

# Communion

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Our message for the morning hour is entitled Reflections on Palm Sunday. And this is going to be an abbreviated message for the simple reason that I don't want our communion celebration to be just an add-on to the service, but I want it to receive an unhurried attention that we ought to give it.

It is a very solemn time, and yet it is at the same time an occasion for great rejoicing. So there is both elements involved there.

For the brevity of the message, I want you to just think in terms with me of some of the events that happened on this Palm Sunday. It is, of course, the record that is given in the Gospels of our Lord coming into Jerusalem on this fateful day, commonly referred to as Palm Sunday.

Sunday immediately, or the week preceding what is commonly referred to by the world as Easter Sunday, and my preference is Resurrection Sunday, which is a much more accurate term.

But I would like us to consider for just a few moments different people's perspectives of this particular event. because any time there is something significant that is happening in public, and there are a number of people watching on, a number of people witnessing the thing that's taking place, it is amazing how diverse the opinions are of people as to what actually occurred there.

[ 1 : 3 8 ] And there have been all kinds of, I guess you would call them tests given, or demonstrations of this, where people all witness the same event.

Maybe it's an accident at the corner of 4th and Elm, and there are a half a dozen different people who actually witness the accident. And these people are interviewed by the authorities after it's all over and done with.

And it is amazing the diversity of opinion and the difference of what people saw when they all had the same evidence to look at. Yet they come up with different things.

Somebody notices the one car more than the other car. Somebody notices the occupants more than anything else. Somebody else notices whether the light was red or green and whatnot.

And you put all of these things together, and sometimes you get an accurate story, and sometimes you don't, because people's perceptions aren't always correct. And so it is on the day of Palm Sunday, when Christ came riding in to Jerusalem on the back of this foal, a colt, and people were gathered there in great numbers, huge crowds thronged away all along, numerous witnesses represented different backgrounds and different entities at the time.

[ 3 : 0 3 ] Out of the groups that were present that I would like you to consider for just a few moments, and we'll begin with those who represented the greatest number of people. First of all, there was the throng, the crowd that always seemed to gather wherever Jesus showed up, because word had well gotten around regarding his teaching and his miracles, and a number of people would be there, even if they weren't serious about Jesus Christ being the Messiah.

Perhaps they didn't even believe it. Nonetheless, it must have been considered very entertaining as well. And they were curious. They wanted to know what's going on. You know, nothing draws a crowd like a crowd.

Everybody wants to know what's going on. And when you are in a city like Jerusalem, at this time of the year, you have a ready-made crowd, because there were huge throngs of people there, just because it was time for the Passover feast.

And there are people who had come from all over the Mediterranean world to conduct a pilgrimage, to be in Jerusalem, so they could present themselves before the Lord in Jerusalem.

And faithful Jews were required to do that by the law of Moses. So, many of them, at great personal expense, some of them saved up years to be able to make this trip, because they came from all over the Mediterranean world.

[ 4 : 29 ] Yet they had the Jewish religion in common. So they would come to the temple area, the Temple Mount area, and they would secure a lamb to be offered.

And then the lamb would be examined by the priest, and if it passed muster, not having any spot or blemish, etc., then it would be considered acceptable for sacrifice, and the priest would sacrifice the animal.

And that was what constituted the individual presenting themselves before the Lord. And you did it by way of a representative sacrifice.

That was the Paschal lamb, the sacrificial lamb. So the population of Jerusalem around any of the feast days, whether it was Pentecost, or Passover, or Tabernacles, the population would just swell enormously.

It's kind of like, kind of like the weekend of running the Indianapolis 500, when you can't get a motel room for miles around, because everybody is there for the big event.

[ 5 : 33 ] We can understand that. Just transport that back to a religious occasion in Jerusalem about 2,000 years ago, and the huge crowd was there. They represent, of course, the largest number.

And out of this huge crowd, we would commonly refer to them as the common people of the masses. They were divided. Probably a great many of them had already signed on to Jesus being the Messiah, that concept.

