

"Palm Sunday: Here's What's Going to Happen"

Text: Mark 11:1-10

May the love of God the Father fill you with wonder; may the sacrifice of God the Son fill you with gratitude; and may the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit fill you with faith, hope, and love. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

You've heard it a hundred times, in movies and maybe even in real life. There's chaos, uncertainty, and indecision – a crisis is looming and panic begins to set in – but then suddenly the "take charge" alpha steps in, commands everyone's attention, and in his (and increasingly now *her*) most commanding voice declares, "Okay, listen up. Here's what's gonna happen." The alpha then tells everybody what they are going to do and (this is the dramatic part) how it's all going to "go down."

They can say that in movies, can't they, because movies can create whatever "reality" they want. Movies are tethered to reality like politicians are bound to the truth. The hero in a movie can make bold predictions that always come true only because the writers, who obviously know what's coming next, gave him his lines. Just once wouldn't it be refreshing to hear some obscure character reply to a "Okay, here's what's gonna happen" with some something like, "Oh give me a break, you knuckle-dragging mouth-breather. How can you possibly know 'What's gonna happen'?"

But then I guess the viewing public isn't looking for reality in their movies. They just want heroes; they want supremely confident heroes that can singlehandedly wipe out an entire battalion of bad guys, and then shrug it off as "no big deal." Psychologists tell us that it's because we subconsciously relate to heroes. We project ourselves into that fictitious character and somehow come away feeling tougher, stronger, more capable and more confident.

And then there's reality – like our text for this morning. Here we actually do find someone that actually can and does overcome seemingly impossible odds, singlehandedly defeats legions of enemies, and who can, and *does*, declare to us in no uncertain terms: "Here's what's going to happen."

The text that will re-introduce us to this man is found in the 11th Chapter of Mark's Gospel:

^{ESV} **Mark 11:1-10** Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples ² and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. ³ If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'" ⁴ And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. ⁵ And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" ⁶ And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. ⁷ And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. ⁸ And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. ⁹ And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"

This is God's Word, graciously recorded and preserved for mankind down through the ages to this very moment. That you and I might gain the full benefit that our God intended for us through the study of these words, so we pray, "**Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth.**" Amen.

We have arrived at Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week and the end of the intrigue surrounding Jesus of Nazareth. Having effortlessly avoided every one of the clever traps that the Jews had so meticulously laid for him, Jesus entered Jerusalem to die – at the predetermined time of his choosing. We know that Jesus was in complete control because just a few days earlier he had given his disciples one of his "Here's what's going to happen" statements in Mark 10:33-34: "**See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. ³⁴ And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him.**"

Telling in advance exactly what was going to happen really wasn't unusual for Jesus, was it? He did that sort of thing fairly often, and he was unerringly right. Peter boldly declared that he would suffer all, even death, rather than deny his Lord. Jesus replied with a "Here's what's going to happen" when he told Peter that that very night he would deny him three times. In the upper room he said that one of the

Twelve was going to betray him. He said that all of his disciples would abandon him in the end and run for their lives. All came true. Remember that, because in a moment that's going to tell you something.

Our text begins with yet another *"Here's what's going to happen"*: **Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples ² and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. ³ If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'" Note again that it happened just as Jesus said it would. ⁴ And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. ⁵ And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" ⁶ And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go.** When Jesus says it's going to happen, it's going to happen.

So it was that on Palm Sunday Jesus entered Jerusalem to die. He entered riding on **"a colt, the foal of a donkey"** – because it could be no other way. The Holy Spirit through the Prophet Zechariah had given another *"Here's what's going to happen"* when he inspired the Prophet to write (our Old Testament reading for this morning): **"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey."** The import of this decision, this action, was certainly not lost on Jesus' Jewish enemies. They were experts in the Old Testament prophecies and knew full well that in entering Jerusalem according to the Old Testament prophecy, Jesus was wordlessly declaring himself to be Israel's Promised Messiah. This fact was further emphasized when he refused their demand to quiet the crowds as they sang his praises. With this sort of entry, there would be no turning back. The inevitable confrontation had finally come. The last and greatest of God's messengers had entered Jerusalem to die.

