

“A Better Tomorrow”

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Series: Palm Sunday 2020

Conversation Starter: *We have many traditions in our lives. Traditions, like a compass, help keep us focused and directed as we navigate life. Traditions remind us of some really great times in the past in order to bring us hope for tomorrow. However, sometimes tradition can be an invitation for some to live in the past, hoping that the past is reborn tomorrow. In the Bible, God established traditions for His family to cherish his faithfulness in our past, trusting that His tomorrow will be greater than what was yesterday.*

Let's Dig In! “*Why a donkey?*”

Turn to **Matthew 21:1-6**. As we approach a week of great value for followers of Jesus, we are navigating stories to remind us of Jesus' life then and what it means for you and me today, and our children tomorrow. His Disciples, now having done life with Jesus for three years are accustomed to His requests- even when they seem odd or outrageous.

But why a donkey? Why not a horse? Roman Victors expressed their might and military advantage with parades of great pomp astride the most beautiful of horses with songs, music and dance.

And here comes Jesus on a donkey. *Why a donkey?*

Because Jesus was Israel's *Messiah*. His entry on the foal of a donkey was signifying that He was bringing peace from God to His people. This was fulfilling a promise from God to His children. The God who has not left His people even though His presence is not in the way they had hoped or desired it to be.

Peace with God does not come from the sword anymore than peace in our day can come from war. Not lasting peace. Not the peace God offers between us and Him. This peace would not change their circumstances; but it would change *them* and *how they live* amidst their circumstances. Even after Jesus would rise from the dead and send His Spirit, Israel would still be a conquered people subservient to the Roman Empire.

Time to Go Deeper! “*A vision for tomorrow*”

Let's continue with Matthew's narrative **21:7-11**. Note the sequence here- sometimes we miss it. First, *Jesus* commanded His Disciples and they obeyed Him. Then the *Disciples* put their cloaks on the Donkey for Jesus to ride. *Next*, the crowds put their cloaks down for the donkey to step on as it carried Jesus. Now, add some palm branches and BOOM- it's officially a party!

Jesus Commands -> Disciples obey -> Word + Example lead others to join!

This crowd grows to surround Jesus on His Journey into Jerusalem, crying out *Hosanna*. Have you ever felt so overwhelmed emotionally and struggled to find just the right word to express yourself? Well for those in this moment that word is *Hosanna*. This is a word embodying the highest form of praise, adoration and joy.

Where did this joy come from? How did Jesus riding a donkey incite such a response from people?

Turn to **Zechariah 9:9-13**. We need to step back from this moment to a time when Israel had returned from Exile in Babylon. After 70 years of Captivity God brought them home. But it was different than they remembered; in fact, it was like building sandcastles on the beach then coming the next day to find everything washed away. *God encouraged them through prophets that it was time to rebuild.*

Haggai encouraged them to rebuild the Temple. It did not look like the old one. Not even close. But that was ok; this new one was temporary until God would again abide with His people in a Temple not made with hands (see **Acts 7:48**).

Zechariah encouraged them to repent and turn back to the God who is still present and faithful to them. It was time to renew the Covenant. This too would feel different than before.

Yesterday was gone; it was a time to mourn what was lost and embrace the new God was doing. Today, God wanted them to know His love and do life together in that love overflowing. He wanted them to do life with Him as He is doing it with them.

When God gives His people Visions and Dreams it is of the future- *a tomorrow that is coming.* God does not give us vision and dreams of the past; we celebrate the good and mourn the hard. We move on. God leads us onward. The Father leads His children to a Better which is coming.

We must not miss the past more than we desire the future God is bringing. We must not desire yesterday more than the tomorrow God is preparing.

This passage in Zechariah would give the people a vision of a better tomorrow than what was yesterday. A king would come who would bring peace. Not just peace for Israel- but all the nations. *It would not be by the sword or war; that was how judgment came.* Babylon and Rome subdued the people with militant might. But not God's chosen king- He would bring God's peace and Hope setting us free from our bondage to sin.

The Challenge then and now: "Desiring yesterday to return"

Through Zechariah God gave the promise of an incredible tomorrow that was coming. This inspired the people to take their eyes off what they saw to know and enjoy the presence of God with them today.

God's chosen King would inspire God's heart to be known and lived out in the life of those He would rule. Turn to **Psalms 72**. This is where we find the challenge Israel faced when Jesus was present to them. They expected Jesus to look like David; His Reign to be like yesterday.

Psalm 72 was meant to be a prayer the people would pray for both their present and future king through the line of David. The best of each of these kings- the reflection of God's heart in them would be but a shadow of the ultimate King God would send.

The challenge was that Israel thought the best was yesterday, so they were looking for that to be restored. God was showing them the best was still to come. God was giving them Hope to keep their eyes on His tomorrow. A tomorrow that would see a Righteous King come to bring peace between God and Humanity in a reign that would see God's unchanging heart lived out those He reigns over.

Who Jesus *wasn't*.

- Jesus wasn't the Roman destroying sword bearer they desired (John 19:12-16 / Matthew 27:24-2)

Who Jesus *was*.

- A king that would bring true healing and draw all Nations and People's together under one confession -> That He is Lord (Psalm 72:17-19) Now Read **Philippians 2:1-11** Can you hear Psalm 72 echoed in this? Can you hear the words of Zechariah in this??

Mind = Blown. I continually stand in awe of the God who loves me and truly prepared an incredible tomorrow for us.

But where are you in this story? Do you long for yesterday more than tomorrow? How does this impact our relationship with Jesus today?

Finding Balance: *"The Hope of Tomorrow impacts how we live today"*

How did Jesus balance the *yesterdays* and *tomorrow*? If Jesus is truly our king that fulfills Psalm 72 & Zechariah 9, His Word & Example are righteous and for us to follow.

Regarding *Yesterday*, Jesus:

- Celebrated and continues the *Best of times* (See **Matthew 5:17-20**)
- Mourned the *Worst of times* and what was lost (See **Luke 13:31-35 / 19:41-44**)

Regarding *Tomorrow*, Jesus:

- Focused. Everything of Jesus is leading to His tomorrow (See **John 18:33-37**)

If we follow Jesus, He will lead us to celebrate and continue the love of God's presence from yesterday embracing the promise of a Tomorrow that will see a beauty unlike anything yet beheld.

If we follow Jesus, He will lead us through our mourning and bring us His healing. Jesus will bring closure and strength to move on.

If we follow Jesus, we will trust and obey His Words & Example into the tomorrow He is preparing for us and Him- together forever.

Application Time.

Palm Sunday stands to help us celebrate the Peace we have with God's Chosen King, our Messiah and Savior, Jesus.

We cry Hosanna because we have been forgiven, received mercy and grace. We are changed by Jesus, not our circumstances.

But what is this Tomorrow going to look like? Read **Revelation 21**.

I'm focusing on:

- New Heaven and new earth (v.1)
- New Holy City / Bride (v.2)
- Eternal abiding Presence of God with His people (v.3)
- **A light that will draw all Nations into it** (Vv.22-26)

This is our *future*. This is our *Tomorrow*. It is better than the best of times from yesterday.

This is ours through Jesus.

Jesus is our Peace, not from the sword of judgment but the Grace of forgiveness through Atonement.

Let us celebrate Palm Sunday as His Disciples did.

Jesus Commands -> Disciples obey -> Our *Word* + *Example* lead others to Jesus!

Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest!

-Matthew 21:9