Probably a great number of them weren't sure whether he was or not. And probably a number of them, I've kind of divided this in a third, probably a third of them were convinced that he was not the Messiah, that he did not have the proper credentials.

So in this mixed multitude, you really do have a mix. People of all kinds of persuasions. But, one thing you can count on is that those who were strewing the palm branches in the way were those who were believers.

This was their way of honoring Jesus into the city of Jerusalem. We would call it the equivalent of rolling out the red carpet. You wanted to honor this person.

[ 6 : 43 ] You wanted to express your favor toward him. You wanted to honor his dignity, his personhood, etc. So these people, some of them, would actually take off their garments, their outer garment, which we would refer to as a robe, and strew it in the way kind of like a, you've heard the Sir Walter Raleigh thing who supposedly took off his cloak and spread it out so that the Queen of England could step from the curb down to the street without getting her feet wet.

That was a Sir Wally gesture that we've, I don't know if it's true or not, but that's what history says. Well, this was kind of like doing that for Jesus with their coats and the palm branches.

And what's the significance of the palm branches? A lot. Because it not only honored this one who would walk over that path or that trail of palm branches that they had stripped from nearby trees, but the palm branch was very significant because it was the Hebrew symbol of nationalism for Judaism.

This was before a star of David became common, which represents Israel today, the five-figured star called the star of David. But the palm branch was significant to the Jew and it spoke of Jewish independence and Jewish nationalism.

Tie that in with what they expected this Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, to do when he got into town. They anticipated, at least his followers, they anticipated that he was going to go in to the temple area, declare himself publicly to be the Messiah and rout the Romans, send them packing, establish the kingdom of heaven, come to earth, and it was going to be absolutely glorious.

[ 8 : 41 ] After all, God promised the Messiah 4,000 years ago and now he's making good on his promise.

And at least one-third of this crowd was absolutely electrified. They were strewing the palm branches. These are the ones who were shouting, Hosanna! Hosanna!

Which literally means, deliver now! Deliver now! Save now! In other words, they were saying, do it! Do it now! Let's get this on!

We know why you came. Go right ahead and perform what you came for. Hosanna! To whom? Hosanna to the son of David.

What does that mean? That means they recognized that Jesus of Nazareth was the direct descendant of David the king who lived and ruled over Israel a thousand years earlier.

[ 9 : 45 ] Now, this is his direct descendant, Jesus the Messiah, the son of David. It was exciting. These people were just fervent, zealous, ready for the event that Israel had looked forward to for thousands of years.

And now, it is going to come to pass. Can you imagine the excitement these people were thinking? Just think of it. All of the generations that have come and gone and have died off, and ours, our generation, we get to witness this.

This is amazing. And they were just absolutely beside themselves. They made up the greater number of people. That's group number one. Group number two, the religious establishment.

They were salted within this larger group. There were not nearly as many of them because the scribes, the Pharisees, the chief priests, etc.

didn't number anything like this huge throng of people, but there was a considerable number of them. And you could tell them, you could spot them a mile away just by the way they were dressed. I mean, they stood out in their finery, in their robes, in their accoutrements, and everything that went with them.

[ 10 : 58 ] You could spot one of these chief priests or Pharisees from here to the back of the auditorium. And they really stood out. Everybody knew who they were and everybody paid them special honor because they recognized the position that God had given them, etc.

But you've got to remember that by this time the religious establishment had become so corrupt and so dishonest and so deceptive and so manipulative of the people that even though the people respected them much because they felt they had to, they had no choice, they at least outwardly respected them but inwardly they had great contempt for them because they saw through their hypocrisy and their manipulation and their scheming and all the rest.

In fact, they saw through it so well that remember when Jesus and he's going to do that this time too, when he arrives in town he's going to the temple and cleanse it. This is the second time.

He did the same thing early on in his ministry. Now near the end of his ministry he's going to do it again. And the cleansing of the temple is when he upset the money changers and sent all of the animals scurrying and everything.