This is the event we celebrate this morning, known simply in our day as Palm Sunday. We today recognize the event as the beginning of Holy Week. The final, terrible battle between the Son of God and his mortal enemies was to be joined in David's City. The "sides" could not have been more unequally drawn. On the one side was Jesus, who was soon to be abandoned by all of his men and thereby forced to stand alone against his enemies. On the other stood the vast hoard of man and demon – Satan and all the forces of evil that he controlled.

And Satan and his minions never had a chance. We know this because Jesus had not just revealed to his men that he was going to die in Jerusalem, he also declared that something else was going to happen: **"See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. ³⁴ And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise."**

Jesus' own men feared his entry into Jerusalem – so much so that they unanimously opposed it when Jesus first voiced that particular *"Here's what's going to happen"*. To their credit, they made the trip with him – most, if not all, no doubt wondering if it would lead to their deaths as well as his. What is puzzling is that they still seemed to doubt him. Even after they had witnessed the fulfillment of every single one of his prophecies, every single *"Here's what's going to happen,"* they still seemed surprised when Jesus rose the third day. Again, we need to not only hear this well, but to learn from it. When Jesus says that something is going to happen, it happens.

It is certainly an interesting study to contemplate what the disciples must have been thinking when the crowds greeted Jesus as they did. While Jesus knew the outcome, his men did not. That's not to say that Jesus hadn't clearly told them. He had. It would, nonetheless, have been nearly impossible for them not to be carried away in the moment – hoping against hope that Jesus would somehow be wrong and that, instead of dying, he would establish the kingdom they wanted on earth.

Jesus was not fooled by the very temporary reaction of the crowds. He rode knowing he was riding to his death. That was his life's purpose. It was his loving, humble mission. He had come to die for the sins of the world, and he knew that that was exactly what was going to happen.

This realization undoubtedly escaped everyone else – friends and enemies alike. While the reaction of the crowds undoubtedly buoyed the spirits of the disciples, it undoubtedly filled Jesus' enemies with as sense of foreboding. Surely they must have imagined that as soon as Jesus entered their power center he would be at their mercy. The reaction of the crowd was therefore both alarming and disconcerting. Maybe this wasn't going to be as easy as they had hoped.

They needn't have worried. Jesus' plan was actually identical to their own. They wanted him dead, and he had come to die. In fighting against Jesus, they were actually his greatest allies. Little did they

know that not only had he come to die, his intention was that his death would save every single one of them.

Yet there was one more *"Here's what's going to happen"* in our text. Did you recognize it? Maybe not, because in this particular text it wasn't spoken, it was acted out. Yet it was given nonetheless, and its fulfillment is every bit as certain as everything else he said would happen.

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was a demonstration of "what's going to happen" on the Last Day. That's the great message we are to take from this day. Life for the Christian will most certainly include hardship, sorrow, and suffering, since Jesus also told us that that is what's going to happen, but the fact is we've already won. We don't look at Palm Sunday with misguided ideas of a kingdom on earth, but we do see those events as a foreshadowing of what will come. As Jesus entered Jerusalem to the cheers of a few, one day he will return to the deafening jubilation of all of the elect – including you and me. He himself has promised it. On that day, his holy angels, now unseen, will attend him before our eyes, and the sights and sounds and joys of that great day simply transcend our present human ability to fully grasp. Suffering and death must still reign until Christ returns, but both have lost their power over God's children. Those who die in the saving faith will rise glorified, never to die again.

