

You may take great pride in your independence and self-sufficiency. But when we admit our weakness what does Paul say we are allowing Christ to do?

When Paul surrendered his “thorn in the flesh” and accepted God’s grace as sufficient, he released trying to control what he could not change, and what it seems God was not going to change. Is there something in your life that you have tried to control but you’ve been frustrated because it hasn’t worked out? How much more peace would you feel if you gave up control to God and received God’s grace instead? Take a moment to pray with open palms asking God to take control of any areas you have been struggling with in your own strength. Then sink into the embrace of your loving Father who cares for you so much He went to the cross in your place.

WRAP-UP

This week, as we celebrate Palm Sunday, we remember the final days of Jesus’ life—a journey that began with triumph and ended in resurrection, but included deep distress and unexpected turns. Though welcomed as a conquering king, Jesus defied the people’s hopes for political liberation, instead humbly entering Jerusalem with a mission of spiritual salvation. His path to the cross challenged human expectations, just as He often still challenges ours today. As we reflect on His journey through places like Bethany, the “house of affliction,” and Bethphage, the “house of unripe figs,” we are reminded that peace, healing, and spiritual fruit often come through surrender, not control. Jesus’ gentle yet powerful kingship invites us to let go of our pride and self-sufficiency and trust that He is working for our ultimate good—even when the outcome isn’t what we expected.

MEMORY VERSE

5 "Tell the people of Jerusalem, 'Look, your King is coming to you. He is humble, riding on a donkey--riding on a donkey's colt.'"
- Matthew 21:5 NLT

Challenge – Set aside 30 – 45 minutes this week to visit the Prayer Walk at New Life. Bring your family or friends as you experience the passion and love of Jesus through the final events of His earthly life.

The Humble King Beneath the Surface - Week 6

INTRODUCTION

This week we celebrate Palm Sunday and remember the events that happened during the final week of Jesus’ life on earth. It started off well with a triumphal procession into Jerusalem, and it ended even better with Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. But in between we find that Jesus wasn’t there to meet the expectation of the people, and the path He took to the cross shocked and disappointed everyone. Jesus still doesn’t always meet our expectations, and the journey He leads us on may not be the path we want to follow. But this humble king has come to save us and only He knows how to accomplish that in our lives.

Ice Breaker

Have you even been the passenger on a trip that you felt took the wrong route? Did you attempt to get the driver to change course?

Key Passages

The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

- Matthew 21:9 NIV

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Who is Jesus?

On what we call Palm Sunday, Jesus was concluding His earthly ministry and so He headed to Jerusalem. His final journey took Him through places that symbolized the spiritual journey He was on.

*1 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples,
- Mark 11:1 NIV*

Jesus' goal was Jerusalem and the cross that awaited Him there. But along the way he passed through Bethphage and Bethany.

The name Jerusalem in Hebrew can mean either "teach peace" or "he will see peace". But Jerusalem is far from a peaceful place.
In what way was Jesus bringing peace to Jerusalem?

Jesus passed the village of Bethany which in Hebrew and can be interpreted as "house of affliction".
What kinds of affliction (physical and spiritual) would Jesus face on His way to peace?

Finally, Jesus traveled through Bethphage meaning house of unripe figs.
In what ways was the fruit God longs to see in His people not yet ripe as Jesus entered Jerusalem?

4 This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: 5 "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.' " ... 9 The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!" 10 When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" - Matthew 21:4-5, 9-10 NIV

The prophecy Jesus fulfilled was from Zechariah 9:9 where the prophet says the king coming on a donkey will be "gentle, mild, meek." Jesus is allowing the people to recognize and proclaim Him with His messianic title, Son of David. But when they shouted "Hosanna", they were saying, "Save us now".

There was a dissonance in Jesus' arrival at Passover riding a donkey that most Jews were unable to resolve. When they asked, "Who is this?", there were likely other "saviors" that they compared Him to. Passover was a time to remember how Moses led the people out of slavery, putting an end to Pharaoh. David had been a warrior king who delivered Israel from the hand of the Philistines (remember Goliath)

and other hostile nations. And 150 years earlier Judas Maccabee led a rebellion and overcame the Greeks of Seleucid, driving them from Jerusalem and restoring the Temple. So, when they asked, "Who is this?" they may have had another kind of savior in mind; one who would free them from Roman oppression. A role that Jesus didn't fill because His kingdom would come through His death.

What are some of the ways you have expected Jesus to rescue you from your problems? Have you looked for a savior to heal a disease, provide finances, direct your career, restore a relationship? Are these expectations yet unfulfilled? Is it possible that Jesus is leading you through those circumstances to demonstrate your need to draw near to Him even when the outcome is not what you were hoping for?

*9 "This, then, is how you should pray: " 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'
- Matthew 6:9-13 NIV*

You will find what you truly need when you recognize Jesus' authority over every area of your life. The salvation Jesus offers is much greater than anything we might long for. He may be humble and gentle, but He is the King. And we are invited to say "your kingdom come, your will be done."

2. Who Are We?

As the crowds lifted their palm branches and shouted "Hosanna" they were saying "Save Us". They were admitting they were weak and needed a savior, although they thought he'd be a warrior to defeat the Romans. Today this idea is counter cultural. We are encouraged to push our weakness beneath the surface and deny that we need help. But Paul discovered a different reality.

9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. - 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 NIV