

Refuge City Church — March 24, 2024 “Hope Deferred” (Palm Sunday)

Introduction

- Technically, we started our Easter series last week with a message entitled, “Glory, Grace, & Truth”.
 - By providing a better understanding of who Jesus is, and why He came, we can look at Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter with a deeper appreciation.
 - These are not just mere religious holy days, they are *everything* to our faith in God above!
- I’m going to take a slightly different approach this year with Palm Sunday.
 - If you know me, you know I’m all about context.
 - So we’re going to look at a couple stories in conjunction with what Palm Sunday represents, Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem the week before His death and resurrection.

Story #1: The death and resurrection of Lazarus [John 11]

John 11:1-4, “Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent to him, saying, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” But when Jesus heard it he said, “This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

- Close friend to Jesus, Lazarus becomes ill. So his sisters Mary and Martha appeal to the compassionate love of Jesus [signifying faith in who He is].
- There is purpose in every circumstance, even the dark moments.
 - Last week: God’s glory is power, provision, and it sanctifies.
 - Lazarus’ illness and death would point to something greater.
 - **Romans 8:28**, “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”
 - Even illness and death can point to the glory of God.
 - There is hope beyond this temporary shell we call a body. There is hope in eternal life beyond this temporary place, for those who believe.
- Jesus is told about Lazarus’ condition, and He waits...Why??
 - There is a plan, purpose, and perfect timing in everything God does.
 - Sometimes He calls us to wait, and from our human perspective, that can be difficult.
 - **Proverbs 13:12**, “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.”
 - **QUOTE**: “The ever unsatisfied longing of a hungry soul results in faintness of spirit and sickness of heart. Such is the *hopeless* hope of the Christ-less. How blessed the contrast in the case of the Christian!” [Harry Ironside]
 - *Here me*: The purpose in waiting in one respect, was to allow Lazarus to die.

- **Verses 14-15:** “Then Jesus told [the disciples] plainly, ‘Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, *so that you may believe*. But let us go to him.”
 - The disciples hesitated. Was Jesus really about to go back to the place where the Pharisees had wanted to arrest and stone him?
- May all our earthly circumstances cause us to grow in our faith, hope, and love of God!
- **Verse 16:** “So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, ‘Let us also go, that we may die with him.’”
 - **Luke 9:23,** “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”
- May we all be so bold that everyday, because of our hope in Jesus, we can die to the things of this world, and trust Jesus more and more.
- Hope deferred can cause our emotions to get the better of us.
 - When we trust emotion, it will let us down.
 - When we fix our eyes on Jesus, while sad, confused, destitute, even at peace, etc., His glory and grace sustains us and strengthens us!
 - **John 11:21-26,** “Martha said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’ Martha said to him, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. *Do you believe this?*”
- [at the grave of Lazarus] **Verses 39-40:** “Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.” Jesus said to [Martha], ‘Did I not tell you that *if you believed* you would see the glory of God?’” [vs. 4: “This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”]
- Trust, Hesitant belief... Trust, hesitant belief... Trust, etc. etc.
 - In our humanity, we always say we trust in God, yet when circumstances don’t go the way we had hoped and conflict with our ‘peace’, we get very hesitant.
- **Verses 42-44:** [Jesus prays] “I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, *that they may believe that you sent me.*” When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”
- Hope confirmed!
 - All in which we see the Power of God on display, His Grace to sustain us in our darkest moments, and the Truth of His word that never returns void!

Story #2: Mary anoints Jesus at Bethany [John 12:1-3]

“Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.”

- Hope-filled worship: In a moment of refreshment and fellowship, Jesus dines with Mary, Martha, newly alive Lazarus, along with others.
 - It is at this moment, we see an act of sacrificial worship.
 - [Verse 3] A year's worth of wages given in worship.
 - A moment of love and devotion, out of a heart of gratitude for renewed life.
 - **Psalm 71:20-21**, "You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again. You will increase my greatness and comfort me again."
 - **Psalm 80:18-19**, "Then we shall not turn back from you; give us life, and we will call upon your name! Restore us, O Lord God of hosts! Let your face shine, that we may be saved!"
 - We can learn a lot from Mary!
 - Luke 10:39 — Mary sat at Jesus' feet to learn from Him.
 - John 11:32 — She fell at Jesus' feet in despair.
 - John 12:3 — She anointed Jesus' feet in worship.
 - In every circumstance of life, we hope in Jesus!
 - **QUOTE:** "If we would learn to sit at His feet, we would give more to Him, too."
[J. Vernon McGee]
 - In reflection of what God has given to us through Jesus, we worship Him for the grace He freely gives. In gratitude for new life, we glorify His name.

Story #3: The Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem [John 12:12-19]

"The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!" [Zechariah 9:9] His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."

- The people came for the feast; to participate in their annual religious ceremony of Passover.
 - But when they heard Jesus was coming, something changed.
 - The air in Jerusalem went from ritual to praise. [**Hosanna** = praise; cry of salvation]
- **Verse 16:** His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.
 - We may not understand in the moment, but Jesus reveals everything we need to know at the right time.
 - In the moment, we have particular expectations we place on Jesus...
 - He's here to solve all *my* problems.
 - He's here to fix all the wrong in the world.

- He's come to save us from all the political and cultural drama! [Israel expecting an earthly king to rid them of Roman occupation]
- They understood His "Messiahship", yet not to the fullest extent.
- We may find ourselves doing the same.
 - But because of your misunderstanding of who He is, and what He came to do, your praise will become silent when the dark clouds roll in.
 - A misunderstanding of *who* Jesus is can turn your praise into disappointment when you only praise for what you can gain.
- On this day, Jesus revealed exactly who He is...do you believe?

Conclusion

- **QUESTION:** So how can we gain a better understanding of who Jesus is??
 - Trust Him and follow
 - As the disciples had been doing, despite some hesitations, misunderstandings, and forgetfulness, they continued to follow, observing everything about Jesus.
 - **Hebrews 12:1-2**, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."
 - Sit at His feet to learn
 - As Mary found herself on multiple occasions, in various circumstances [good and bad], she listened, learned, and when devastating loss came her way, she still found dependency and hope in Jesus.
 - Testify to His goodness
 - The disciples and crowds continued to testify to the goodness they've seen in Jesus.
 - *Believe* in Jesus, and consistently go after Him!
 - **Romans 5:2**, "Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God."
 - **Proverbs 13:12**, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life."