This was nothing more than a rip-off that was instigated by the religious establishment and they simply soaked it to all of the tourists and the pilgrims who came from surrounding areas who came with coinage from their own country and had to get converted into Jewish shekels because you couldn't pay the temple tax you couldn't buy anything in the temple area with the money you came from you had to have your money exchanged and of course many of them took advantage of it because these people didn't know what the exchange rate was what their money was worth as opposed to the Jewish money etc.

[ 12 : 51 ] and they just ripped them off they sold the animals for sacrifice for two and three prices of what they should have and the common people they knew that they saw through all of that and that's why they called the temple court area that's why they called it the bazaar of Annas Annas was the high priest in other words our equivalent of that would be the shopping mall of Annas Annas ran it staffed it got a cut off from all of it a cut of all of it and it was just corrupt through and through this is why Jesus said my father's house is to be a house of prayer you have made it a den of thieves that's what he was talking about and everybody knew it this religious establishment of course had it in for our Lord and they were determined by this time that he was going to have to go because he presented too much of an embarrassment to them and the people gave him entirely too much attention these were the same ones who when

Jesus was writing in and the crowd was shouting Hosanna Hosanna to the son of David these were the ones this chief priests and the high priest and all the rest of them were there and they were the ones who turned to Jesus and said tell your disciples to be quiet tell them to stop saying those things and Jesus said I tell you if these hold their peace various stones will cry out it was his way of saying he would not be denied their accolades on this day and they of course were insanely jealous of him because every time they tried to trap him and take him and make him look bad he always managed to turn the tables on them with the simplest of logic and wisdom and ended up embarrassing them to no end and they built up a tremendous amount of resentment against Jesus and all he ever did was simply tell the truth but it always conflicted with what they were saying

I remember reading in one occasion I believe it was in Luke 19 and one of the Pharisees was speaking and this is what he said this is a voice of frustration speaking these Pharisees had tried all kinds of angles they tried to trick him with the question if a woman has seven husbands and they all die whose will she be and that and is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not these kind of trick questions that they would try to set him up with to make him look bad and he always ended up making them look bad and one of them said you know we need a different strategy so they would come up with different ways to approach how are we going to handle him how are we going to approach this what are we going to say if he says this they develop these strategies and schemes and then they can't wait for an opportunity to try them out because they're trying to turn the tide of public opinion against him has anything changed do you see this ever happening in the political realm today it's called spin and people put their spin on something they put their take on it and very often it's distorted and it's manipulative and it's designed to affect public opinion and sometimes it works very well there's a lot of dishonesty out there there always has been and there is here too and one of these

Pharisees turn to another and I think it's in Luke 19 but I'm not sure and it's as if he's punching this guy in the ribs and he says to him you see you are not doing any good in other words whatever it is that we're trying is not working you see that it's not doing any good and then he goes on and says look the whole world has gone after him as if in abject frustration everything they try fails and they're really getting upset about this and this one facetiously says look if we let him go on the whole world is going to go after him well the whole world should but of course that was hyperbole and the whole world wasn't going after because Jesus had his detractors too but these people were saying look the more we oppose him the more people line up with him what are we going to do well you know what they're going to do ultimately they're going to say there is after all only one final solution just do away with him he's got to go so a contract was actually put on

Jesus much earlier than Palm Sunday but now this week is bringing things together and it's all coalescing so that they're going to be able to do it this week and it will start with a break that they're going to get that they hadn't anticipated and it must have really excited them because the big problem they had you see once they could get Jesus under arrest and bring him to the authorities then it'd be all over then it would be shouting time then then we've got this thing whipped but we can't take him we can't lay hands on him and we can't put him under arrest with all these people surrounding him because a lot of these people are really into Jesus of Nazareth and there will be a riot we can't do that and then the

[ 19 : 06 ] Romans will come in and they'll get involved and it'll be a big mess what are we going to do how are we going to handle this and one day seemingly right out of the blue a man walks in to the high priest's area and says what would it be worth to you if I could deliver Jesus of Nazareth oh who are you I'm Judas of Iscariot I'm one of the twelve apostles I have an inside track I know where he will be and when he will be there oh interesting you think you can really deliver I know I can but I'm not going to do it for nothing it ought to be worth at least thirty pieces of silver so they made a deal and you know the rest is history so this is the religious crowd the religious establishment and the third group consisted of

