

Text: John 12:12-19**Theme: Jesus Is always in Control**

The whole story of Paul Sunday, and indeed the whole Passion account, especially in John's Gospel assures us that Jesus is in control. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke Jesus tells the disciples exactly where the donkey would be, and that when they tell the owner that the Lord needs it, he would let them have it. As Jesus is going down the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem, a huge crowd gathers, singing, "Hosanna." In Luke's Gospel the Pharisees tell Jesus to silence His disciples. Jesus answered, "*If these kept silent, the stones would cry out.*" Once in Jerusalem, Jesus first act was to cleanse the temple. It's amazing that no one could stop Him. The leaders were looking for any opportunity to arrest Jesus. They were not able until Jesus was ready. There is no story in the whole Bible that shows how much Jesus is in control as the stories of Holy Week. They assure us that He is always in control.

**I. We hate it when we have no control.**

The Pharisees were frustrated and angry that they had lost control. In verse 19 they said to one another, "*See, this is getting us nowhere, Look how the whole world has gone after him!*" Those two emotions had really set in. They were frustrated. They had done everything that they could to try to stop Jesus, but He was gaining more and more followers. Nothing was working! In chapter 8 they tried to stone Him, but Jesus slipped away. (8:59) In chapter 10, they tried to arrest Him, but He escaped their grasp. (10:38) Now they were hoping that Jesus was going to stay away. After he raised Lazarus from the dead, they decided that He had to die. So Jesus went to a village call Ephraim, which was about 15 miles from Jerusalem. (11:54) They thought that Jesus was scared. But Jesus came. The crowd was bigger than ever. You can imagine how frustrating it was. That made them even more angry at Jesus. They were almost out of their minds.

We often find ourselves frustrated and angry when we lose control yet today. How many of us would rather drive someplace rather than to fly, knowing that the chances are greater of dying in a car accident than a plane crash, but we like to be in control. We want to sit in the drivers' seat. These last few weeks have been particularly frustrating. We have never experienced the government making all of these mandates, that businesses must close, we should not leave our homes, churches should not gather. We have seen loved ones lose their jobs. There are people whom we dearly love, whom we are not allowed to see. Despite all of this, we watch as cases of the Coronavirus continue to skyrocket. We all feel so powerless at this time. It's frustrating.

That frustration can lead to anger. Sometimes we get most angry at those whom we love the most. We get angry with God. We have a short fuse with our family and loved ones. We get angry with those are trying to manage this situation.

II. But Jesus comes with His salvation.

He came to save His people on Palm Sunday. This triumphant entry had been prophesied hundreds of years ago by Zechariah, "*Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated*

on a donkey's colt." There was nothing to be afraid of. Jesus was coming to save His people from their sins. John speaks of Jesus' glorification. In the next story He tells the crowd that He must be lifted up. His glorification would come when He was lifted up on the cross. In John's Gospel there are 5 long chapters in which Jesus' prepares His disciples for this event. He washed their feet. He prayed for them. He told them exactly what would happen. When He was about to be arrested, He asked whom they were looking for. They answered, "*Jesus of Nazareth.*" When He said, "*I am He,*" they all fell to the ground. Pilate tried as hard as he could to let Jesus go, but he also lost control and was able to do nothing but ask the people, "*Shall I crucify your king?*" As Jesus hung on the cross, he was in total control. The charge above Him said what He wanted that He was, "*The King of the Jews.*" He forgave people, promising paradise, and even looked out for His mother from that cross. Finally, He shouted, "*It is finished.*" Then He died. Jesus was raised up on the cross to be the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. He shed His innocent blood, so that you and I could receive His righteousness. He was not a powerless victim. He was the victor who defeated sin, death, and all the power of the devil on that cross. He proved it on Easter morning when He was victoriously from the dead.

He is still our Savior today. Jesus has everything under control. He told His disciples after His resurrection, "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*" (Mt 28:19) Remember what He said to Martha as she grieved her brother's death, "*Do you believe this?*" Her answer was, "*Yes Lord, I believe that you are the Christ.*" Jesus wants to take away all of your sin. Judas tried to deal with it himself. Look where that got him. In this and every time of trial, He calls out to you and me, "*Come unto Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*" (Mt 11:28) Even when we grieve, He assures us that He is the resurrection and the life.

It lifts a great burden from our souls when we realize that Jesus is in control. None of us knows why God has allowed this time of suffering and anxiety in our world. We don't know why any of our personal tragedies come. But there is something that we are sure of. That is that Jesus loved us so much that He gave His innocent life for sinners like us. If God loved us that much, is there anything that can ever separate us from His love?

Times like these teach us that we are not in control. God is. The good news of that is that God loves us and works all things for our good, even these times of testing. If you are feeling frustrated and even angry, look to Christ and His cross. Trust that He has everything under control. Be like the throng on Palm Sunday that shouted, "*O Lord save us,*" "*Hosanna!*" And you will end up confessing, "*O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. His mercy endures forever.*" (Ps 118:28

Amen.

***Pastor Don Hougard
Benediction Lutheran Church
Milwaukee, WI
April 5, 2020***

Prayer of the Church
Palm Sunday
5 April 2020

Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the Highest

Gracious Lord, on Palm Sunday and throughout Holy Week, you showed that you have everything under control, right up to the moment when you said, “It is finished.” Give us a sure confidence and peace during this time of trouble, that we will cling to the forgiveness and salvation that you came to bring us on the Calvary’s cross.

Blessed Is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the Highest!

Almighty Lord, You have given authority to the governments of our world and hold accountable all those who govern in this and every place. Guide our president; the members of Congress; the governor of this state; and all who make, administer and judge our laws, that they would serve nobly and wisely, pursuing the path of justice and protecting the citizens entrusted to them. Give them the wisdom and strength needed to bring our world out of crisis and back to stability.

Blessed Is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the Highest!

Merciful Lord, Your grace is sufficient for all our needs, and You have promised to be the strength of the weary, the hope of those who fear, the healing of the ill, the fullness of those disabled, and the peace of all who are distressed. Hear us on behalf of our nation and the world suffering pandemic and isolation. We pray especially for _____ and all whom we name in our hearts, that they may be well supplied by Your grace in every time of trouble; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Blessed Is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the Highest!

Blessed Lord, You give food to the hungry and provide for all our needs in this mortal life. Grant to us a grateful heart and knowledge to use wisely and well all that You have entrusted to our care. Bless those who work to make, prepare, deliver or serve our daily bread, and give relief to those whose work has been halted;

Blessed Is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the Highest!

P: Almighty and everlasting God, You sent Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take upon Himself our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross. Mercifully grant that we may follow the example of His great humility and patience and be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.