

Sun., April 10 - Palm Sunday

Memory Verse: Luke 9:62 “Jesus said to him, ‘No one who puts a hand on the plow and looks back is fit for God’s kingdom.’”

Reading of Scripture: Luke 19:29-48 (The Triumphal Entry)

Message: Luke 3 Miracle 7: “Following a Failure”

Text: Luke 9:53 “The Samaritan villagers refused to welcome Jesus because He was determined to go to Jerusalem.”

Scripture: Luke 9:51-62

Blurb: This Sunday we join the excited crowds who wave palm branches to welcome Jesus. But why are we waving palms for Jesus? Do we greet Him as He comes, or as the way we want? This Sunday we’ll discover that Jesus invites us to follow Him in sacrifice and self denial.

[Recorded Worship Beginning]

WELCOME -Pastor David
Palm Sunday!

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David
“Jesus said to him, ‘No one who puts a hand on the plow and looks back is fit for God’s kingdom.’” -Luke 9:62

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Prerecording
Death Was Arrested
Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

[Live Worship Beginning]

GATHERING SONG: *Death Was Arrested* -Sanctify

WELCOME -Pastor David
Palm Sunday!

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David
“Jesus said to him, ‘No one who puts a hand on the plow and looks back is fit for God’s kingdom.’” -Luke 9:62

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify
Only King Forever
Jesus Shall Reign
Not Just Stories
Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

[Both Recorded & Live Worship]

READING OF SCRIPTURE: Luke 19:29-44

We read Luke's telling of when Jesus rode into Jerusalem. There is joy and celebration, for salvation has come. But also listen for the sorrow in Jesus' heart, His anger at the Temple and the evil in the plotting of the Jewish leaders. It's a story of mixed messages! Luke 19:29-44,

"29 As Jesus came to Bethphage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives, He gave two disciples a task. 30 He said, 'Go into the village over there. When you enter it, you will find tied up there a colt that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If anyone asks, 'Why are you untying it?' just say, 'Its master needs it.' 32 Those who had been sent found it exactly as He had said.

"33 As they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, 'Why are you untying the colt?'"

"34 They replied, 'Its master needs it.' 35 They brought it to Jesus, threw their clothes on the colt, and lifted Jesus onto it. 36 As Jesus rode along, they spread their clothes on the road.

"37 As Jesus approached the road leading down from the Mount of Olives, the whole throng of His disciples began rejoicing. They praised God with a loud voice because of all the mighty things they had seen. 38 They said, 'Blessings on the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heavens.'

"39 Some of the Pharisees from the crowd said to Jesus, 'Teacher, scold your disciples! Tell them to stop!'"

"40 He answered, 'I tell you, if they were silent, the stones would shout.'

"41 As Jesus came to the city and observed it, He wept over it. 42 He said, 'If only you knew on this of all days the things that lead to peace. But now they are hidden from your eyes. 43 The time will come when your enemies will build fortifications around you, encircle you, and attack you from all sides. 44 They will crush you completely, you and the people within you. They won't leave one stone on top of another within you, because you didn't recognize the time of your gracious visit from God.'

"45 When Jesus entered the temple, He threw out those who were selling things there. 46 He said to them, 'It's written, My house will be a house of prayer, but you have made it a hideout for crooks.'

"47 Jesus was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests, the legal experts, and the foremost leaders among the people were seeking to kill Him. 48 However, they couldn't find a way to do it because all the people were enthralled with what they heard."

SERVE MOMENT: "Easter Hop" & "Easter Offering" -Pastor Andrew

PRAYERS -Pastor Andrew

GENERATIONAL BRIDGE -Pastor Andrew

MESSAGE: Luke 3 Miracle (Luke 7-9) 7: "Following a Failure"

PP#1: Miracle 7: “Following a Failure”

“The Samaritan villagers refused to welcome Jesus because He was determined to go to Jerusalem.” -Luke 9:53

“Miracle: Following a Failure.” Luke 9:53, “The Samaritan villagers refused to welcome Jesus because He was determined to go to Jerusalem.”

