

March 28, 2021    The Way Pt. 4    The Promised King    Mark  
11:1-11

Dearly Beloved;

Throughout the Pandemic, I have used this platform in part to keep you informed of reasons why the Church was closed, the timing of re-openings, and what I understood to be the latest information on Covid-19. As I understand it, there are no imminent announcements about a widespread lockdown. Our area continues to be rated Green, which is why we are able to have in-person services to the extent that we are able to socially distance in the sanctuary, with masking, and the other measures in place under Public Health Guidelines.

Having said all that, if another lockdown is imposed, the message will be on the Church Sign, and we will be trying to send out e-mails and make phone calls to inform you.

I am 76 years old. When the announcement was made that people 75 and up could register for vaccine shots, I registered. This past Wednesday, March 24<sup>th</sup> at 11:43 I received my first dose of the Pfizer vaccine. I am scheduled for a second dose on July 14<sup>th</sup>. I was instructed to pay attention to e-mails and phone messages because it could be scheduled for a sooner date depending on the arrivals of shipments of the vaccine. The normal aftermath is a slight ache in the arm that was jabbed, and drowsiness (the blahs). I was told it could last up to 3 days, and my experience was 24 hours. There were no lineups. I walked in and was vaccinated 7 minutes before my appointment time. Everything was well signed from the

moment I drove onto the Loyalist College Property...where to park, where to enter, and there was always a person to direct me to the next step. My (seated) wait time after registration, was less than 5 minutes. Traffic was continuous...people arriving, people leaving. You are required as with the flu shot to sit for 15 minutes before you leave, and are checked out by a nurse, who concludes the log of your experience. I will continue to urge anyone and everyone to get their shot when it is available. Along with my mask, distancing, hand washing and the use of hand sanitizer this is one more level of protection. There have been cases (world wide) where vaccinated persons have caught Covid-19, but not once, has a vaccinated person had a serious enough case regardless of age to need to be hospitalized, and no vaccinated person to date has died from the Covid-19 virus or any of its variants. That is the primary reason I endorse vaccination. Barbara is younger than I and is waiting for the call in our area for her age group. She wants the shot, and will get it, when it is available to her.

Let us come together around the word of the Lord. Mark 11:1-11

As early as Mark chapter 8 Jesus is telling the disciples, specifically the 12, that being the Son of Man, the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament, HE must suffer and die. Jesus told them that the religious establishment based in the Temple in Jerusalem would reject HIM, and that HE would be killed, and that three days later HE would rise again. (Mark 8:31-38) The disciples in general, and Peter specifically, disagreed with Jesus on these points. It is one of the few

occasions on which Jesus rebukes HIS chosen inner circle. HIS words are harsh. "Get behind me Satan!" Jesus tells them they are not thinking about God's way but the ways of men. And is it not true, that we are tempted to approach the death of Jesus as a tragedy, rather than the way of God's saving us from our sin? We have a tendency to think of Good Friday as a day of great sadness. We question why it should be called good Friday at all. Because we do not think about things as God does, easily or naturally. We have to work at it, Bibles in our hands. The way of faithfulness. Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem, and this is extremely important, understanding what was going to occur, committed to what would unfold, and bearing the fury of mankind's rejection of HIM, and the perversion of justice that would fall upon HIM Jesus continued the journey.

That is the background of Palm Sunday. In Mark 11 we read the story of Jesus arrival at the gates of Jerusalem. He passes through the villages, of Bethphage and Bethany, the outskirts of Jerusalem, as Scarborough was once the outskirt of Toronto. From the Mount of Olives, the area of those two villages, you can see the walled city of Jerusalem across the Kidron valley. Jesus has walked, ministering as he passed through villages all the way.

I can't tell you why but I always pictured in my mind's eye, Jesus walking surrounded by the crowd that accompanied HIM. That crowd is the balance of the 120 that meet in the upper room on the evening of the resurrection on Easter Sunday. In Mark 10:32 Jesus again predicts HIS death.

