

## **“The Great Palm Sunday Procession.”**

Text: Mat 21:1-9

Suggested Hymns:

Tan: 733, 208, 494, 283, 603

Ade: 733, 87, 208, 494, 603

- 1) Marching through Jesus through the ages
- 2) Are we marching along?
- 3) We march by way of the cross
- 4) The goal is Jerusalem the golden

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 21:1-9, <sup>1</sup> *Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me. <sup>3</sup> “And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.”*

<sup>4</sup> *All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: <sup>5</sup> “Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.’” <sup>6</sup> So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. <sup>7</sup> They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. <sup>8</sup> And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup> Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: “Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ Hosanna in the highest!” (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

On the first Palm Sunday a great procession marched with Jesus into Jerusalem. The Apostles enable us to reconstruct the events that led up to this occurrence.

Our Lord had come up from Jericho with one of the usual convoys of Passover pilgrims. He and the Twelve disciples stopped with friends in Bethany, while the rest entered the city. There they informed others that Jesus, the famous

Galilean Teacher was staying in the near-by village. The next day, a Saturday, many came out to see both Jesus and Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. Everybody was talking about that sensational miracle.

On Sunday the stream of visitors kept coming. When Jesus started out for the Holy City, they of course went along. Word was swiftly passed on ahead, *“He is coming. He is on the way.”* Crowds came to meet Him. They joined the multitude with Him.

Then occurred what our text records, <sup>8</sup> *And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road.* <sup>9</sup> *Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: “Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ Hosanna in the highest!”*

The first Palm Sunday procession was a tremendous display of enthusiasm. These multitudes were keyed up to a high pitch of emotion by the approaching festival. All their religious hopes centred around the promised Messiah, who was to redeem Israel.

Here was a Man who by word and deed had given evidence of His Messianic mission. And they, in turn, by word and deed hailed Him as the Expected One. The palms and the branches, and the garments that were cast on the road, and the joyous shouts of *“Hosanna to the son of David!”* was their way of telling Jesus, *“Yes, we accept You as our Redeemer. Please deliver us.”*

But crowds are emotionally unstable. Crowds are notoriously fickle. These crowds had the wrong idea of what the Messiah would do. They expected Him to remove the hated chains of the Roman oppressor. The teachings of Jesus during the next few days destroyed that dream. On Good Friday it was easy for the priests to make the people sing a different tune. Jubilant hosannas became a blood-curdling *“Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”*

But today is Palm Sunday, so let us consider the Great Procession escorting Jesus into Jerusalem. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Marching With Jesus Through The Ages**

Let us use this scene as a picture of the conquering march of Jesus through the centuries. The Twelve disciples who did His bidding on that eventful day, the

multitudes that went before and that followed after, have become the host of saints and sinners that entered the Church He founded.

It is a mighty throng of Apostles and martyrs, of pastors and teachers, of believers of every description and from every kindred and nation and tongue under heaven. The religion of which Christ is the Centre has swept through the world. The centuries have seen one conquest after another.

White people and black, red, yellow, and brown, have found in Jesus pardon and peace and life. They have seen their sins and confessed them. They have trusted in His amazing grace. They have yielded themselves to His love. They have flung themselves at His feet. They have placed their lives in His service.

In prayers of praise and in fervent acts of adoration they have hailed Him as the Lord's Anointed. "*Hosanna,*" they have cried, which means "*Lord, save us.*" And still that procession marches on. Jerusalem, the City of God, has not yet been reached. On, and on, it sweeps, touching more and more lives and bringing them into subjection to the gracious Son of David.

Therefore we sing,<sup>1</sup>

Onward, Christian soldiers!  
Like a mighty army  
Moves the Church of God;  
Onward, then, ye people!

However, Christian conquests are not made by force of arms. Scripture says in Zechariah 9:9, *Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly [meek] and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.* So just as the Prophet predicted, Jesus entered Jerusalem in this way on the first Palm Sunday. In the same way He still comes to people today. The Gospel of His love is the weapon that subdues hearts. It is the power of God unto salvation.

Opposition cannot stand up before it, even though there is much of that. Hell rages and sputters. The world persecutes and terrorises. It does not want this Jesus to rule. It does not want the Gospel to prevail. It can make life miserable for those who march in the procession. It can kill them. It has done all that and still is doing that. But it cannot stop the great Palm Sunday procession. The gates of hell cannot prevail against the Church. The King of kings shall lead His servants into the New Jerusalem.

## 2. Are We Marching Along?

Always there are those who only tag along. A parade will attract a crowd. If a movement seems to be going places, people will join up, just to be on the band wagon.

In that first Palm Sunday procession there was Judas, plotting betrayal. The greater part of the people forming the mob were only momentarily enthused. They did not know who this King really was, nor did they want the salvation which He had. They just ran along and yelled.

And so it has always been in the Church. It has known more than one Judas, men and women who, having loved this present world, betrayed their loving Lord. Nor are all whose names are inscribed on its roster true followers of His. Thousands of children today vow allegiance to the King of Kings. Only God knows how many do so with a sincere heart. Only God knows how many will remain loyal to their Lord. Both the history of the Church and our own experience teach us these tragic lessons.