Roman soldier occupiers there were a lot of them I doubt seriously that they numbered in the thousands but they probably had several hundred available at any given time I'm sure they could give a signal and have a mustering of a lot of Roman soldiers there because you see they occupied the land of Israel Israel like all the lands around them were a conquered people and Rome would send in occupational troops this is nothing unusual that's the way it was and that's the way it still is we sent in occupational troops to Germany after we defeated it we sent in occupational troops to Japan we have occupational troops in Iraq right now and in Afghanistan and we know what a hotbed that is but this is common for the vanquished to have to entertain occupational troops and ordinarily these Roman soldiers wouldn't be there in that great number because you see the headquarters for the

Roman government in Israel was located in Caesarea Caesarea is right on the coast right on the Mediterranean coast and it is a lot cooler there it's a lot nicer there that's where Rome had the palace for Pontius Pilate who was the Roman procurator at that time and ordinarily Pilate would be in Caesarea he did not want to be in Jerusalem no Roman wanted to be in Jerusalem because Jerusalem was thick with Jews and they are a stubborn obstinate people they've got this harebrained idea that there's only one God do you ever hear of anything so ridiculous just one God that's what they actually believe and they're very defensive about that and when we march in with our guide-ons with our symbol on them they just vibrate and they are disrespectful to us of course this is common for people who view them as outsiders and as the conquerors and they come in and of course they tax the people they put them under all kinds of constraints and restrictions and naturally they resented them you know there is something that is really super dynamic that is involved whenever a nation is invaded by outsiders can you imagine what would happen if the

United States of America was invaded by a foreign country I think we would give a new definition to guerrilla warfare I think there would be Americans rise up all over this country and they would constitute a considerable force we hope nothing like this ever happens but countries do get invaded and you can be sure that the locals the natives of that country always resent the intrusion of the outsiders coming into their country to take over and put them under their laws and their restrictions and their demands anybody any nation would resent that we love our homeland everybody feels the same way about their homeland and they resent any intruders so these Romans would be garrisoned in Caesarea now Caesarea being on the sea is actually about 40 miles from Jerusalem so these soldiers have to go all the way from Caesarea where they would normally be garrisoned over to

Jerusalem but why did they even have to go there well when the Jews would have one of their feast days one of their annual celebrations they tend to get very frisky they tend to get very patriotic feeling and there's always some hotheads around that are talking about insurrection about rioting about throwing the Romans out and there are always little pockets of rebellion here and there and yon and it just makes it difficult we know that when they get together in a huge group like this they start feeling more challenging and more we think we can take these guys that kind of thing and that happened a number of times Judas Maccabeus was probably the most most example of that kind of a situation and anytime anytime you get large numbers of people together and they start talking you know this was going on in the revolution when they met

[ 24 : 58 ] Jefferson Adams would meet along with other patriots they would meet in a local tavern and talk politics and talk rebellion and talk these things go on because people have a yearning and a longing to be able to dictate their own future and to not be under the boot of an enemy and that's just natural that is just bred into our humanity the quest for freedom and liberty to determine your own future and make your own way and that's always been in the bosom of humanity from time immemorial so these Roman soldiers always considered the feast days of Judaism to be trying and risky because they were harder to handle they were more obstinate they were more obnoxious they were more difficult they would take swipes at Roman soldiers they would sometimes ambush them and they just hated that kind of duty but they're there and I can tell you one thing they did not appreciate when the

Jews started throwing down those palm branches the symbol of Jewish nationalism they were they were unspoken signs as to what these people were really thinking and you can be sure that these Roman soldiers all filtering all throughout the crowd all of whom could be easily identified because they were dressed as a Roman soldier but they were there to keep the peace they were there to make sure there was no rioting because Rome wanted to maintain control and they had very stern measures in hand for anybody that got out of line and you can be sure that they were there in considerable numbers then there were the apostles this is the fourth group and each group has a different perspective the apostles didn't want to go there in the first place if you read back in John chapter 11 Jesus said that he was going to