PP#2: *Images for Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem, with lots of palm branches*

Waving palm branches is awesome! It’s a special treat for us here in MN because palm trees don’t grow outside. These branches today take us to mental pictures of warmer, far-off, exotic places, like Florida, even Israel and Jerusalem. In the Mediterranean basin, the ancient tradition was for people to cut palm branches and wave them when a king rode by in victory procession. So, today we’ve kind of joined in the procession that day, when Luke tells about how Jesus finally arrived in Jerusalem. Many saw Him as their Messiah. Many saw Him as their new King. But I’m not sure if any of them saw Him as a suffering servant. And that’s why, as the people celebrate, Jesus weeps.

Palm Sunday is a day of contrasts. Jesus’ crowd of disciples, joined by many others, celebrate: hoping that Jesus would be the Lion from the Tribe of Judah, the Messiah-King who would lead a political rebellion against Rome. But King Jesus rides in on a humble donkey colt. The Jewish leaders, who don’t believe Jesus is the Messiah, tell Jesus to make the throng quiet down. But Jesus says that if *they* didn’t celebrate, the very rocks would cry out. Why? Because although the people get the understanding of who Jesus is *wrong*, *what* they are saying is actually *right*. God is coming to bring salvation for all creation, and so there must be celebration! Creation would celebrate if the people didn’t.

But the celebration is mixed, because although salvation is coming, it is coming only through the terrible cost of Jesus’ self sacrifice. So Jesus’ heart is heavy. It’s heavy because He knows He will be crucified, but it’s also heavy because He sees so clearly how the misguided people *need* to be saved. It’s like He’s at Lazarus’ tomb, looking at death. Jesus weeps. And Jesus weeps again over Jerusalem. He foresees the capital city, along with its magnificent temple, all destroyed.

Jesus goes to the Temple, where the Messiah-God *should be* enthroned, but there Jesus sees an oppressive religious system. Jesus, seeing how the temple vendors were gouging religious pilgrims, becomes angry and overturns their kiosks.

The crowds celebrate, while the Jewish leaders plot His death. What a story of contrasts!

PP#3: *Image of a person looking introspectively at a palm branch*

Take a look at your palm branch again. We have joined with Jesus’ disciples. We’ve been following Him, too. Today we fast forward from Luke 9 to Luke 19 so we can place ourselves with the crowds at Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. And as we stand there waving our palm branches, we realize that we are ourselves also stories of contrasts. We want Jesus for our own reasons. We want His miracles, His power, for Him to fix our lives, solve our problems and to make things better. Yet we also commit to doing Jesus’ work, to help usher in God’s Kingdom, to serve like Jesus—selflessly, self-sacrificingly—and to live for others. We claim Jesus is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, and we claim Him as our Suffering Servant Messiah. We want more of God, but we also want our own selfish desires. We mean well, we want to do good, but we also admit how easily we behave in ways we’re not proud of. We are mixed; we are full of contrasts.

Look at your palm branch. Why do you wave the palm branch today?

Earlier back in Luke 9 Jesus turned around and asked His disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” (Luke 9:20). Jesus then said that those who follow Him must give up their lives and die to self. We then saw Jesus glow in divine radiance, but then He said that He must suffer and die. Then, His closest disciples start arguing about which of them is the greatest in His Kingdom! Why do you wave the palm branch today? Is there any room in you to choose to follow a failure?

PP#4: *Map of Israel marking Jesus’ travels through Samaria, Judea and Perea, with those places named on the map, along with Jerusalem.*

Turn to Luke 9:51. We ended with this verse last week. We’re past the halfway mark in Jesus’ earthly life: we’re into His third year of ministry, the year when His popularity plummets. He has committed to go the distance, to go all the way to the cross. And so, as it says, “He set His face to go to Jerusalem.”

