

Mark 11:1-10 Better things are coming! Psalm Sunday/Confirmation March 29, 2015

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God's grace and peace are yours from Jesus Christ who promises us a perfect future as our King! Amen.

We read of Jesus' ride into Jerusalem in Mark 11:1-10

These are Your Words heavenly Father. Make us certain of Your loving plan in Christ. Your Word is truth.

Dear Christian Friends,

Palm Sunday is Trinity's traditional day to have the confirmation of our 8th grade class. Whether we were confirmed on a Palm Sunday or later in the spring, confirmation brings back memories. We were probably nervous in front of people. Yet, we felt a sense of success to be confirmed and be communicant members. It was also a time to think about our future. Some of us may remember on confirmation day what we planned to do in the future. But, few things turned out as expected. For many of us, God had completely different plans. None of us knows what the future holds as far as life in this world, but through faith we know that Christ is with us. He is our risen Lord and Savior. God has a plan and a course for us to finish just as He had for Jesus to fulfill on the first Palm Sunday. Christ knew the challenges ahead for Him, yet He rode into Jerusalem to fight the powers of evil. He let them attack and kill Him because He knew that victory was certain. His ride into Jerusalem showed that He was willing to accomplish everything to bring blessing to our future. With God's promises, we can say:

Better things are coming!

We don't want to be like the crowd who misunderstood. Many pilgrims were on the road with Jesus. The road ran along the ridge of the Mount of Olives. At the crest of the hill the crowd could suddenly see much of Jerusalem and the beautiful temple. This was a point of the annual journey where the crowds would break out in joyful singing of the Psalms. When Jesus got on the donkey's colt on that same road to Jerusalem, the people were even more excited! Their shouts and singing led the people from within Jerusalem to run out to join the joyful procession. Mark states, *"Those who went ahead and those who followed [Jesus] shouted, 'Hosanna!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!' 'Hosanna in the highest!'"* (v.9-10)

The word "Hosanna" was a plea to God meaning: Save us! Make a change to better our lives! The people were convinced that Jesus could help. Many people had seen His power to heal or drive out demons. Many had heard Him speak with authority in the temple. They wanted a man like Jesus they could follow. They welcomed Him as a descendent of King David, hoping that He would establish a new kingdom for them. Jesus was humble, riding on a donkey, an animal of peace, yet according to Zechariah he would powerfully bring justice to the people. What an ideal king! Yet, in the coming days many of these same people turned away from Jesus because His kingdom was spiritual and physical as they had hoped.

But, Jesus is still an ideal king for us if we are ready to receive Him. If we expect Him to answer every prayer always as we want it, we won't receive Him for long. If we expect Him to always make life easier for us, we won't keep following Him. God has a plan for us in Christ for us to follow by faith. Think of the prophet Jonah. God called him to preach judgment to the people of Ninevah. Jonah ran the other way by ship. Once caught in a storm, he told the sailors to throw him overboard. Instead of drowning, Jonah was swallowed whole by a large sea creature so he was not harmed. He lived a horrible existence for 3 days until he repented. Then God ordered the creature to throw him up onto the shore of his own country. Then, Jonah followed God's command. He entered Ninevah alone with only God's Word and preached judgment on the evil Assyrians. Then, he went outside the city to watch it burn. To his disappointment, the Assyrians were sorry and turned to God and He showed mercy. To Jonah, the trip to Assyria was a waste of time. But, God explained that it was His plan was to save people, even enemies, and He urged Jonah see things His way!

I pray that we can learn from Jonah's lesson. As believers, we shouldn't think that life will be easy like roses without thorns. We should not expect Jesus to solve every problem according to our ways. Jesus is God and knows all things. It's okay if His plan is above our plan because we can trust He will work for good. God said, *"I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* (Jeremiah 29:11) Paul wrote, *"We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."* (Romans 8:28)

Second, Jesus is in control and He will lead us by His Word! We see that on the first Palm Sunday. Jesus directed His disciples to exactly where the colt was to be found. He predicted that people would object and that the disciples only had to say, *"The Lord needs it"* (v.3) and the owners would let him go. It all happened just as He said. Jesus' ride into Jerusalem on a donkey was predicted in the Old Testament and fulfilled to the letter. Jesus predicted that He would be arrested, suffer, and be executed according the God's Word. It all happened just as He said.

Jesus willingly went to be sacrificed. If God did not want the evil Assyrian enemies to die in their sins, He certainly doesn't want us to die in sin either. So, Jesus predicted that as Jonah was in the creature for three days, so He would die and be in the tomb three days until the resurrection. Jesus let Himself be captured. He stood quietly during His perjured trials. He was judged to be innocent by Pontius Pilate yet was sent out to be executed! Jesus did these things because He knew the future of God's plan to save us!

Now our risen Savior has all authority in heaven and on earth and what does He offer for our future? As we all learned so clearly in confirmation class, Jesus offers to save those who believe in Him and are baptized. He offers to forgive those who confess their sins and receive His body and blood in the Lord's Supper. How do we respond? In our communion service we sing, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!" We have such high expectations of Jesus because He has made the promises. He is the one who won forgiveness on the cross. He is the one in control to distribute His full and free forgiveness to all who receive His promise by faith.

Let's picture our journey through life as if we are walking with Jesus to Jerusalem. Only instead walking to Jerusalem in Israel, we are walking with Him to heaven! The walk will not be easy in life, but we know that Jesus has prepared a place for us. Along the way, we sing in anticipation of future glory. If we think that the Palm Sunday crowd of 1,000's was impressive, we know that heaven has room for millions of people to gather around Christ's throne. Our singing with the heavenly angels we be beyond description. There, we will join believers singing of Jesus' victory. In heaven we will stand with Jesus and never be disappointed for He has done all things needed for our good.

It is no wonder that on this Confirmation and Palm Sunday we should be happy. Jesus continues to instruct His people through His Word so they can confidently confess their faith and are saved. Today, we celebrate that the new confirmands are certain of their eternal future. Just as Jesus continued His ride into Jerusalem as a King because He saw the future crown, so we will continue to follow Jesus trusting in His promised victory. No matter what challenges in life that we face, they will not compare to our future with Jesus. Be confident in Him and say, "Hosanna! Save us! Blessed is He who comes to help us in the name of the Lord!" Amen.