

**Palm Sunday: Hosanna**  
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**West Valley Presbyterian Church**



**Palm Sunday 2018**

You were all given palms this morning,  
Wave them...and shout Hosanna...lets get  
some good use out of them...

Do you know what  
the palm branches you hold in your hand  
today symbolize?  
What did they mean for the crowd that day  
as Jesus entered Jerusalem?

**Palms symbolized freedom**

Why do the Palm Branches symbolize freedom?

Because when the Jews were free, back before Roman oppression they had Palm  
Branches on their coins

They were a nation back then, with all the rights and privileges thereof...  
And they wanted that freedom again!  
Freedom to live the way they wanted to live!

Now when you really know the Bible you realize that the whole message of the Bible is  
about freedom from bondage in one way or another—  
From Exodus where the Hebrews are freed from slavery...to the sacrifice of Christ who  
frees us from sin  
There is this drumbeat through the Bible, of a God who seeks and desires liberty for his  
people -  
God is a God of freedom

Now of course national freedom is different from personal freedom  
And the cool thing here is that Jesus is entering Jerusalem during the festival of the  
Passover – the festival that celebrated  
The beginning of freedom for the Hebrew people way back at the beginning of the Bible  
in the book of Exodus

Exodus means exit! Exit from what?  
Exit from slavery! Exit from bondage! Exit from abuse and toil and heavy burdens and  
the snap of the whip!

When the Hebrew people put the blood of the lamb on their door in the book of Exodus,  
the angel of death passed over them, and did not strike their firstborn dead

The Egyptians yes. They had a death in their family that night  
The Hebrews “no” because the blood of the lamb was on their door protecting them from death  
And that’s when Pharaoh finally let the Hebrew people go – and they followed Moses out of slavery.

So now...on Palm Sunday...during the festival of the Passover...the festival celebrating this Exodus of long ago  
Jesus enters Jerusalem, as the Passover Lamb for the whole world...  
His blood would save us from death...

Do you understand this? Meaning that death will now Pass-over all who believe...so that we can have eternal life with him...through the cross...

When you wave a palm branch on Palm Sunday you are waving a freedom banner  
Its like you are in a march for kingdom freedom...

Palms were also a multi-cultural symbol of rejoicing, and triumph, and were also used to welcome royalty.

Was Jesus royalty? Yes!  
Was liberation about ready happen? Yes!  
Had this exact event been prophesied generations before? Yes!  
(on screens)

**"Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! 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" (Zechariah 9:9).**

Was Jesus going to bring liberty and freedom the way the people expected? NO!

So nobody gets it that day as Jesus enters the city,  
They are all waving palms and shouting hosanna  
**What does hosanna mean? Save now!**  
What an irony. Jesus will save. He will bring liberty...but differently than they expect...

The palms meaning freedom- mean a different kind of freedom – like we said – the people totally misunderstand...and Jesus must have felt so alone...  
**Everyone else had an agenda...(free us from political oppression!)  
Jesus had a mission ...**

So I want you to understand today that this freedom  
This exodus from our sin  
**This exodus from death through Jesus Christ  
Came at a great price.**  
Don't take it lightly this Holy week.

Fall in love with the God who agonized to make this come about for you.  
Freedom comes at a cost.  
And in this case the cost was Jesus' own life.

That's how much he wants us to be free folks.  
Free from whatever it is that is holding us back, keeping us from him, keeping us guilty, afraid, or hopeless, keeping us from fully following him with all our heart.

Now you may have noticed I added a little to the traditional scripture reading this morning

I added the little excerpt from Luke as the time for this processional, this parade into the city gets closer...s **"Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem"**  
What does it mean to set your face?

You know I just had my first root canal.  
I don't want to have second root canal.  
One is enough.  
And they made me bite into this bitter tasting clay stuff  
And hold my teeth in place so they could get a mold of my bite  
The Dr. said...don't move for five minutes...we need to let it set...  
I thought "you have got to be kidding...five minutes holding this stuff in my mouth?"  
But I had to let it SET  
That meant that mold had to harden, so it wouldn't change...

