

“Garments and Palm Branches” Mark 11:1-11 (Matt 21:1-11; Lk 19:28-44; Jn 12:12-19)

We have been “marking” the words of Jesus through the gospel of Mark. Today our study brings us to Mark 11, the story of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on what is traditionally called “Palm Sunday” – the beginning of Holy Week.

There are no words of Jesus directed at us in this story, so we divert from our method of “marking the words of Jesus” for this one week only – and focus on the words of 11:8 where we are told by Mark: **“And many spread their garments in the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields.”** In the gospel of John, 12: 12,14 we learn that these “leafy branches were indeed the branches of the palm tree.

John 12: 12-13 On the next day the great multitude who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took the branches of the palm trees, and went out to meet Him, and began to cry out, “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.”

I have entitled today’s message “Garments and Palm Branches” because I want us to focus on the meaning of these two objects of respect shown to Jesus – and how they are an important reminder as to how we can and should welcome Jesus as King of our lives.

OUR MARK TEXT

- 1 As they approached Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples,
- 2 and said to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it here.
- 3 "If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' you say, 'The Lord has need of it'; and immediately he will send it back here."
- 4 They went away and found a colt tied at the door, outside in the street; and they untied it.
- 5 Some of the bystanders were saying to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?"
- 6 They spoke to them just as Jesus had told them, and they gave them permission.
- 7 They brought the colt to Jesus and put their coats on it; and He sat on it.
- 8 And many spread their coats in the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields.
- 9 Those who went in front and those who followed were shouting: "Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD;
- 11 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David; Hosanna in the highest!"
- 12 Jesus entered Jerusalem and came into the temple; and after looking around at everything, He left for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late.

- Jesus was creating a bold visual aid of His being the Messiah. He was not coming to conquer, as so many of his followers thought and hoped, but His kingdom was coming in peace. A king who rode to conquer rode a horse, but a king coming in peace rode a donkey – and thus the choice of Jesus to do so here. His riding the colt of a donkey into the Holy city was acting out the well-known prophesy in Zechariah 9:9 which spoke of the coming Messiah.
 - *Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, our king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*
- The shouts of “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” is a well-known quotation from Psalms 118. This post-Davidic psalm was very possibly written just a century or so before, recalling the triumphant entry of Judas Maccabaeus in 163 B.C. when he rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, amid the brandishing of palm branches, to overthrow the wicked Syrian King Antiocheius.
- Antiocheius had been desecrating the temple with worship of Zeus, swine offered on the burnt altar of sacrifice and brothels around the Temple court. If Psalm 118 indeed marks this occasion, it also became a clear prophesy of the Messiah Jesus on Palm Sunday some 150 years later.
 - *Psalm 118: 24-26 This is the day which the lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. O Lord, do save, we beseech Thee; O Lord, we beseech Thee, do send prosperity!*
 - *Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We have blessed you from the house of the Lord.*
- “Do save” from this Psalm is equally translated: “Hosanna” meaning, “save now.” It was not praise offered the King in this psalm or on Palm Sunday but rather a joyful cry of petition to make this day the day of national salvation. Thus, “this is the day, let us rejoice and be glad in it.”
- But today, as we consider the impact of Palm Sunday, I want us to focus on two emblems: garments and palm branches. You see both spread here on the floor of our sanctuary to visually and graphically remind us of the ground over which King Jesus rode that day.

PALM BRANCHES

- **The Coming Kingdom**, as they will be in heaven praising God
- **Praise**, as they are waved high drawing attention to the occasion.
- **Exaltation**, as they are lifted high over the crowd and the King
- **Life and Prosperity**, as they represent something alive and flourishing
- **Royalty**, as they are associated with the entrance of other Kings and dignitaries
- **Salvation**, as “save now” is spoken as they are waved
- **Joy**, as they are waved in enthusiasm in hope of a coming kingdom

Psalm 92:12 The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree, he will grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They

will still yield fruit in old age; they shall be full of sap and very green, to declare that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

This passage increases our understanding of the symbolism of the palm branch:

- **Righteous** – planted in the house of the Lord
- **Flourishing** – full of sap and very green
- **Upright** – standing tall and confident

Revelation 7:9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

This passage is the fulfillment of both the Abrahamic covenant, where God promised that all nations would be the children of Abraham – and of Palm Sunday, with palm branches and “Hosannas” of salvation offered to the King of Heaven by the multitudes.

It seems to indicate that the reference to palm branches flourishing in the courts of our God is more than a metaphor – but the reality of palm trees growing in the heavenly kingdom, signifying righteousness, life and prosperity and salvation.

GARMENTS

- **Our Earthly Life**, as they are part of our everyday existence
- **Contrition**, as they are often rent to show repentance and sorrow
- **Humility and submission**, as they are laid down to be walked on
- **Laying down or death of self**, as they are associated with our body
- **Servanthood**, as they are taken off for the King

NOTE the contrasts:

Garments

This world
Contrition
Repentance
Humility
Laying down of self
Confessing sin
Sinfulness

Palm Branches

The Heavenly Kingdom
Joy
Praise
Exaltation
Lifting up of Christ
Expressing faith and hope
Righteousness

Our Christian life and personal “Palm Sunday” needs to be a balanced combination of these:

- We need to lay down both our GARMENTS and our PALM BRANCHES
- The apostle Paul claimed both to the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15) and the “least of all saints”