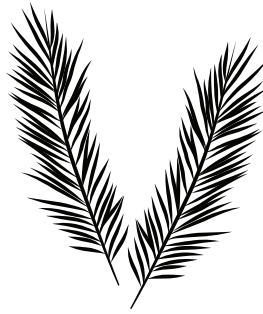


THE SIXTH SUNDAY IN LENT
PALMARUM

Palm Sunday

Study Notes for the Christian Layperson

by: Rev. Weslie Odom

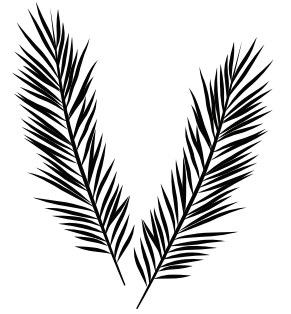


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Matthew 21:1-9 ESV

Author and Date:

Matthew Levi the apostle and evangelist, receives these words from the Holy Spirit around AD 50. The text relates Christ Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem on the last week of His life prior to His crucifixion.

¹ Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples,

- “Bethphage,” whose name means “House of Figs” or “House of Young/Unripe Figs,” is between Bethany and Jerusalem. From this position, Jesus and the crowds could be seen from Jerusalem.

² saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.”

- Jesus, as He does, for example, in speaking to Nathanael in John 1:48, chooses here to use His divine power in revealing the presence and location of the donkey and colt. The words to the owners of the animals may indicate that Jesus also knows something about them – that they're His disciples and will happily obey His Word.

⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, ⁵ “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”

- God uses Matthew to speak in a particular way about the events as he did the “prophet” mentioned in verse four. The one who confesses God as the sole author of Holy Scripture isn't surprised to find a combination of prophetic utterances referred at as being spoken by “the prophet.” The introductory phrase, “Say to the daughter of Zion,” from Isaiah 62:11 is combined here by God through Matthew with the explicit prophecy from Zechariah 9:9 to reveal the full meaning of what Jesus is doing in entering Jerusalem in the way He is. One should not think that Jesus makes the decision that it's time to fulfill a prophecy. Rather, one should understand that, centuries before, the prophets were given the words to write concerning this day Jesus of Nazareth entered His own Holy Zion.

- The point often made concerning Jesus' entrance is well taken that in His meek entrance all thoughts of a militaristic overthrow ought be put out of the mind. Jesus is the king, yet He is the king of His own, spiritual kingdom, which is not of this world. His horse and chariot are lowly beasts of burden. His crown is made of twisted thorns. His wooden throne is covered in His holy, precious blood. His royal bedchamber is His soon-to-be-emptied tomb. This is how the Christ is to conquer, and He does.

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⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. ⁸ Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

- The disciples seem to know that Jesus will ride into Jerusalem, but not which animal He will ride on. Cloaks are placed on both animals.
- The casting of cloaks and branches under Jesus' feet recalls the recognition of Jehu's divine anointing as king of Israel (2 Kings 9:13). The act is one of submission and honor on the part of the people.

⁹ And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

- In this verse one sees the wisdom in selecting the passage from Psalm 118 as the Psalm for this day. This Psalm, which Martin Luther called, "my own beloved psalm," (*Luther's Works*, 14:45), was most likely used in the liturgical worship of the Temple. As the prophecy above, the particular words of Psalm 118:25-26 find their fulfillment in the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem the week of His crucifixion.
- The cry "hosanna in the highest" is a plea to God for mercy and rescue. Christians are reminded of the great words of the Sanctus in the Divine Service. There too it is a cry to God for rescue, but its place in the service immediately following the Words of Institution teach the Christian that in the true Body and Blood of Christ in the Sacrament, the answer from God to this plea has already been provided.

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