will be there? How do you know we can take it without asking? How do you know the owner will let us take it?" But they did not ask. They did not question Jesus. They praised Jesus with their obedience.

Our world does not give Jesus that kind of praise. They question why God and his Word and his church have a right to tell us what to do at all. They question how God can send troubles into our lives and still claim to love us. They accuse the Bible of patriarchy when it names man the head of the woman and woman the helper of man. They question why they can't live together without marriage, why they can't curse and swear if everybody else does, why they have to go to church if they feel fine without it. But believers praise God with their obedience. Christians praise Jesus as King by the godly obedience of their daily lives. Christians obey without questioning Jesus' authority or wisdom. They live good, clean, decent, and honest lives outside the church in the world every day. They don't just say and pray, "Your will be done." They go out and obey so that Jesus will is done on earth. This is praise. This is worship of Jesus which pleases God.

One of the most sensitive areas of praise has always been the praise we give God with our money. There are a couple of reasons why we are so sensitive about praising God with our money. First of all, we believe money is very valuable to us, and we're protective of it. It buys us everything we need and think we need. It is our food and our home and transportation, as well as the measure of our pleasure and influence. The second reason we are so sensitive about the mention of money to praise God is within ourselves. We are sinful people, and regardless of how many years we have been Christians, we are by nature stingy and selfish. We arrogantly think our money is ours, and we forget it is from God. We do not trust God's promises that if we are generous, he will not only take care of us but bless us even more.

The crowds on Palm Sunday were not tight with their praise of Christ. They were lavish with their gifts of money and material things. One person happily gave the use of his donkey. The disciples took off their own cloaks and put them on the donkey on which Jesus rode. Others took their coats off and put them into the dirt so that the donkey on which Jesus rode would not get its hooves dirty. Still others having nothing else to give cut down palm branches as a symbol of Jesus' victory. The crowds, the disciples all praised Jesus with their money and earthly possessions.

Yet here we sit, Palm Sunday, 2021. The souls of men are dying. People are going to their grave without hearing the gospel. Missions in our country are not being opened and the ones that are open struggle to build churches or service their debts because money is short. Desperate needs in world mission fields, both for workers and materials, cannot be met because there is little praise of money. And still we worry—but not about God’s kingdom coming. We worry about our own money, that there will not be enough for us to enjoy our old standard of living, that there will not be enough for our summer vacation, that we will not be able to buy that one item we can’t live without. Is Jesus important enough to us so that we bring our praise of money to him? Can we put our shirt in the dirt just a little so that Jesus and his message of forgiveness can march triumphantly into our hurting world? Has he done so little for us that we cannot cut a few palms here and there from trees of worldly hopes and spray them in his direction? Using our hands to praise Jesus with our money—that would be real praise for the Savior King.

Another kind of praise on that first Palm Sunday was the praise of mouths. **“Those who went in front and those who followed were crying out, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! 10 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!” (vv. 9,10).** When the praise of obedience and the praise of money is there, the praise of the mouth will naturally follow. It is enthusiastic. It is loud. It is joyous and happy. There was no printed liturgy or hymnal in front of these people. There was no rehearsed choir music. They didn’t object to the dull and boring nature of the praise. In fact, the enemies of Jesus were looking on, watching closely and jealously as these people praised Jesus with their mouths when they weren’t even in church!

Jesus still needs the praise of our mouths, but not just our singing in church. He needs the spontaneous and sincere praise of our mouths out in the world where his enemies are listening. We will not convert any souls to Jesus by cursing and swearing, by arguing and fighting about religion or anything else, by bad-mouthing Jesus’ church or its members, or by being pessimistic and grumpy. But we will give praise to the King by confessing our faith to the weak and sinful, by praying openly for those in need, by singing hymns around the family table, by speaking for the spiritual work of the church at voters’ meetings, by being friendly when we see someone we don’t know at Church, by looking out for our neighbors. Jesus needs the praise of your mouth, not just here in church, but out in the world, especially in the hearing of his enemies.

You can think that heaven will be boring only if you think that praising God is boring on earth. And you can believe that only if you are standing by and doing nothing on this Palm Sunday. There were only two groups of people watching Jesus enter Jerusalem: those who praised him and those who hated him. Dear Lord Jesus, enter our hearts as King. Let us praise you. Let our hands praise you with our unquestioning obedience. Let our hands praise you with our money, knowing that all the money in the world will not be able to repay the blood you shed for us. And let us praise you with our mouths every day in every way outside the church. Then one day soon we will praise you in heaven, where our praise will be anything but boring. Amen.