He doesn’t take a direct path, however. He meanders His way down through Samaria, and then around Judea and then Perea, continuing His preaching tour. Take a quick look at the map. In the Roman Empire, the Jewish kingdom of Judea had three parts. In the north was Galilee, up around the Sea of Galilee. This is Jesus’ home area. The second section was called Judea, which is the area around Jerusalem in the south. On the east side of the Jordan is the third region, called Perea in Greek, or the Trans-Jordan in Hebrew. And in between Galilee and Judea was the territory of Samaria. This is a non-Jewish land, or more rightly, a post-Jewish land. It used to be part of Israel but when Israel was conquered by the Assyrians, the people here intermingled with their Gentile occupiers and became pagan. The Jews and the Samaritans didn’t get along, because the Jews viewed the Samaritans as traitors—worse than Gentiles—and the Samaritans viewed the Jews as self-righteous jerks.

Now, Jews were expected to travel to the Temple in Jerusalem three times a year for religious celebrations. For the Jews living in Galilee, the most direct route was straight down through Samaria. But the Samaritans harassed them all along the way. It was a three-day journey through Samaria, and the Samaritans refused to offer lodging to Jews, especially if they were heading to religious festivals in Jerusalem. So, most Jews in Galilee crossed over to the Decapolis on the east side of Jordan River, then headed south into Perea, and then crossed back over the Jordan to Jerusalem. That was a five day journey.

But, we’ve been learning in Luke, that Jesus intentionally went to Gentiles as well as Jews in order to extend the Kingdom of God. So, as Jesus now heads south to Judea, He purposely heads straight into Samaria.

PP#5: Luke 9:51-62

51 As the time approached when Jesus was to be taken up into heaven, He set His face to go to Jerusalem. 52 He sent messengers on ahead of Him. Along the way, they entered a Samaritan village to prepare for His arrival, 53 but the Samaritan villagers refused to welcome Him because He was determined to go to Jerusalem. 54 When the disciples James and John saw this, they said, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to consume them?” 55 But Jesus turned and spoke sternly to them, 56 and they went on to another village.

We pick up the story in verse 51. “As the time approached when Jesus was to be taken up into heaven, He set His face to go to Jerusalem. 52 He sent messengers on ahead of Him. Along the way, they entered a Samaritan village to prepare for His arrival, 53 but the Samaritan villagers refused to welcome Him because He was determined to go to Jerusalem. 54 When the disciples James and John saw this, they said, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to consume them?” 55 But Jesus turned and spoke sternly to them, 56 and they went on to another village.”

I can’t help but notice similarities between this story of Jesus heading *toward* Jerusalem, and the story earlier when Jesus headed *into* Jerusalem. He first of all sends disciples on ahead of Him to get things ready. The Samaritans reject Jesus, just like the Jewish leaders, and even the crowds in Jerusalem will turn on Jesus and reject Him, too. James and John—who seem to be a bit impulsive—want to use their new-found powers to call down God’s destruction on the village, whereas Jesus weeps over the divine destruction of Jerusalem that He foresees.

Speaking of calling down fire, James and John are remembering what the prophet Elijah did in 2 Kings 1. Jesus is not impressed with their intended use of *His* power. He shakes His head and marks on their evaluation: “Not ready!”

Instead, just like Jesus instructed them to do at the beginning of the chapter when they are not received well, He had them move on.

PP#6: *Image of a Samaritan coming to Jesus asking to follow Him (from Luke 9:57-62)*

So, as they are traveling along, they encounter three different Samaritans. And here I want us to make a switch. I want us to stop seeing ourselves as one of the disciples with Jesus and instead see ourselves as these three Samaritans. I think this may be Luke’s intention. You see, only Luke tells these stories about the Samaritans. Matthew records that Jesus had similar answers for a couple of Jews, but Luke, remember, is concerned with salvation for the non-Jews, too.

We are non-Jews, so we identify better with these Gentile Samaritans. And these encounters help us today reflect on why we are waving the palm branches for Jesus. We are each of these three Samaritans.

PP#7: Luke 9:51-62

57 As Jesus and His disciples traveled along the road, someone said to Him, “I will follow you wherever you go.”

58 Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and the birds in the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.”