Jerusalem he didn't say this in John 11 but it was in Matthew another place where he made it perfectly clear to them that he was going to Jerusalem and be badly treated by the scribes and Pharisees and be crucified and they heard what he said but it didn't compute and the reason it didn't was because yeah we heard what he said but that's crazy that's not going to happen he's not going to do that and Peter remember Peter even took Jesus aside and said you shouldn't be talking like this I mean you ought to be saying things like this this isn't true and it's not going to happen we wouldn't permit it and Jesus said get thee beside me Satan for you savor the things of Satan not of God in other words he told Peter that Peter in reality you would you would preempt this thing you would prevent me from fulfilling what I came for if you could because you are thinking just like human beings think and Satan helps you think that way because you were already born with a warped intellect and the darkness that he pours into it makes you think just like he does this is not going to happen but it has to happen because this is why the father sent me what shall

I say father save me from this hour but for this hour came I into the world so even though he had warned them up front do you know when they would really believe that after the deed was done when Jesus was there hanging on the cross to them well I'll be he told us this he said this is what was going to happen we didn't believe it we didn't want it to be true we couldn't believe it we refused to believe it but here it is and in John 11 when he said that he was going to Jerusalem and his head his face was set toward Jerusalem he was a man on a mission and he had to go and his disciples said to him last time we were there they wanted to stone you you are going back there now this is not the right thing to do now you have got to understand these men were with

Jesus for three years days and nights they had become very close and it was not unusual at all for somebody to rebuke in fact we know Peter himself was pretty good at that he would stand up to Jesus and say stop talking like that that's not going to happen we won't so they are the apostles they were briefed earlier but it didn't occur and the fifth group actually isn't the group at all it's just one person and I want to read to you from Luke chapter 19 and verse 41 when Jesus approached he saw the city and wept over it saying if you had known he's talking he's talking to the city of

[ 30 : 54 ] Jerusalem as if it could hear with ears and be able to respond to them he's talking to the city and he says if you had known in this day even you the things which make for peace and what was one of his names prince of peace wasn't it Jerusalem if you only knew the things that make for peace but now they have been hidden from your eyes for the days shall come upon you when your enemies will throw up a bank before you and surround you and hem you in on every side and will level you to the ground and your children within you and they will not leave in you one stone upon another listen to this listen to why why that's going to come to pass because you did not recognize the time of your visitation what was the time of their visitation this was it it was right then it was right there the time of their visitation was deity on the back of a donkey coming into that town in

Jerusalem didn't recognize him didn't understand this this is the day the day of the visitation this is it and the only ones who would acknowledge that was approximately this is my estimation a third of that massive crowd who was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah but once they were able to arrest him and get him in front of the religious authorities and then the political authority with Pontius Pilate they knew they had him then it was all over the time of their visitation the vast majority of Jerusalem never knew and never understood because you would have had to have embraced Jesus as the Messiah and it was only a minority of the people who did the nation certainly did not this was a really sad sad time many translators and a lot of the commentaries and sometimes even in our

Bibles they regard this as the triumphal entry I've always taken the position that there was nothing triumphal about it it was the tearful entry and he wept over Jerusalem because he knew precisely what was going to befall him this is why he came he knew that Jerusalem was in their blindness and would not be able to understand that he indeed was the Messiah so there would be no reception there would be no establishment of the kingdom all of that is held in abeyance and it will be realized eventually because God who cannot lie has promised that but for now Israel remains in the unbelief that they were in at that time so Black Friday that was upcoming here in the text was a good Friday for us and it was black negatively and I just have a question that

I want to leave you with have you availed yourself of God's Black Friday to make it your good Friday think of that what was a Black Friday for God for Christ was a good Friday for us this is why Hebrews talks about our Lord being able to rejoice because of what he endured in his afflictions that he was able to rejoice even over the cross and the death he died on the cross and do you know what his basis was for rejoicing in the death he died on the cross he bought and paid for you that's why it was for the joy that was set before him he suffered that loss endured the shame and all that went with it because the payoff was you the payoff was the millions of people purchased through the precious blood of

