

Mark 11:1-10 As they approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, on the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ² and told them, “Go into the village ahead of you. As soon as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it, and he will send it back here without delay.’”

⁴ They left and found a colt on the street, tied at a door; and they untied it. ⁵ Some who were standing there asked them, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” ⁶ The disciples answered them just as Jesus had instructed them, and the men let them go.

⁷ They brought the colt to Jesus, threw their garments on it, and Jesus sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their garments on the road. Others spread branches that they had cut from the fields. ⁹ Those who went in front and those who followed were crying out, 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!

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus, dear brothers and sisters in Christ. Some people are so afraid that heaven is going to be boring. Maybe that thought has occurred to you. When I was a kid and learned that in heaven we will spend all our time praising God, the picture I had was sitting in uncomfortable wooden pews singing hymn after hymn after hymn, for eternity. It didn’t occur to me at that age that praising God can be done in other ways than just singing hymns in church.

Paul says as much in 1 Corinthians, “**Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.**” On this side of heaven, that’s hard because we are sinful. Our selfish sinful natures get in the way. But in heaven there will be no sin, so whatever we do, *all* we do, will give glory to God — as much as the company of angels singing your favorite hymn.

The events of Palm Sunday give us some examples of doing just that, praising God with more than our voices, as we learn to find joy in raising to Jesus our Hands of Praise.

With that thought in mind one realizes that most of the praising of God that happens on earth takes place, not with our voices inside church for an hour each week, but out there, in the world, as we strive to use all that God has given us to carry out his will and glorify him. Some of the greatest praise of Jesus on Palm Sunday took place *before* the triumphal march, before any of the singing, before any of the spreading of the palms.

It came first from the obedient hands of the disciples. Jesus asked them to go and get a colt, a young donkey. Jesus told them that they would find the colt tied up in the town ahead of them and that they should just go and take it. He instructed them that if anybody said anything, they should just say that Jesus needed it. Not only did the disciples do what they were told without question, but the men to whom the animal belonged raised their hands in praise by giving the colt to Jesus without question.

Unquestioning obedience to God is what followers of Jesus strive for throughout their lives. It’s more than saying and praying, “Your will be done on earth,” while we are in church or at our bedside. It means actually trusting and doing Jesus’ will on this earth without questioning the Lord’s wisdom or his love.

Obviously Jesus’ instructions were unusual. Obviously the disciples who were told to get the donkey had questions. “Jesus, how do you know the donkey will be there? How do you know we can take it without asking? How do you know the owner will let us take it?” But they did not ask. They did not question. They praised Jesus with their silent obedience, even as onlookers must have thought their actions strange.

Our world does not give Jesus that kind of praise. They question why God and his Word and his church have a right to tell us what to do at all. They question how God can send troubles into our lives and still claim to love us. They accuse the Bible of misogyny when it names man the head of the woman and woman the helper of man. They question why they can’t live together without marriage, why they can’t curse and swear if everybody else does, why they have to go to church if they feel fine without it. But believers strive to praise God with their obedience. Christians strive to praise Jesus as King by the godly obedience of their daily lives. Christians strive to obey without questioning Jesus’ authority or wisdom. They strive to live good, clean, decent, and honest lives outside the church in the world every day. They don’t just say and pray, “**Your will be done.**” They strive to go out and obey so that Jesus will *is* done on earth. This is praise. This is worship of Jesus which pleases God.

So how is your worship life? Or rather, how is your life of worship? The disciples on Palm Sunday weren’t afraid to go to someone they didn’t know and carry out Jesus’ instructions, and yet the thought of going up to someone we don’t know to give them the words of eternal life frightens us into paralyzed silence. The people on Palm Sunday literally gave their shirts off their backs, laid them in the road to be trampled by a donkey,

and yet we struggle so in being as generous with giving back to God a portion of the overwhelming wealth he has given to us.

If we're honest, we fall short in carrying out God's will and glorifying him in our lives. We let our sinful nature act like a regulator on our praise. In here, where no one else can see or hear us, ok, we can praise him here, though as Lutherans we could work on our enthusiasm as we sing and respond to the gospel! But out there in the world, the sinful flesh squeezes it down to a trickle. **The good I want to do I do not do, the evil I don't want to do, this we keep on doing.** We question God's will and second guess his instruction. We don't praise God like we ought. Paul was not ashamed of the gospel and sometimes one might wonder, are we?