So, first encounter. Verse 57: “As Jesus and His disciples traveled along the road, someone said to Him, ‘I will follow you wherever you go.’” Sounds like a winner! Just what Jesus wanted, right? But look at His response, verse 58, “Jesus replied, ‘Foxes have dens and the birds in the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.’”

Jesus doesn’t receive, or push the Samaritan away. Instead, Jesus challenges the Samaritan to consider the cost of following Him. Jesus doesn’t have a home, a place to be, no worldly comforts or possessions. His lifestyle is to forsake living for this world and instead live for the Kingdom of God. To follow Jesus means doing the same.

PP#8: Following a Failure

1. Not living for this world

Not that we can't have homes and possessions. It's that those who follow Jesus live not for this world, but for the Kingdom of God. For Jesus, and for some disciples, it does mean forsaking home and family. For all of us, it means holding our earthly lives lightly, and putting them into complete service for God's Kingdom. Are you ready, oh eager disciple, to choose this lifestyle?

Perhaps Luke never learned this person's name. Or perhaps Luke intentionally didn't include it. Either way, it does open the invitation for us to see ourselves in this person. Why do you ask to follow Jesus? Why do you wave your palm branch? Are you attracted to the benefits of what Jesus might give you? Or are you willing to give up your earthly lives to follow Him?

One application I see here for us is that not living for our worldly lives means that we keep an eternal view of our lives while living in this world. We learn to hold lightly the things of this world: all of our experiences, and even what we hold most dear! Let that sink in. We hold lightly even what is most dear to us, like our loved ones! Living for God's Kingdom means that we release God to use us and those we love most, to not have to stay safe and close to us, but to be used by God, wherever and however God wants, even if that means giving up our earthly plans and desires for them. Wow. How's your palm branch waving now?

It means, you see, that we don't fear death like others. Death is not the end of everything. When we have God, it is simply a move to our eternal home: where we belong and what we were made for. It's okay to leave this world. I was talking with Maxene Schwanke before she died. She said that although, because of her liver cancer, she was in her final weeks of earthly life, she was perfectly content and at peace. She knew she was going to glory soon, and that excited her. And she said that she was more than happy to leave all the mess of this world to the rest of us to sort out!

How would you handle a terminal diagnosis? How about your kid or best friend wanting to go serve as a missionary in the Ukraine, or Iran, or North Korea? How tightly do you grip your palm branch; how willing are you to offer it up to Jesus?

Interesting, isn't it, that Luke not only doesn't tell us this person's name, he also doesn't say what the person decided. Luke leaves it open ended for us to think about what we would do.

PP#9: Luke 9:51-62

59 Then Jesus said to someone else, "Follow me."

He replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

60 Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead. But you go and spread the news of God's kingdom."

61 Someone else said to Jesus, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say good-bye to those in my house."

62 Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand on the plow and looks back is fit for God's kingdom."

Okay, take a deep breath. Let's keep going. Are you ready to be a Samaritan again? Verse 59. "Then Jesus said to someone else, 'Follow me.' He replied, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' 60 Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead. But you go and spread the news of God's kingdom.'"

It's not that the guy's father had just died. He didn't need to go back for the funeral. In Jesus' day, "burying my father," meant to continue to live in the family home until the father eventually passed away. At that point, the adult children—well the sons (the daughters hopefully would have moved in with their husbands)—would move out on their own. So, the man whom Jesus called was saying, "Let me continue on with my family until it becomes time to start my life on my own. Then

I will choose a life with you.” Now, not a bad desire. He had obligations to his father and expectations from his family. Godly people did live faithfully with their parents.

PP#10: Following a Failure

1. Not living for this world
2. Not living for your plan

But Jesus’ response here reinforces His previous response: to follow Him means you have to let go of your primary allegiance to this life—even family!—and choose instead God’s plan for your life. The point is not that you have to turn your back on your family in order to follow Jesus—although for some that is true. The point is your allegiance. Jesus can’t come secondary, when convenient, when it fits in with your plans for life.