Christ when he died for our sins amazing absolutely amazing don't expect to ever get over this don't want to neither do you and we are gathered here today to celebrate that enormous price that was paid and the salvation that was secured by it through what he did on that cross and these elements portray and remind us of the body and the blood of our Lord every year we go through this kind of reminder but it is a subject of such great significance we need to bear it in mind not just on Palm Sunday and not just on Resurrection Sunday but we need to think in terms like this all year long this isn't an annual thing it's a daily thing would you open your hymnal please to number 305 would stand please for for nothing good have

[ 37 : 21 ] I whereby thy grace acclaim I'll wash thy garments white in the blood of Calvary's Lamb Jesus Jesus Jesus be him I own all to him I go sin had left a cleansing stain he washed it like the snow and when before the throne I stand in him complete Jesus guide my soul to save my lips shall still repeat

Jesus fade it up all to him I do sin had let the world stay he loves that night the snow thank you be seated please on the night that our Lord was betrayed the disciples he were all gathered together in the upper room I'm sure that many of them had no idea that this would be their last gathering with him before the cross and he was going to say some things that night that would be a complete puzzle to them they just would not be able to compute it but of course they would and these things that he said to them beforehand would come back to them very clearly and very plainly and very forcefully after the events transpired and sometimes

God saw fit to prevent them from understanding ahead of time but the record needed to be addressed and what he said was on the record even though the understanding of it wasn't appreciated until after the events actually transpired and so it was with this when Jesus took that common piece of bread and broke a piece off of it and said to them this is my body which is given for you they did not say in their mind oh yes well I really understand exactly what he's saying and what he means and we'll just do what he says take eat this is my body we understand what he's they didn't have a clue they didn't understand I'm sure they looked at each other quizzically and said what what what and then he took the cup and said this cup is the new covenant in my blood and as often as you eat of this bread and drink of this cup you just show forth the Lord's death until he comes they're looking at each other quizzically and saying what is this what's going on here but it would all be crystal clear after the event then they would be able to look back on that night and recall with vividness that's exactly what he said we didn't understand it we couldn't put it together what is he talking about what does this mean but it all came back to them and when he met after his resurrection the disciples on the road and he clued them in as to all of those places in the scriptures that were referring to them and then he left them and departed from them one said to the other did not our hearts burn within us as he opened unto us the scriptures by the way never saw those things before now it all makes perfect sense and you and I today we have the benefit and the advantage of all of that history we can look upon those things with eyes that they couldn't imagine because we have an understanding that the passing of time has given us that they did not have so it was indeed quite remarkable if you know the Lord

Jesus Christ as your personal savior then you are in union with him and you are invited to partake with us we practice what is known as open communion you need not be a member of this church in order to receive communion because we believe that the requirement that God makes is that you be a member of the body of Christ and we're not about to add to that and make it more difficult than what God makes it so this is open communion and if you are in Christ then you are welcome to partake with us if you do not know the Lord Jesus as your savior partaking of these elements isn't going to change anything it's not going to make you a Christian we do this because we are believers not in order to become believers so we do it in remembrance of him and you're invited to partake with us if you know him our



Lord took the bread and said to his disciples take eat this is my body which is given for you wonderful hymn number 312 would you take your hymnal please let's sing that together we'll sing verses 1 and 2 number 312 far dearer than hope that the world can impart was the message that came through my heart how that Jesus all for my sin did atone and count the recovery covers it all count the recovery covers it all my past with the sin in stain my guilt and despair

[ 44 : 33 ] Jesus took on him there and count the recovery covered it all the stripes that he bore and the thorns that he wore hold his mercy and love evermore and my heart bowed in shame as I called on his name and count what recovers it all recovers as all I passed with sin and stain I killed and despair Jesus took on him there and calvary covered with all and in the same manner our Lord took the cup who might the grams above the 24

Anyone have one