There are two requirements for marchers. There are two things that we must do. First of all, pray. Pray for one another, children and adults alike and implore God to keep your friends true and steadfast. Pray also for all the feeble ones in the Church that, even though Satan wants to sift them as wheat, that their faith does not fail them.

Yes, and let us pray for ourselves, no matter how sure we are of our faith. Scripture says in 1 Corinthians 10:12, <sup>12</sup> ***Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.***

The second thing that we must do is to examine ourselves. Is our tribute to Jesus, king of kings, only a matter of lips, or have we really surrendered our hearts to Him? Do we merely say, “**Lord, Lord,**” and will He reply, “***I never knew you, depart from Me***”?

You are marching along in the great Palm Sunday procession. What does it mean to you? Is it nothing but a habit? Are you merely following a crowd? How many people are in church today instead of reading the paper at home but most other Sundays are missing? Is it the idea that on Palm Sunday and perhaps on Easter and Christmas, too — they feel that they must be with His saints?

Or is it your love of the Lord that brought you? I hope that is the case but I don't know. Your neighbour does not know. But you should know. And it is essential that we get this thing straight for ourselves for Jesus also knows.

### 3. We March By Way Of The Cross

The great Palm Sunday procession marches by way of the Cross to the throne of glory. That was the road that Jesus took. He was obedient unto death, even the death on the Cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him. Popular acclaim did not deceive Jesus. He knew the temper of His foes.

Jesus went up to Jerusalem on that last journey, knowing that He would be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles and mocked and spitefully treated and killed. But that did not stop Him. Only in this way could the will of God be done. Only in this way could people be saved from their sins.

But what were the thoughts of Jesus when the crowds so jubilantly hailed Him? Certainly, there was no elation in His heart. Jesus had no illusions. And perhaps sighed, as on another occasion, <sup>37</sup> *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!”*<sup>2</sup>

Down through the centuries the great Palm Sunday procession can reach glory only by way of the Cross. Sin is barred from heaven. The sinner who wants to share in its bliss must get rid of his sin. And only the blood of Jesus, shed on the Cross for the redemption of the world, can rid him of sin.

The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many. Jesus Christ, the Righteous, is *“the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”*<sup>3</sup> The Cross stands for all that. The Cross bestows all that upon us. Therefore we march under the banner of the Cross. By that Cross we can get to heaven.

Priceless are the blessings which the Cross makes our own. But the demands of the cross are correspondingly severe. The great Palm Sunday procession is a multitude prepared for battle. It is an army of cross-bearers. On the first Palm Sunday opposition showed itself only later. But finally the Son of David marched

the sorrowful way that led to the Cross. So those who march through life with Him must each take up his cross.

Each one must fight, and fight unceasingly. Every person has within him a foe who may be down once and again, but is never out. That is the old Adam. You know what your weaknesses are. You know your own selfishness, greed and ugly passions. You can fight against them, or you can give in to them, doing exactly what your baser impulses demand. It is up to you.

But let me tell you, if you let yourself go and follow the course of least resistance, then you have let go of the Cross. You have flung it down. Outwardly you still may be keeping step with the followers of the crucified Christ, but inwardly you have broken with Him and are not His. These are His solemn words as written in Luke 9:23, <sup>23</sup> *Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."*

There are also other enemies to overcome. We must overcome the world. The world is a seductive and charming temptress. Nobody has succeeded in rationing her temptations. The world dangles before us numerous prizes, wealth and pleasure and popularity and all those things that mean nothing in the long run, but are so attractive for the moment.

It has a way, this world, in which, although we are not of it, in it we must still live. More than one person who has started off bravely to march in the great Palm Sunday procession has succumbed to its lures and dropped out.

How far has it succeeded in getting a hold on us? To what extent has it stolen our hearts and given our conduct an unchristian colouring? We need to watch our step. There is a broad way that leads to destruction. The way to glory is narrow, because it is the way of the cross. Flowery beds of ease, desirable as they may seem to our cross-hating flesh, are not for those who want to march with the royal Christ by way of the cross to glory.

#### **4. The Goal Is Jerusalem The Golden**

But whatever affliction we must endure, it is, after all, light and only for a moment. We read in Romans 8:18, <sup>18</sup> *For I consider that the sufferings of this*

*present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

At the end of the road is New Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup> The hymnist writes:

*There is the throne of David;  
And there, from care released,  
The shout of them that triumph,  
The song of them that feast;  
And they, who with their leader  
Have conquered in the fight,  
For ever and for ever  
Are clad in robes of white.*

Toward that bright shining goal the Royal Christ is marching and with Him the great Palm Sunday procession. Around the throne of the Lamb shall be gathered all ***“the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”***<sup>5</sup>

And as Scripture says in Revelation 7:16-17, <sup>16</sup> ***“They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;”*** <sup>17</sup> ***“for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”***

By the grace of God may we be with that happy throng which raises triumphant hosannas to the Son of David, to the Lamb that was slain, the royal Christ. Will you be there? Are you marching with Him in the great Palm Sunday procession? Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Hymn 208

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 23:37

<sup>3</sup> 1 John 2:2

<sup>4</sup> Hymn 494 v3

<sup>5</sup> Revelation 7:14