Maybe we've had it too good. The people on Palm Sunday had had it bad. Oppressed, down trodden, they had a desperate need for a savior, mistaken though they were at the kind of savior they needed and had in Jesus.

Maybe we've had it too good. Maybe the blessings we've enjoyed all our lives have lulled us into complacency when it comes to not only how much we, but also how much the world needs Jesus. For if we did, our sinful flesh wouldn't have such an easy time holding us back from living God's praises.

The times we are living in make it clear that we can't make it on our own. God uses times like these to make us not so comfortable in this life so that we're reminded just how much we need him and the life that is to come. And his Word makes it clear first and foremost what we need him for.

The Bible says **the wages of sin is death**. That's not hyperbole. That's not God blowing smoke, when really sin isn't such a big deal. The Bible says that unbelievers **will not inherit eternal life**. That's not God just putting up a strong front, it's true. And that was each of us at one point in our lives. An unbelieving sinner destined for eternal death in hell. That was the road each of us was on. You may not remember it, but you were there, part of the great throng of people, walking that wide road leading straight to the fires of hell. and there was no escape. Nothing we could do to get off that road, while the devil used all his limited power to convince us there was no such road and no such destination. But there is. And that was our inescapable fate.

On our own, we don't have it so good. On our own we desperately need to be rescued, to be helped, to be saved, from our sinful selves and from the sinful world around us.

And there the Savior was. And the people praised him because they thought their earthly troubles were over. They thought they had an earthly king. But seeing him crowned with thorns, left beaten and bleeding by their enemy, the Romans, Jesus didn't appear to be the king they wanted any longer. Their shouts of praise turned a few days later to cries of "Crucify."

Let's not miss him too! The Savior we truly need, the Savior the truth of the law makes us long for, the Savior God's loved caused him to promise and send, is here, before you today.

Here he is, in his Word. Promise after promise made. Promise after promise fulfilled. The Savior we needed is the Savior God sent, to rescue us from the impossible demands of the law by his own perfect life for us, to redeem us from an eternity in hell by paying the price our sins deserved. For you and me Jesus lived, suffered, died, and rose again, completing the divinely inspired and imagined equation that resulted in the salvation of the world. Praise him!

Here he is when we begin each service by recalling our baptisms, how through water and the Word our sins were washed away and we were made his brother, heirs together with him of eternal life by the Holy Spirit's gift of faith. Praise him!

Here he is when we celebrate the Sacrament, giving us the only thing he had left to give, the priceless treasure of his precious body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. Praise him!

Here he has been the last 6 weeks as we've focused on the Hands of the Passion. Here we see him today, riding into Jerusalem to face the death we deserved. There he will be on Thursday professing his love for us and Friday on the cross and into the hell of being separated from God. All this deserves our praise, that someone would do all that to save us.

But he deserves our praise even more because he succeeded. Next Sunday, we know what's waiting for us. We know what's waiting for Jesus. Easter! He rose! He won. He was victorious and so are we.

And so we praise him with our voices we praise him with our hands. We praise him with our actions and we praise him with our attitudes. We praise him with our hearts continuing to conform to God's will because the life death and resurrection of God's son proves that God's will is always for our good.

Praise Jesus with all you do, because you're no longer on the road to hell. You've been rescued and forgiven, fully and freely. Your life is no longer

defined by sin, but by God's love, grace, mercy, and the eternal future waiting for you heaven. Your life is no longer confined by sin. You are free, free *from* sin, and so from death and the devil too. You are free to live your life however you see fit. I don't know about you, but living a life of praise to the one who gave it to you seems like a pretty good way to spend our time between now and heaven.

And about heaven. Some are afraid that an eternity of praise sounds boring. But think about it this way:

That's what the absence of sin will make us do.

That's what the presence of God will make us do.

That's what finally embracing our Savior will make us do

That's what being reunited with our loved ones will make us do

That's what meeting our children again will make us do.

That's what heaven will make us do — our entire being and all that we do, perfect praise to God.

That doesn't sound one bit boring to me. Amen