



PALM SUNDAY

STUDY TOOLS

Sunday, April 13, 2025

Teaching Title: The Confusion of Palm Sunday

Key Scripture: Matthew 21:1–11

CEDAR VALLEY

5-DAY READING PLAN* WITH QUESTIONS:

Monday: Matthew 21:12–22

Tuesday: Matthew 25:31–46

Wednesday: Matthew 26:1–16

Thursday: Matthew 26:17–30 & John 13:1–17

Friday: Matthew 27:11–56

Saturday: Matthew 27:57–28:10

1. What does this passage tell you about God?
2. What does this passage tell you about people?
3. If this is God's word, what do I need to do?
4. What's your takeaway?
5. Who would you tell?

MEMORY TOPIC:

God knows what you need

MEMORY VERSE:

1 John 4:14 NLT

Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.

*READING PLAN NOTE:

This week, our reading plan follows Jesus' journey through Holy Week. Our hope is to help prepare your heart for Easter Sunday. Each day, you'll read a passage from the Gospel of Matthew that highlights what Jesus experienced on that specific day. We've also provided a brief 2-minute daily devotional to help guide your reflection on the meaning of each moment. View the Holy Week teaching videos at <https://www.cvchurch.org/easter/>.

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION:

Introduction:

The "Triumphal Entry" of Jesus into Jerusalem marks the beginning of the end. This moment marks the final week of Jesus' life on earth. It was most likely Passover, and Jerusalem was packed with millions of people who had traveled there to celebrate. The whole scene shows that Jesus had carefully prepared everything and knew exactly what He was doing. This story is full of celebration, but there's also sorrow in it. As Jesus enters the city, the crowd is shouting "Hosanna!" and laying palm branches down to honor Him, celebrating the victory they expected He would bring. It all feels so exciting! Yet Jesus knows they don't understand. They don't see what kind of king He truly is. The victory He will bring is different from what they expected. God knows what we need for salvation better than the crowd did, and better than we do. They wanted military victory, but God's way is through self-sacrifice. You want what you want, but God knows what you need.

Questions:

Icebreaker—When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up? Did it happen?

1. Read Matthew 21:1–11 together as a group. Was there ever a time in your life when God didn't come through the way you wanted Him to? What impact did that have on your faith at the time?
2. Read the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9–17. What might the people have expected to happen to God's

chosen king based on this prophecy?

3. Why do you think Jesus chose to ride on a donkey instead of a horse? Why is that significant? (See Digging Deeper)
4. The Gospel of John tells us that the branches the crowd laid down were palm branches. Why do you think they used palm branches and laid them out, almost like a red carpet? (See Digging Deeper)
5. From this passage, how does Jesus demonstrate control over the situation?
6. What would it look like for you to trust Jesus even when life doesn't go the way you hoped? Pastor Neal said, "We want a fixer, but Jesus came to make us new." How might you respond differently in your current situation if you really believed that?

Digging Deeper

Question #3:

Why a donkey? Why is that significant? (Psalm 33 as well as Zechariah 9:9) are helpful:

¹⁶The best-equipped army cannot save a king, nor is great strength enough to save a warrior.

¹⁷Don't count on your warhorse to give you victory—for all its strength, it cannot save you.

¹⁸But the Lord watches over those who fear Him, those who rely on His unfailing love.

¹⁹He rescues them from death and keeps them alive in times of famine.

²⁰We put our hope in the Lord. He is our help and our shield.

²¹In Him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in His holy name.

²²Let your unfailing love surround us, Lord, for our hope is in You alone.

"When Jesus rides on a donkey, I think he's saying we have to trust God when we feel like we're losing. He's going to obtain the victory, and we shouldn't go in charging on a warhorse. The way of the donkey is not being passive. The warhorse is a vain hope for victory. This is biblical – this is Psalm 33. The warhorse cannot save. Jesus showed us that victory comes through sacrifice. It doesn't come through shows of power." —Dr. Nijay Gupta, New Testament Scholar

Question #4:

Using palm branches was not an exclusive Jewish tradition. Greece used palms as a symbol of victory and power. In the 2nd century BC, there was a Jewish revolt against Seleucid powers called the Maccabean Revolt (named after Judas Maccabeus meaning "hammer"). There are two books in Jewish literature (also referred to as the Apocrypha) called 1 and 2 Maccabees that tell about this revolt. When they had victory over the Seleucids, they waved palm branches as a symbol of military victory.

1 Maccabees 13:51—On the twenty-third day of the second month, in the one hundred and seventy-first year, the Jews entered it with praise and palm branches, and with harps and cymbals and stringed instruments, and with hymns and songs, because a great enemy had been crushed and removed from Israel.

2 Maccabees 10:7—Therefore, carrying ivy-wreathed wands and beautiful branches and also fronds of palm, they offered hymns of thanksgiving to him who had given success to the purifying of his own holy place.

Most likely, palm branches were an allusion to the Maccabean triumphs, showing they see him as more of a revolutionary messiah. Hosanna means "save now." It was a cry for help that people made to their king; a cry of oppressed people in their trouble (Psalm 118:26; 2 Samuel 14:4, 2 Kings 6:26). (*Expositors Bible Commentary: Matthew*, page 437, DA Carson).