

Palm Sunday

The Cross is God's invitation for us to abandon trying to make life work on our own terms, but instead trusting Him:

- As the source of our security
- As the forgiver of our sin
- In the dark moments when everything feels like its falling apart
- To lead us as we join Him in His mission in the world today

'Realigning' our understanding of:

Who is Jesus?

Who are we?

Walking the way of the Cross

Mark 8: 28-35

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ." Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

- Peter's acknowledgement of Jesus as Christ, as Savior, was right.
- But Peter's understanding of *how* He would *be* Savior was out of alignment

Mark 11: 9-10 (From Psalm 118)

"Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

"Hosanna! "

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"

"Hosanna in the highest!"

- The crowds acknowledgement of Jesus as Christ, as Savior, was right
- But the crowds understanding of *how* He would *be* their Savior was out of alignment

"the Cross of Jesus Christ is thus the ultimate place where, at last, heaven and earth meet and are reconciled. The temple is redundant because the reality to which it pointed- the meeting of heaven and earth,has now been clothed in flesh and blood. That is why Easter, when it comes, is the true beginning of the new creation, the new heavens and the new earth embodied for ever in the person of David's son, David's Lord" (N T Wright)

Today we celebrate Jesus' grand entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Next Sunday we will celebrate Easter and Jesus' resurrection from the dead. But are we aware of the journey from Palm Sunday to the Resurrection- the events of Jesus' Passion during the week? Read Mark 11-16!

Two Challenges:

- (1) Our faith must go deeper than a shallow faith that abandons Jesus at the first sign of trouble
- (2) We must walk the way of the Cross

Mark 12: 1-12

HE THEN BEGAN to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard..... "He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, 'They will respect my son.' "But the tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.'.....Haven't you read this scripture:

" 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes' ?"

Then they looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them.

What fruit does God requires from us today?

1. That our place of worship be a house of prayer for all nations (11:17).
2. That our community be a forgiving one (11:25).
3. That we give to God what belongs to God (12:17).
4. A community that loves God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (12:30), and our neighbors as ourselves (12:31).

God expects His people, the church, to be an accepting, prayerful, forgiving, devoted, and loving community built around his Son, the one 'stone' that binds everything together. When it becomes something other than that, it invites God's judgment.

Study Questions for personal reflection or group discussion:

Through this coming week, read Mark chapters 11 to 16.

If we just go from the celebration and 'triumph' of Jesus entrance into Jerusalem (Mark ch 11) into the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus one week later (Mk ch 16), we miss a lot of action in between! (suffering, persecution, misunderstanding, trusting God in dark moments)

1. In what ways do our lives reflect this journey of Jesus?
2. If someone asked you, "Who is Jesus", how would you respond? Has your understanding of this changed at all?
3. Do you prefer 'triumph' or suffering?! In which one do you learn the most?
4. *"The Cross is God's invitation to us to abandon trying to make life work on our own terms..."* Anything you need to abandon, or surrender? In which of the areas do you need to trust God?
5. What does it mean to you to *"deny yourself and take up your Cross and follow Jesus?"* Any specific areas you feel the Lord speaking to you about?
6. Any areas you feel the Lord 'realigning' your beliefs? Your actions?