



**Sermon Notes: Steve Stanis,  
“Psalm Sunday”**

**13 April 2025**

**Readings: Mark 11:1-11, Zechariah 9:9-10, Philippians 2:5-11**

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**Introduction: Fronds with a Prime Minister**

Have you ever made a grand entrance?

Before I was married, I went on a trip to Papua New Guinea. I caught a domestic flight from Port Moresby to a smaller provincial town. The plane was full of local people. As we landed, the runway was lined with people wearing traditional clothes, holding garlands of flowers, all singing and dancing.

‘Wow’, I think to myself. ‘What an entrance. These are friendly people.’

A lady with a garland came straight towards me, beaming a beautiful smile.

‘This is how they treat tourists? I’m coming back!’

She continued; walking straight past me and placed the garland on the shoulders of the Prime Minister, at the time Michael Somare.

The grand entrance was for him. It had nothing to do with me!

Today we look at the grand entrance of Jesus as he arrives in Jerusalem before His crucifixion and resurrection. It is a day of celebration, a day of anticipation, and yet, it is also a day that foreshadows the suffering to come. Pilgrimage to Jerusalem was common for the Israelites at Passover, and on pilgrimage, they were required to walk into Jerusalem. Jesus walked everywhere throughout his ministry but at this moment, rather than walking into Jerusalem like everyone else, he chose to ride on a donkey.

Let’s explore why:

**The Glory of God:** Mark 11:1 begins;

*“As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives”.*

Keep this in mind as I refer to the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel had a vision of the destruction of the temple. Ezekiel 10:18-19 says;

*“Then the glory of the Lord departed from over the threshold of the temple and stopped above the cherubim.*

*While I watched, the cherubim spread their wings and rose from the ground, and as they went, the wheels went with them.*

*They stopped at the entrance of the east gate of the Lord’s house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.”*

Ezekiel 11:23 continues;

*“The glory of the Lord went up from within the city and stopped above the mountain east of it.”*

It is only a temple if God presides there. If the glory of God departs the temple, it is no longer a temple. It will just be an abandoned building ... abandoned by God. The glory of God departs to the East, which is the direction of the Mount of Olives.

At the end of Ezekiel, he sees an end-time temple, which represents the work of the Messiah and the end-time kingdom.

Ezekiel 43:2 says;

*“and I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east” and Verse 4; “The glory of the Lord entered the temple through the gate facing east”.*

Where was Jesus when he asked the disciples to get the colt?

At Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives. He was travelling from the East, to enter the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus is the glory of God, made human. He is riding from the East, not on cherubim but on a donkey.

When Jesus entered the temple, it was defiled, just like at the beginning of Ezekiel.

The glory of God, Jesus, is the new temple that Ezekiel explains at the end of his book.

The body of Jesus, which he himself alludes to in John 2:9, as the true temple, when he says,

*“Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”*

Jesus is fulfilling the Old Testament Scriptures. He is the glory of God.

### **The King Riding on a Donkey:**

Jesus instructs two of his disciples to go and fetch a colt, with a little detail from Verse 2; *“which no one has ever ridden”*.

A colt that has never had anyone sit on it. An untamed animal. Maybe a hidden miracle. The importance of this comes again from the Old Testament, where an animal used for sacrifice should never have been worked or have pulled a yoke.

This made **this** colt a special animal that had never been sat on, that would be used for the religious purpose of carrying Jesus, who would himself be the sacrifice, into the city of Jerusalem. Why a donkey?

Jesus is the son of David, from the line of King David. The king after David was Solomon. 1 Kings 1:34-35 from the NKJV says;

*“Take with you the servants of your lord and have Solomon my son ride on my own mule, he will sit on my throne, and he shall be king in my place.”*

Jesus is re-enacting this. Jesus, the son of David, will ride into Jerusalem, on a donkey, to assume his throne.

In 2 Samuel 7:11-14; the Lord promises His commitment to establish His kingdom. He says,

*“I will raise up your offspring to succeed you ... I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son.”*

This promise goes beyond Solomon, is foretold by the prophets and is fulfilled in Jesus.

Matthew references this in (Chapter 21:4-5);

*“This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:*

*“Say to Daughter Zion,  
See, your king comes to you,  
humble and riding on a donkey,  
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”*

Jesus is fulfilling (Zechariah 9:9). He comes, humble and riding on a donkey. Interestingly to ride on a donkey is not lowly. This is reserved for kings.

Jesus is making a statement that He is a King, not of worldly power, but in humility, to usher in the Kingdom of God.