As the crowds once called out, ***"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"*** so will we. But unlike the first time, at his next coming he will arrive in power and great glory to take you home. That's what the cheering of the crowd means to us. That's why we can, even now, thrill to the words that the crowd called out to Jesus, not as idle spectators watching the joy of others, but as those who know – *know* – that the next time he comes, we will be in that crowd. We will be the ones calling out with our own voices, seeing with our own eyes, hearing with our own ears.

This is Jesus' demonstration on Palm Sunday of "here's what's going to happen." He also spelled it out for us in so many words: ***"Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."*** (Matthew 24:30) As he kept every other promise, so he will keep this one. It cannot be otherwise. Come to grips with that reality, and let the joy of that certainty fill your heart and lighten your step. Jesus will return, at the time that has already been determined. He has promised. He will do it. And you and I will see it. Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{ESV} **Zechariah 9:9-10** Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. ¹⁰ I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

^{ESV} **Philippians 2:5-11** Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

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Palm Sunday – March 25, 2018

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 161 *(Red Hymnal)*

"Hosanna, Loud Hosanna"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. *(Brown Hymnal)*

The Scripture Lessons: *(Printed on the back page of this bulletin)*

The Old Testament Lesson: (Zechariah 9:9-10) Long before the event we celebrate today (Palm Sunday) ever took place, it was foretold by the Prophet Zechariah. Now, as also foretold by Zechariah, the King has "*established his dominion from sea to sea.*" Christ's kingdom or dominion has been established in the hearts of believers around the world. Those same children of God eagerly await the Second Coming of our Savior-King.

Psalm 8 (Supplement page 27) *(Brown Hymnal)*

The New Testament Lesson: (Philippians 2:5-11) Our Epistle lesson follows on from our Old Testament reading. In our Old Testament lesson the Prophet Zechariah tells of the coming of a King that will be humble. We recognize that humility in Jesus not just in the outward circumstances of his entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, but in the very fact that he left the glory and perfection of heaven to enter our world as our servant. That humble service culminated in his sacrificial death on the cross.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed *(Brown Hymnal page 15)*

The Pre-Sermon Hymn –725 *(Brown Hymnal)*

"No Tramp of Soldiers' Marching Feet"

The Sermon – Mark 11:1-10 *(Printed on the back page of this bulletin)*

"Here's What's Going to Happen"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn –160 *(Red Hymnal)*

"All Glory, Laud, and Honor"

The Prayers

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 54 *(Red Hymnal)*

"Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

Attendance – Sunday (44) Ave (41) Wednesday (25)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
Thursday	-7:00 p.m.	– Maundy Thursday Communion Service
Friday	-7:00 p.m.	– Good Friday Service
Next Sunday	-8:15 a.m.	– Annual Men's Breakfast
	-10:00 a.m.	– Easter Sunday Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer is considering the call to Luther Memorial of Fond du Lac, WI. Pastor David Schierenbeck of Berea – Inver Grove Heights, MN has announced his intention to retire from the pastoral ministry at the end of June. Faith of Markesan has called Teacher Andrew Roehl.

Holy Week Schedule – Note that there is no midweek Bible study or Confirmation class scheduled for this week. A 7pm communion service is scheduled for Maundy Thursday and a 7pm Good Friday service. Please note also that in addition to our Easter Sunday service, the men of the congregation will also be serving their annual Easter breakfast, beginning at 8:15 am on Easter Sunday morning.

Quarterly Voters' Meeting and Council Position – A Quarterly Voters' Meeting has been scheduled for April 22. With the pending departure of Treasurer Mike McEnroe, a new council member will need to be elected at that meeting.

Delegate Conference Representatives and Housing – We are looking for one more delegate to represent St Paul at the WCDC in Bismarck May 29-31. We will also need housing for the pastors and delegates from other congregations. Please see the sign-up sheet on the mailbox table.

Care Packages – The Women's Fellowship is again assembling care packages for the members of St Paul that are attending school out of town. There are three students this year. The packages will be assembled on Easter Sunday, so please plan to bring any donations to the church no later than next Sunday.