

PALM SUNDAY

Philippians 2:5-11; Mark 11:1-11

The events of Palm Sunday show us the kind of Messiah Jesus was. The events of Palm Sunday did not take place in a vacuum.

They were preceded and followed by events that gave meaning to them. The story of Palm Sunday really begins when Jesus set his face for Jerusalem. Jesus and the Twelve Disciples had been traveling around the holy land. Then, all of a sudden, Jesus informs his Disciples He is going to Jerusalem. They had heard Jesus talking about the kingdom to come soon and they had heard Peter say that he was the Messiah, so they thought, "This is it!" "Jesus our Messiah is going to Jerusalem to take his rightful place on the throne of David." "God has sent Jesus to save us from the Romans." They were so sure that Jesus was going to drive out the Romans, that they began to argue over who would sit at Jesus' right hand in the Kingdom. In other words, they were arguing over who would be the Chief of Staff after the Revolution.

To add to this air of expectancy, Jesus made a dramatic entrance into the city. When Jesus got to Jerusalem, the first thing He did was send one of the disciples to borrow a colt. Now we look at Jesus on this colt and we say, "Oh look at Jesus meek and mild riding that humble little colt." Humility was part of why Jesus rode a colt. But every good Jew, who knew their Scripture, knew that the Messiah would ride a colt into Jerusalem. To them it was not a sign of humility, it was Jesus stating, "I am the Messiah." This colt was very important to Mark. Mark only

wrote eleven verses about Palm Sunday and six of them are about the colt. So when Jesus came riding in on that colt, people started yelling "Hosanna! Hosanna!" They laid down their coats for Him to ride over, and they shouted that God's kingdom was coming. It was a first century version of a ticker tape parade. But we all know the glory of that moment did not last long. Oh, Jesus and the disciples did stage a raid on the temple, and they even took control of it for a while. And Jesus did show the Pharisees up when they asked him a few tricky questions. Jesus even healed a blind man right there in the temple. But, by the end of the week all that had changed. The hosannas were just echoes of the past. The same crowds that had yelled "Hosanna! Hosanna!" at the beginning of the week, were yelling "Crucify! Crucify!" at the end of the week. They said, "What kind of a Messiah are you? "How dare you claim to be the Messiah when you won't even conquer the Romans." "Imagine the nerve of him riding into town on a colt and claiming to be God's Messiah." "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

So, why did the people turn against Jesus? Jesus was the Messiah after all. The crowds got angry because Jesus was not the kind of Messiah they had expected. They had expected the Messiah to establish an earthly kingdom. They expected the Messiah to conquer the Romans. But Jesus did neither. They forgot that Jesus had plainly said he would suffer. Everyone recognized that His riding a colt was a fulfillment of Prophecy. But they failed to remember the meaning of the Prophecy. The prophet had said that the Messiah would ride a lowly colt because He would be no ordinary king. The Messiah would be on the level of the people and would rule their hearts. Jesus was a different kind of Messiah from what they were looking for. Like the disciples, we sometimes forget that Jesus came to

Jerusalem to die on a cross. If it were not for the cross, Jesus would not be our king in heaven. It is Jesus' death that sets us free to be followers of Jesus. Without the cross of Christ there is no crown of glory. Jesus was, and is, the Messiah. But the only crown he wore on earth was a crown of thorns.

Paul talks about what kind of Messiah Jesus was in his letter to the Philippians. Paul wrote, "Being found in human form, Christ humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross." Jesus could have called down the angels of heaven to rescue Him from death. But He humbled Himself to His father's will to die on a cross for our salvation. Jesus, the Messiah, did as his Father in heaven told Him to do. It was because Jesus was obedient to the Father's will that He can be called the Messiah. Jesus was willing to die on a cross so that we could be saved. Because of that, He is our Savior and we worship Him.

So, does it really make any difference what kind of Messiah Jesus was? Actually, it makes a big difference. Paul wrote, "Let the mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus, who, though being in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking on the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of human beings." The mind Paul is talking about is Jesus' willingness to obey and serve.

Jesus was the Son of God. He didn't have to die on a cross for our sakes but He chose to. He chose to take on the form of a servant and obey God even if that meant death on a cross.

As followers of Jesus we need to learn from His example. We should be obedient to our Heavenly Father just like Jesus was.

They say that imitation is the best form of flattery. Well we should be imitators of Christ.

In our Gospel Reading for today, Jesus was hailed as Messiah

and King, and we are part of it, as if we were there on that first Palm Sunday. It is easy to follow Him today. But don't be deluded into thinking that people, us included, will always hail Jesus as King. Before the week is over He will be hanging on a cross. Then, where will we be?

AMEN.