### **Two Processions, Two Kingdoms:**

To fully grasp the impact of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, we must contrast it with another procession occurring at roughly the same time. From the west, Pontius Pilate enters the city with the military might of Rome on display. His mission is clear: to reinforce the garrison in Jerusalem, to remind the people that Rome is in charge. This was a procession of power, force, and domination.

From the east, Jesus enters on a colt. Jesus' entry is a deliberate, countercultural statement. This would have been provocative to both the Romans, and the Jews who opposed to Him because they would have understood His intentions.

He is the King, but not the kind the world expects. He does not come with an army or weapons, but with peace and humility. Pilate's kingdom is one of fear and control; Jesus' kingdom is one of love and surrender. Once again, Jesus is at the centre of the contrast between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Caesar. This contrast is about to become a collision.

### **Jesus is Intentional About Bringing Salvation:**

Jesus is very intentional in this entry into Jerusalem.

He is coming as the King to bring about salvation. Jesus enters Jerusalem with the authority of a King. Jesus goes on to show His authority when He gives the disciples the assurance that if anyone questions them, they should say, *"The Lord has need of it and will send it back immediately."*

The disciples were questioned.

Jesus' answer was enough for these people.

### **Waving Branches:**

We continue the account from Mark 11, moving onto Verse 8; *“Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields.”*

Notice Mark does not call the branches 'palm branches'. It is John who explicitly uses this term.

Palm branches tend to get used in Autumn at the Feast of Tabernacles. Passover takes place in the Spring. In history, palm branches were used by the Jewish nation at celebrations of independence. In this way, palm branches are symbolic of the people being free of tyranny. They were a symbol of revolution. The Jewish crowd are welcoming the King who will bring them liberation.

Jesus does not come to conquer the Romans by force but to establish a Kingdom of radical love, service, and sacrifice.

The crowds may have expected a warrior king who would overthrow Rome, but Jesus was not that kind of king. Jesus did enter Jerusalem to overthrow tyranny, but the tyranny He challenged, was the rebellion of humanity and our need for salvation, to be brought back into a right relationship with God. He did bring liberation, but his liberation was the freedom to be called children of God. He was the right king, but they had misunderstood the story.

**Hosanna:** The people cried out, from Verse 9; *“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”*

This word, hosanna, is found in Psalm 118:25 when the people cried out hosanna to King David. They are crying out for King David to help them or save them. In Hebrew, the word is a verb, it is an action.

Jesus, the true Son of David, enters Jerusalem to establish His throne and God’s kingdom forever.

The people cry out to Jesus for liberation; save us! Hosanna!

### **A Community of Practice:**

As saved people, the early followers of Jesus did not merely listen to his teachings, they lived them out. They healed the sick, showed hospitality, prayed together, challenged oppressive systems, and forgave one another. They did not wait for the world to change; they became agents of change.

Their faith was not just belief, it was action. This was vital because they lived under the crushing weight of the Roman Empire. They had no reason to expect that the world would change for them. Yet Jesus did not simply tell them to have faith; he pushed them into the world to practice faith. By doing so, they themselves were transformed.

Palm Sunday is not just about waving palm branches and recognising Jesus as the true King; it is a call to live out his Kingdom values in real, tangible ways. We, too, are called to be a community of practice. The world does not need people who simply believe the right things; it needs disciples who live out their faith, who practice justice, mercy, and humility. To do this, we need to be prayerful, as we are connected, and as we are transformed by the Spirit to be more like Jesus every day!

The Kingdom of God is not an abstract idea; it is a lived reality.

### **Will We Follow?**

Palm Sunday is a day of both celebration and challenge. It calls us to reexamine our faith and ask ourselves: Do we truly acknowledge Jesus as King, not just in name, but in the way we live?

This day invites us to lay down our cloaks, our attachments, and the things that take God’s place in our hearts.

It urges us to surrender whatever holds us back and step forward in faith. Do we fully grasp that the Kingdom of God is not about power and domination but about love, sacrifice, and service? Just as Jesus lay down His power to win our salvation, we are called to do the same. When we live as disciples of Jesus, we need to have the mindset of Jesus. By holding too tightly to our

preferences, we claim power over others. Love cannot bully or operate with some sense that we have control of truth. Jesus always gave others dignity. We are called to do likewise.

Palm Sunday, and certainly the rest of the events we will remember this week, point to freedom to live as God created us. Jesus says in the Gospel of John, *“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly”*. We have a long journey ahead of us before we arrive at the joy of Easter morning but when we get there, it will be a celebration about life. Jesus came that we may have life and have it abundantly. We are able to be restored to both God and others when we are freed to be who we truly are; when we are freed to live the lives that God has called us to live.

Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Amen!