

## **Palm Sunday (2020)**

(St. Matthew 21:1-9)

*“And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; and the multitudes that followed, cried saying: Hosanna to the Son of David:”*

Five days. What can happen in one’s life in five days?

In the life of our Lord Jesus, and in the history of man’s redemption, a whole lot happened in five days.

The portion of St. Matthew 21 I quoted tells us of a great celebration that took place in Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday.

The entire account is verses 1-9. I encourage you to read it.

There were many visitors in Jerusalem that day because the Passover was just days away and many came to prepare for the festivities.

But even if there had not been so many visitors in the city on that day, it would not have mattered.

For as Jesus told the nay-saying priests and scribes, if the people had not shouted out “Hosanna”, the rocks themselves would have done so!

Such was the celebration in the air on that first Palm Sunday.

Only the most hardened or ignorant were not caught up in it.

But that was the first day.

As we heard in the Passion Gospel, over the next five days the celebratory air would change drastically to the stench of suffering and death.

It would first change to indignation as Jesus cleansed the Temple of those who bought and sold, and had made the Temple a house of merchandise instead of a house of prayer.

It would change to introspection when Jesus challenged the Jewish religious leaders in one final series of theological debates.

It changed again, to an evening of servitude and solemnity when Jesus washed the feet of and shared the Last Supper, the institution of the Holy Eucharist, with His apostles.

It then changed to betrayal as Judas first made his deal with the chief priest for 30 pieces of silver, and later delivered Jesus to them with a kiss.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, it turned into a time of agonizing prayer for Jesus, and of sleep and then turmoil, terror and flight for the apostles as Jesus was taken captive and led away for trial.

Then first in the house of the High Priest Caiaphas, and afterwards at Gabatha, the house of judgment where Pilate presided, it turned into trials filled with false testimony and unjust judgments.

The guilty Barabbas was set free and the innocent Jesus was sentenced to death.

When given the chance to set the King of Righteousness free, the same crowd who five days earlier shouted “Hosanna!” cried out “Crucify Him!”

It had only been five days.

Ultimately it turned into passion and death, as Jesus’ flesh was torn from His body by a flagrum, His scalp was pierced with a crown of thorns, and He was made to carry a rough and heavy cross which He was nailed to in the cruelest means of execution ever known to man: crucifixion.

All of this occurred within five days. Just five days.

Today, we celebrate Palm Sunday.

Though because of the restrictions we are enduring with the COVID-19 pandemic this year is very different from others, we hopefully cannot help but feel a sense of joy welling up within our spirits.

While the summit of Lent’s solemnity, Holy Week, is only beginning: 2,000 plus years removed from the first Palm Sunday we know the outcome.

We know that next Sunday is Easter, and on that day the sense of joy that is only welling within us today will break through as we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord.

But what about these next five days? We don’t know their outcome.

What will occur in our lives over them? How will we spend this week?

It no doubt will be different because we are living day by day in semi-quarantine, but what will we do with each of these upcoming days?

Will the cry of Hosanna continue to ring in our hearts?

Or, will we become indignant like the money changers?

Will we debate with Jesus like the Scribes and Pharisees?  
Betray Jesus like Judas?  
Run from Jesus like the apostles?  
Deny Jesus like St. Peter?  
Will Jesus be mocked and crucified afresh in our minds and hearts because we give into fear instead of standing firm upon faith?  
Will we “want” to draw closer to Christ but be unwilling to do so?  
It’s just so much easier to get lost in television and social media than to pray and to read?  
Will we slide into lax-living and in essence nail Jesus to the Cross anew?  
What will we do over the next five days? How will we live them?  
How will we live our lives after them?  
How will we live after this pandemic has passed?  
These next five days might determine the answer.  
As we have seen, a lot can happen in a mere five days.  
These next five days can be pivotal to our Christian lives.  
Even while living sheltered, we can more firmly take hold of God’s grace, and the spiritual strength and discipline that flows from it.  
We can further shake off the bonds of sin, fix our eyes more firmly upon Jesus, and take up *our* cross determined to follow Him no matter how uncomfortable it becomes.  
We can die to ourselves a little more each day and live for Christ.  
Doing this will come with some pain. Old attitudes and habits die hard.  
But it has to be that way. The way of the Cross is not comfortable.  
It certainly wasn’t for Jesus, and the servant is no better than his Master.  
At best, we can hope to be as, to imitate, our Master.  
We know what the Palm Sunday crowd in Jerusalem did in five days.  
What will we do?  
Let us not allow this week to be just another week.  
Because we are not able to gather publicly, at minimum please take the time to read the Passion Gospels appointed for each day in the BCP.  
Meditate on them and ask “What will change in my life because of this?”  
Let us ask the Holy Spirit what needs to change and be willing to obey.  
Let us use these difficult situations to draw closer to Christ, taking up this cross of Coronavirus and following Him.  
My brethren, a lot can happen in one’s life in five days.  
What will happen in ours in these next five?  
***In the Name...Amen.***