

In Jesus' name. Amen.

People Loved by God,

In the 4 Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John), Jesus raised 3 people from the dead.

Jairus' daughter, only moments after she had died;

The son of the widow in Nain, as his body was being carried out of the city to be buried;

and Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, who had been dead and decaying already for 4 days.

In each case, Jesus showed that He is the Lord of life and death.

And in each case, there were great crowds of people who were witnesses to what He had done.

In our text for today, we hear of some of the reactions to Lazarus' resurrection,

which Jesus' had performed just a short time before His own death and resurrection,

but more importantly, we see Jesus' determination to offer Himself on the cross

as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world.

As follows in Jesus' name:

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. But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples (he who was about to betray Him), said, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. Jesus said, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have Me."

When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of Him but also to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

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!"

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. (ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

We heard from Matthew's Gospel just moments ago, how the crowd thronged Jesus, glorifying Him with their singing as they sang Psalm 118,

"Hosanna," (that is, "Save now") "**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord...**"

and honoring Him as they laid their cloaks and palm branches on the path before Him.

We often call this "Jesus' triumphal entry", as He entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey's colt,

to the joyfully praise of the crowds.

But this account from St. John gives us more context to these joyous events.

We hear about an undercurrent, swirling about in this same crowd.

Not everyone was joyful... not everyone was hopeful... not everyone believed...

In fact, this crowd is a very mixed crowd.

So let's consider some of the various elements, starting with the grand majority of crowd.

First of all, they were Jewish pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem for the Passover feast.

Every year, God had commanded them to make this trip to temple and observe this feast of redemption, reminding them of His salvation from Egyptian slavery, and foreshadowing their salvation from sin.

And so these pilgrims did what we used to do on long trips before portable screens... they sang.

They sang the seasonal songs appropriate for the festival, like Psalm 118, especially verses 25 & 26

"Lord, save us! ... Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."

In this general crowd of pilgrims were Jesus' disciples who were devoted to Him.

They were excited! They believed Him to be the Messiah, the Son of David, the true King of Israel.

They believe Him to be their Savior. But their understanding of His salvation...

what they expected Him to save them from... is less than accurate.

They were dreaming of an earthly, political king, like David was, to save them from the Romans and other earthly powers.

So as excited as they are and correct as they are to praise and honor Jesus,

they do not truly understand the significance of what they are doing –

their faith still had room and need to grow and mature.

In this crowd too, St. John just told us that some came out to see Jesus, AND Lazarus,

whom Jesus had just raised from the dead a short time ago.

They came out to see the miracle worker, as well as the living proof of the resurrection.

When they saw Jesus and Lazarus, their reaction was to rejoice and honor, Jesus, thus glorifying God.

We also hear from St. Matthew's account, that there were others in the crowd who did not know Jesus.

They came out in ignorance, to see and hear what all the commotion was about.

And so they ask others in the crowd **"Who is this?"** Matthew 21:10

The response they are given is: **"This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."**

Which is true, but it is certainly not the complete and necessary truth that they needed to hear.

St. Luke reports that there were Pharisees in the crowd who wanted Jesus to shut down the throng,

saying to [Jesus], **"Teacher, rebuke Your disciples."**

But Jesus did not heed their demands. Instead, **He answered,**

"I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out." Luke 19:39-40

How that must have enraged them and led them to desire His death all the more.

And then we hear of the chief priests, whose hearts are truly hard and evil.

They know that Jesus has raised Lazarus from the dead. They cannot deny it.

Too many people... even their own people... saw it and heard it with their own eyes and hears.

And instead of wanting to learn more, or considering that He might truly be the Son of God,

they were more fearful of losing their power and influence, envious of Jesus' popularity, that **"many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus."**
And so we hear from St. John that they were plotting, not only to kill Jesus, but Lazarus as well.

And then there was Judas, who just the night before had been prompted by greed to reprimand Mary's display of love and devotion as she anointed Jesus' feet with expensive perfume. Even knowing what Judas would do later that week, Jesus doesn't let his hypocrisy go unchecked. He rebuked Judas, and the other disciples who had followed his lead, and defended Mary. Would we doubt that this contributed to Judas' thoughts of betraying Jesus only a few days later?

And finally, there was Jesus who knew and understood everything, not only what happening that day, but also what was to take place. He has no misunderstandings... and still went forward, still rode the donkey's colt. The night before, He accepted the costly gift of the perfume, and said she was to keep it for His burial. He rebuked Judas, knowing that would incite Judas' ire. When challenged by the Pharisees, He did not back down, even knowing that they wanted to kill Him. He doesn't refuse the praises of this pious, though confused crowd, even from the mouths of children, knowing that the envy of the chief priests would be enraged.

In fact, even His trip into Jerusalem that day on the donkey's colt was the epitome of His willingness to pay the price for humanity's redemption. Because not only does He ride the colt in order to fulfill the prophecy from Zechariah, but that Palm Sunday was the 10th day of Nisan, the day appointed by God through Moses in Egypt to select the sacrificial lamb for the Passover, whose blood was to be painted on the door posts, so that the Lord's angel would passover their house. Jesus rides in to present Himself, both to God and to man, as the true Passover Lamb to take away the sins of the world.

People loved by God, consider the great love of your Savior,
That He humbly proceeds into Jerusalem to be the Savior of all people.
The confused crowd, as well as the power-hungry priests,
the inquisitive on-lookers, as well as the hypocritical disciple,
the pious disciples, as well as the envious Pharisees;
He dies for friend and foe alike, in order to redeem all.

Here He would call us all to a deeper knowledge, understanding, and love of your Savior.
Here you see the patience of God and His willingness to bear your sin
no matter with whom in this crowd you would be more closely aligned.
If you have followed Him for few or many years,
He invites you to follow Him still and deepen your understanding,
that you may continue to grow in grace, faith, hope and love, always moving forward with Him.
If you are confused or inquisitive about who He is and what He has done for you,
He invites you to follow Him and learn, to leave behind your natural ignorance of godly things,
and grow in the wisdom and knowledge of God.
If you have acted hypocritically, enviously, or sought your own power and glory,
He calls you to repent and follow Him, to see in Him your humble Savior,

not from political, economic, or social woes, but from your own sin, death, and the power of the devil. To all, He calls you, not only to see Him enter Jerusalem on a beast of burden, but to see Him leave Jerusalem on Good Friday as He bears your burdens and sorrows to the cross. There, the Lamb of God poured out His blood that He might paint it on the door posts of your heart, that His heavenly Father might passover you in judgment and declare you righteous and holy through Jesus Christ your Savior.

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Soli Deo Gloria