The portion begins with these specific words. “They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way.” When a verse like that grabs me, I always reach for my KJV Bible to check what it actually says, you have heard me say it so many times, it is the best “word for word” translation in English we have. Guess what it says. “And they were in the way, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus went before them. And they were amazed, and as they followed HIM, they were afraid.”

Clearly the 12 in particular, the crowd to the degree that they have heard Jesus saying HE is going to die when they get to the holy city, are not nearly as keen as Jesus is on this Jerusalem trip. Jesus is out front. They follow behind. They are weighing what HE has told them. Not necessarily grasping it all. Wondering why Jesus is so committed to this reckless adventure. Some of them are clearly wondering after three years of learning, ministering under Jesus guidance, seeing so many good things happen, and so many signs and wonders, why is HE doing this risky thing. And are they HIS friends and followers in danger as well?

It has been a long walk. Days have become weeks. It is a significant distance from Galilee to Jerusalem. A couple of hours on a tour bus, on a great modern highway doing highway speeds. They walked. Jesus talked. People came out to meet them, and to ask for healing. And Jesus blesses those that cry out for mercy. Covid-19 has given us insight as to the dangers when there is no pill, medication, or even vaccine that can heal

the sickness that threatens the vulnerable, the elderly, those who do not have enough food to eat.

But here they are arriving, within sight of Jerusalem. Jesus sends two of the disciples ahead of them. HE tells them where they will find a colt that has never been ridden. They are to bring it. If questions are asked, they are to say, “the Lord needs it and will send it back shortly.” And sure enough, they found the colt. And people said to them, what are you doing? They said what Jesus told them to say, and there was no hassle. There was no saddle, so the disciples threw a couple of their cloaks on it’s back and Jesus mounted it to ride. It is the time of year when the devout in Jerusalem would be celebrating the Passover, that miracle in the time of Moses, when God liberated the Jewish slaves from Egypt, and set them on the road to becoming the nation, the Kingdom of Israel. And it is not just Jerusalem’s population that is celebrating, Jews have come to Jerusalem from all over the Roman Empire to celebrate God’s power to deliver and raise up HIS people. The city is overflowing with pilgrims who have come for the celebrations. Which is also why the Roman Procurator is in Jerusalem, Pontius Pilate, and a military presence in case there is trouble.

The Romans did not like unusual crowds. The Pharisees, the Sadducees and the teachers of the Law did not like it when the Romans were nervous. When there were more soldiers than normal, looking to quell trouble and sometimes almost causing it. Word spreads in the city. Jesus is coming. HIS

reputation out of Galilee is that HE teaches as one who has authority. HE heals people, by touch, by command, even demons obey HIM. Crowds rush to the city gates to see for themselves this marvelous rabbi, who fulfills the signs, that should accompany the coming of the Messiah.

When they see HIM riding the colt they are mindful of the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9 about the Messiah, the King of Kings, “Shout daughter of Jerusalem. See your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” So what do they do? Some spread their cloaks in HIS path. Some spread Palm branches they had cut in the fields, and those who went ahead and those who followed shouted “Hosanna!” which literally means Save! They shouted “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”(Mark 11:9). And they shouted, “Blessed is the coming Kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”(Mark 11:10).

This Sunday we remember all of these details. The unease even fear of Jesus followers, which gives way to celebration, joy, and abandon. We also remember that there were those, Pharisees in particular who begged Jesus to rebuke HIS followers for saying these things. Jesus refused. That Sunday, on that road into Jerusalem, it is clear to an international crowd, mixed with people from Jerusalem, and the villages of Galilee...Jesus is the Way. And that is what we celebrate: Jesus is the Way. Hosanna!”

Let us pray;

Lord in these precious moments, and on this precious day, we remember YOU. We do not cast our coats on the pavement of the streets. And we do not cover the streets with branches from the trees. But we remember YOU came to save. On our lips too the word is Hosanna. Save us. YOU are the way. Amen