### **Jesus SET his face toward Jerusalem..**

Often we hear the phrase, "His face is set in stone"  
That means that the person's face is immovable...expressionless...it won't change...its like stone...and often this phrase means we are setting ourselves up to do something that we would rather not do.

Luke noticed this about Jesus when he wrote his gospel.  
He noticed Jesus intentionally setting his sights in a direction he did not want to go.



Have you ever had to do something you didn't want to do?  
You had to Set your face to go and do it...go and make it happen...even though every part of you says...**No! No! No! No! No!**  
**That's no fun!**  
When You have to take this test you don't want to take.

You have to go apologize to someone you know is going to spit in your face  
You have to pay the taxes, clean the bathroom, go to the meeting you know will be difficult.

**Jesus has to set his face in a direction he doesn't want go...** he is human folks...so human...in this last week we see it more than ever  
Knowing that he will take our bondage from sin on himself...



Every human part of him is writhing under this huge task  
Saying, **“No!”...Please no!...This is so hard!**

And in the Garden, he prays “Take this cup from me please...”

But it starts right here on Palm Sunday  
The beginning of the end... this whole week is agony for him

Jesus is feeling it, just like you and I feel it when we have to go and do

something that we don't want to do.... He sets his face...

**And As Jesus approaches Jerusalem** – He sees the City from the Mt of Olives looking down and **he starts sobbing uncontrollably** (we know this from the Greek original text)- Its not just a few tears trickling down...its sobs wracking his frame  
He is overcome with grief

This is God weeping for his people - *saying if only you would have come to me of your own accord, like a hen I would have gathered you under my wings and protected you... but you would have nothing to do with me.*

Some people think he was seeing the destruction of Jerusalem that was to come in 70AD.

In a broader way though he was seeing the rebelliousness of all humanity and the destruction of the human race without God

Yes...**If you study the scriptures you recognize that Jesus is very emotional during this last week...**angrily cleansing the temple of the tables of crooks that are exploiting poor people.

**This is a house of prayer...you've made it a den of thieves!**– he cries out

**He is also withdraws to Bethany** alot, as if to prepare himself for the inevitable.

And then **He weeps again when he finds out his friend Lazarus has died...**even though he is going to bring him back to life...he still weeps because of all the people who experience death and who weep for their loved ones.

He also weeps because he knows soon people will be weeping for him....



**Jesus pleads with God, sweating drops of blood, in the Garden of Gethsemane to please take this cup of suffering from him.**

I say all this because I want you to **See the human face of Christ in the last week of his life** like never before...**the emotion...the sadness...the struggle... the**

**anger...the agony**

What if Jesus had said as he came close to Jerusalem, *“Well I just don’t feel a peace about this. This is kind of difficult for me, and I think it will be fine if I don’t go through with it. God will understand.”*

Where would we be folks?

**Jesus set his face to do the hard thing** - to do the hardest thing anyone has ever done in the history of humanity...

To do what was difficult, and excruciating – he didn’t feel a peace about it...it was not easy...it was awful...he did it out of love for us

That’s what love does

And the results of his doing this...of setting his face toward Jerusalem... and being crucified...has echoed down through the generations with testimonies of people healed, and saved, and changed

What would have happened if Jesus hadn’t set his face – what if he had waffled about – and didn’t follow through on doing the hard thing...?

Where would we be?

I am tired of people telling me that they know that “such and such is God’s will because they ‘just have a peace about it’”.

Or they know God is in this or that circumstance because everything is just falling into place.

Well that may or may not be true.

As Christians we are in a spiritual battle, and not everything that is God's will for you and me will just naturally fall into place. We aren't always going to feel a peace about it!!! Its sometimes very hard!

Sometimes we have to fight for what is right; give our lives for it.  
Having the Lord on our side does not mean it  
Will be easy...will be a cake walk, because its Gods will

The ease of the Christian life is not in the Bible I read.  
I read in the Bible that the world...is  
a war zone, set against the things of God  
And we must be ready to set our face – as Jesus set his face, resolutely - to do the hard things

Every disciple, sent out by Jesus had to endure all kinds of hardships to get the gospel out there.