Jesus says to let those who are locked in their worldly lives, who are consumed by pursuing earthly things, who are spiritually dead, continue their empty lives. If you follow Him, however, you have work to do. Pick up His work and “go spread the news of God’s kingdom.”

Are you waving your palm branch to get Jesus to bless you and give you your dreams, or are you giving your dreams to Jesus and choosing to bless Him? Are you willing to let go of your plans for your life in order to take up God’s different plans? Careful! It is easy to say you would. But consider your life now: are you doing it the smaller ways, where you’re called to? Too often we say we would, and then still run our lives on our terms. Are you gripping your palm branch tightly, or are you offering it to Jesus?

PP#11: Luke 9:51-62

59 Then Jesus said to someone else, “Follow me.”

He replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”

60 Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead. But you go and spread the news of God’s kingdom.”

61 Someone else said to Jesus, “I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say good-bye to those in my house.”

62 Jesus said to him, “No one who puts a hand on the plow and looks back is fit for God’s kingdom.”

Can you handle one more? There’s another one here that Luke has for us. The first Samaritan came to Jesus. The second one Jesus approached. Now a person comes to Jesus again. Verse 61, “Someone else said to Jesus, ‘I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say good-bye to those in my house.’ 62 Jesus said to him, ‘No one who puts a hand on the plow and looks back is fit for God’s kingdom.’”

Again, this is not about the person running home quickly to tell his family what he’s decided to do. Once more, it’s about going home to live with his family until it became convenient to leave home and follow Jesus.

PP#12: Following a Failure

1. Not living for this world
2. Not living for your plan
3. Not living for both

Jesus' response is that you can't be double minded. You can't waffle between the two, trying to live both.

My dad was a farmer and as a kid plowed with a team of horses. He told me that in order to plow straight, you had to pick a tree far off out in front, and keep your eye fixed on it. If you looked down at the soil, your row would end up all wavy. Worst of all would be to look backwards. If you did, it wouldn't take long for you to completely veer off course. No, he said, you had to keep your eye out front.

You get the point Jesus is saying, right? You can't look forward *and* backwards and try to plow straight for God. You have to choose just Jesus and let the rest be.

Look again at your palm branch. What do you need to "let be" in your life in order to fix your eyes on Jesus? What do you need to put behind you, so you can wave wholeheartedly facing Jesus?

PP#13: *Image of someone whose "face is set" with joyous resolve (to go forward)*

Jesus set His face to Jerusalem, and didn't look back. He gave up home and comfort and convenience to do God's will. He headed right into Jerusalem in order to accomplish our salvation.

Some of us are called to give it all up to follow Jesus. Most of us have the harder calling to stay in our lives but having to learn to hold onto it all loosely.

When Jesus set His face to Jerusalem, He didn't set His focus on the cross. He knew the cross was in His path, and He kept going anyway. But Jesus set His face onto the victory that God was planning in Jerusalem: the miracle of earning eternal salvation for God's people.

Setting our face with Jesus doesn't mean focusing on what we give up for Jesus. It means never taking our eyes off the abundant and eternal life that we get in Jesus. Yes, hardship, sacrifice and death all lie in our path, but our eye, oh our eye, like Maxene's, is fixated on the unimaginable blessing God gives us.

Let's head into Jerusalem: feet walking forward, hands waving our palm branches, heart committed and eyes fixed on Jesus. Can you see it? There's a miracle out there in the distance!

Amen.

[Live Worship Only] CLOSING SONG: *King of Glory* -Sanctify

OFFERING & ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David

Today, 2-4p Easter Hop

Thur., April 14, 6p Seder

Sat., April 16, Prayer Vigil

Sun., April 17, 6a Easter Sunrise Service

8:30a Easter Breakfast

10a Worship

Wed., April 13 No events!

Fri., April 15, 6p Prayer Vigil

Read ahead: Luke 24:1-12, 36-49

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"Jesus said to him, 'No one who puts a hand on the plow and looks back is fit for God's kingdom.'" -Luke 9:62

BENEDICTION -Pastor David

POSTLUDE -Sanctify (live)