



THE SIXTH SUNDAY IN LENT

PALMARUM

Palm Sunday Procession

Study Notes for the Christian Layperson

by: Rev. Mark Schlamann

Collect of the Day:

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. **Amen.**

Introit:

Psalm 22:1, 7-8, 11 (antiphon: Psalm 22:19, 21) — *Be not far from me, for trouble is near*

Psalm:

Psalm 118:19-29 (antiphon: v. 26) — *Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!*

Old Testament Reading:

Zechariah 9:9-12 — *Behold, your King comes!*

Gradual:

Psalm 73:23-24, 1 — *Truly God is good to Israel*

Epistle:

Philippians 2:5-11 — *Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, our Savior*

Tract:

Psalm 22:1, 4-5 — *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*

John 12:12-19 ESV

Author and Date:

The Holy Spirit inspired the apostle and evangelist John to write his Gospel sometime around 90 A.D. This reading takes place at the end of Jesus' public ministry, as He makes His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Before Holy Week ends—on Good Friday—Jesus will be crucified, dead, and buried, having taken away the sin of the world, including your sin and mine.

¹² **The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.**

- The Sabbath had passed, and the Passover feast had begun, hence the large crowds in the holy city of Jerusalem, as many Jews from the known world would make the annual pilgrimage for the feast.
- Palm Sunday “could just as fittingly be called the day of Christ’s triumphal entry. From Galilee and Capernaum He had traversed the whole land up to Jerusalem, and on this day rode into the city on a donkey. He wanted to be in Jerusalem for the Passover, and there take over His kingdom, even as kings and princes make their entries so that the whole country may pay them homage and swear allegiance” (Luther’s House Postil for Palm Sunday, 1534).

¹³ **So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!”**

- Palm branches were frequently used to adorn religious processions. Augustine: “See how great the fruit of His preaching was and how large a flock of the lost sheep of the house of Israel heard the voice of their Shepherd.... The branches of palms are psalms of praise for the victory that our Lord was about to obtain by His death over death and His triumph over the devil, the prince of death, by the trophy of the cross” (*Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, NT Vol. IVb, 52).

- The word *Hosanna* is literally a cry for help or to be saved. Eventually it became a word of praise, as if the crowd exclaimed, “God save the King!” The words the crowds spoke come from Psalm 118:25-26. They sang these words as part of the Passover feast while lambs were sacrificed. This time they unknowingly sang these words as the Lamb of God was preparing to be sacrificed for them, for you, for me, and for the life of the world. We sing these words with them in the Divine Service, as we sing the *Sanctus*, preparing to meet our Lord who comes to us in His body and blood in the Holy Communion.
- ¹⁴ **And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,**
- All four Gospels record Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. However, only Matthew, Mark, and Luke mention that He sent two unnamed disciples to get the donkey for Him, foretelling exactly what would happen as they went to get it. But the two evangelists who were also the Lord’s apostles note that this took place to fulfill the prophecy spoken of in Zechariah 9, as we read in the next verse.
- ¹⁵ **“Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!”**
- “The daughter of Zion is the Church of Christ, the sum total of all believers in the salvation gained through His blood. The King is Jesus Himself, at that time still in poverty [as noted by His riding on a donkey], but still a king most mighty. His coming banishes all fear, for it means the subduing of all enemies”—namely, sin, death, and the power of the devil” (P.E. Kretzmann: *Popular Commentary of the Bible*, New Testament, Vol. I, 478).
- ¹⁶ **His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.**
- One of the Early Church Fathers, Cyril of Alexandria, says, “The Evangelist [John] does not hesitate to mention the ignorance of the disciples, nor their subsequent understanding, since he did not care about the respect of people but pleads for the glory of the Spirit and shows what kind of men the disciples were before the resurrection and what sort of men they had become after the resurrection” (ACCS, NT Vol. IVb, 55). Jesus gave His disciples their understanding of the Scriptures shortly before He ascended into heaven: “Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45). It is through the preaching and teaching of the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit opens our minds and hearts to understand His Word.
- ¹⁷ **The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness.**
- Again Cyril: “The gathering of the common people, having heard what had happened, were readily persuaded by those who had witnessed that the Christ had raised Lazarus to life and annulled the power of death, as the prophets said. This is why they too went and met Him” (ACCS, NT Vol. IVb, 56).
- ¹⁸ **The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign.**
- This particular crowd is not the one who followed Jesus from Bethany to Jerusalem after He raised Lazarus from the dead. The crowd in this verse did not see but *heard about* what happened and in response went out to meet Him on His way to the holy city. “As [Jesus] was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of His disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen” (Luke 19:37). Likewise, we come to the Lord’s house to meet Him so that we would hear what He has done—and continues to do—for us.
- ¹⁹ **So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.”**
- “This graphically depicts the reaction of the Pharisees. Two parties seem to be represented, the one, more unscrupulous, siding with the radical Sadducees, the other, more lenient, hesitating to propose violent measures. The former address the latter who were in the majority and had thus far prevented violence. Their words, full of helpless wrath, taunt the milder party, declaring that all their temporizing has proved abortive and useless: ‘you are profiting no respect,’ gaining nothing whatever. Against this negative they place the positive: ‘the world’ is running after Him—passionate hyperbole. This royal entry seemed like a public challenge of the authority which had issued orders for Jesus’ arrest and had formally resolved to destroy Him [John 11:45-57]. ...Unconsciously they utter words such as the prophecy of Caiaphas, for soon enough thousands turned to faith [in Christ], and the church spread all over the world” (Lenski, *The Interpretation of John*, 857-858).