It just doesn't hold water to think that Christianity is a panacea to make life easier, a kind of self-help crutch –  
When the One whom we follow suffered more than anyone has ever suffered and says, **“Follow me!”**

Friends, the more you love, the more you suffer.  
It's the way it is.  
And when the God of infinite agape love, in human form in Christ came to earth, that love endured a suffering so deep – we will never even come close to it...

**But As Christians lets set our face to go where we are called, Just like Jesus did as he entered the city that day...**

Did you know that there is a book that has spurred a movement among teen age youth called **“Do Hard Things”**. (**show book**) And the whole premise behind it is that we have such low expectations of our teens, when really they are this amazing generation of competent gifted servants of the Lord who are, because of this movement, mobilizing themselves in all kinds of difficult ways to make God's kingdom become a reality here on earth. Even when it demands incredible endurance and sacrificing they set their face to do the hard thing.

It's a whole movement. If its hard, and it honors Christ, bring it on!  
I love it!!

What I often see Christians doing is  
Using the ease or comfort level of their life, as a litmus test to figure out if they are in the will of God or not.  
Or to determine if God cares about them or not...

Becoming a Christian does not suddenly mean that we are going to live the “good life”

Actually, things in this life often become harder than they were before we came to faith because the world – as it always has – pushes against the things of God.

**1 Peter 4:12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.**

**Matthew 5: 10-12 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.<sup>11</sup>“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

Blessed are you...when its hard... when you mourn, when you are hungry and thirsty and when you are grieving or struggling...”

Paul says, “I rejoice in my sufferings...it connects me to Jesus’ sufferings”

So let me ask you, what is God asking you to set your face toward today?  
In other words, what is the hard thing God is asking you to do?

Or what are you about ready to give up on, because its just too much, and God is telling you right now...just because its hard...it doesn’t mean I want you to give up on it. Stay in there...

I was talking to one of you who told me about their spouse who fell into a deep depression – clinical depression – and had to be hospitalized. The spouse was in the hospital for a long, long, time. This person told me, it would have been so easy to give up on the marriage. It would have been so easy to just leave. But I knew God wanted me to hang in there this person told me . I couldn’t imagine the impact my leaving would have had on our kids, and I knew that I had to keep on keeping on. The upshot? The spouse made an unexpected complete recovery and the two of them were able to have many more wonderful years together.

Doing the hard thing, staying in the game, setting your focus on the things of Christ, not letting your gaze waver even though temptations are all around you, ...will bring a resurrection morning...

I love March Madness!!

I am partial to U of Michigan.

The last March Madness game with U Mich – they won at the last minute when Pooles made a shot - a buzzer beater.

Now I had given up watching the game about a minute before.

I had groaned and walked away for a moment, sure that the Wolverines would be defeated. The next moment, when I looked up Jordan Pools was throwing a shot from what seemed like a mile away for a three pointer – the buzzer went off – the ball sailed through the air – and it swished through the basket...and they won the game...**(static picture of the basketball going through the hoop)**

And do you know what Pools said in the interview? When the interviewer asked him how on earth did you get this ball in the basket? He said....We trained long and hard for this...We trained!

It wasn't by chance that the ball went in. It wasn't by chance that victory happened. There was training...  
Early in the morning, late at night, doing the hard things, the drills, the practices, the endurance runs.

Every athlete that is victorious did the hard things first; in order to get that victory.

Set your face people of God to do the hard things, the right things, the sacrificial things. Do not be discouraged. Unlike Jesus we are not alone. We have the community of faith around us to spur us on to good works.  
Friends, God did so much for us.  
He agonized, wept, and bled for our freedom...Out of love for him, and gratitude may we also set our face to be faithful in the hard things he calls us to do...

Knowing that every time we set our face, to follow Jesus, freedom will follow...and Resurrection will come.

Let Us Pray....

Redeemer...Lamb of God...thank you for doing the hard thing

Setting your face to go to Jerusalem for us

May we also be faithful in the hard things you call us to do

To set our face to follow you

For your glory and honor...AMEN