

WHY DID YOU COME HERE TODAY?

People do things for a variety reasons. Take funerals for instance: why do people go to funerals? Some come because they are family and know what will happen if they don't! Some come because they either worked with the deceased or with the family. Some come to support their friends in their time of grief. Some come because they were touched by the deceased in a very special way. Why do people go to a particular movie? Is because of the story, the actors, or because their spouse said this is the one we're going to and you know what will happen if you say, "I don't want to go!"

Today we celebrate Palm Sunday, the day Jesus rode into Jerusalem amidst the shouts and cheers of the crowd. Why did all those people go out to see Jesus? Why did you come to hear Jesus' words today?

Just a few days before Palm Sunday Jesus had raised from the dead his good friend Lazarus. I wonder if people today realize the impact that this miracle had on people back then. It was at Bethany, which is only a mile or two from Jerusalem, that Jesus' miracle took place. Scripture tells us that crowds came from Jerusalem to Bethany when they heard the news of Jesus resurrecting a dead man. Because the Passover was to be celebrated in less than a week at the temple in Jerusalem, the crowds swelled in numbers. This miracle affected the attitude of the people in two distinctly opposite ways. For most of the lay people Jesus' miracle raised interest in whom Jesus really is. Is He the Messiah? Is He the Son of God? "Inquiring minds wanted to know!" Yet for the religious leaders Jesus' raising of Lazarus only raised their desires to get rid of Jesus. How could they compete against a miracle like that? Rather than accept Jesus for whom He really is, they chose to oppose Him and sought ways to get rid of him.

So the time came for Jesus to go to Jerusalem and fulfill the purpose for which He became flesh, was born of the Virgin Mary, and kept the laws of God perfectly. The crowd on Palm Sunday cheered wildly as He entered. They praised Him as the Promised Messiah and One who raised Lazarus. They threw down palm branches and their own robes in front of Jesus as He rode into the city. But now if they really believed this, if this was not just an emotional reaction to the event of the moment, why then five days later did the crowd demand that Jesus be crucified?

Were the people that fickle? Was it that easy to have their minds changed? Were there that many schizophrenic people in Jerusalem at that time? Were they not really sincere in their beliefs on Sunday about Jesus? Or could there have been two different crowds? Are we sometimes unsure of what we believe? Do we ever say we are committed to Jesus and yet find ourselves in an activity that goes contrary to His teachings or that denies our Christianity? Are we that convinced Jesus really is the Messiah that we will follow Him anywhere, all the time?

Do you know that Christians are not the only ones who say “Jesus is the Messiah?” Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses do, too. However, their definition of the Messiah and who Jesus really is is much different than a Christian’s would be. Did you know that even Islam teaches in the Koran that Jesus is the Messiah? So, when you say “Jesus is the Messiah” whose definition are you referring to: the Mormon, the Jehovah Witness, the Moslem, or the Christian definition?

St. John writes that when the Pharisees saw the crowds on Palm Sunday they realized their current way of dealing with Jesus was not working. They said, **“See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him.”** Understand that the main concern of the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling counsel which the Pharisees controlled, was not concerned with possibility that Jesus was the Messiah. No! The Sanhedrin was concerned that Jesus’ words and miracle would draw the people to Him and away from them, resulting in a loss of power, influence, and control. On the other hand St. John writes what he does because his main concern was how Jesus’ words would impact the world. John hoped that through his words the world would see, know, and believe that Jesus is the Son of God and have eternal life.

The miracle of Lazarus’ resurrection does something that makes people most uncomfortable. It forces people to make a choice! They must decide in their hearts and minds who Jesus really is. For the many of the people who came out on Palm Sunday, they had made their choice: they believed Jesus was the Promised Messiah, the Son of God. The question today is, “What is your choice? What do you believe about Jesus?” Is Jesus just a rabbi, a great teacher? Is Jesus just a prophet, a dreamer, a philosopher from the past? Or is Jesus of Nazareth the Promised Messiah, the Son of the Living God, the Savior, and the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world? What do you really believe? What does your life say!

Why do you seek Jesus in your life? Are you impressed by His miracles? Are you seeking Him because everyone else you know and respect is? I cannot speak for you, nor can I answer for you. But I can tell you why I seek Jesus. Jesus is the Promised One, the Messiah, the Son of Abraham and David, the Son of God. He is the Second Person of the Trinity, the Creator of our entire universe. I seek Jesus because I believe He is my Savior, that He shed His blood for all my sins, and that He laid down His life for me like a Shepherd for his sheep. And I believe that He took His life up again, that He rose again to life on the third day. I seek Jesus because He has the words of eternal life; there is no other way to the Father but by Jesus. He came to save me, to wash me clean of my sins with His blood, to bring me into fellowship with His Father, and to give me eternal life. I seek Jesus for His friendship, His grace, His love, and His direction. I seek Jesus because in His love He sought me first.

Today is Palm Sunday. Today Jesus comes into our lives. He seeks you, and you, and you. If you are looking for meaning and purpose in life, you came to the right place. If you are looking for end to your guilt and hopelessness in life, you came to the right place. If you are looking for love and acceptance, for an affirmation of your self worth or a second chance at life, you have come to the right place. If you are seeking forgiveness for your sins and assurance of eternal life, you came to the right place. If you are looking to unload the burdens of life or for hope as you grieve the loss of a loved one, you came to the right place. If you are struggling with life, facing a crumbling marriage, uncertain of your future earning power, or feel lost and useless, you came to the right place. You came to the right place because Jesus promises where ever two or three are gathered around His Word He will be in their midst. Jesus is coming to us here today in His Word because He loves us and wants us to be saved. **WHY DID YOU COME HERE TODAY? IJN, amen.**