

Small Group Outline for March 27-28, 2021 Palm Sunday Week

We are looking ahead to the most important 3 days of Christian Faith - Good Friday to Easter Sunday. This last week leading up to Jesus' death and resurrection is indeed an intriguing week. It is full of a number of incidents, but none are inconsequential. Jesus Christ is intentional in every move He makes; nothing is by accident nor mere happenstance. We need to know that no one knew what would happen come Friday, except for Jesus, of course, and the Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit. And no doubt, the angel that attended to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Yes, Jesus had told His disciples several times, but they actually didn't really believe it or even comprehend it. You can see this by their despondence after Jesus dies and their utter shock and disbelief when Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to them. It's hard for us almost 2000 year later to understand this as we are too familiar with the story and details.

This week starting with Palm Sunday, is a great teaching lesson in perseverance. Jesus demonstrates how to continue forward to a goal, to keep pushing through the obstacles. We will see by the end of the week, next Sunday, that even death can't stop the work of God in our lives.

Let's look into Jesus week before His death; which will also give us encouragement and challenge to persevere in our challenges.

Palm Sunday Week: Luke 19:28-20:19

Jesus is demonstrating his authority; as His authority is being challenged:

1. Authority for arriving as a King (19:28-40)

- Spreading clothes on the road was a sign of greeting to a ruler (cf. 2 Ki. 9:13). The people who had come with him from Galilee burst into praise to God for the mighty works which they had already seen and hailed Jesus as the coming king who would have God's authority to rule.
- Luke lacks any mention of palm branches, possibly because this imagery is decidedly Jewish and complex. Normally one expected the waving of branches at the Feast of Tabernacles, but this is the Passover. Tabernacles looked forward to the end times, while Passover pictured both the sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins and the final deliverance. This combination is instructive, for Jesus brings both.
- Jesus declares He is the King of the Jews, He is the most High King; He is the Messiah.

2. Authority over Religion - the Temple: the place of worship (19:45-20:8)

- Did he claim to be a prophet with divine authority? Jesus replied with a counter-question. Let them first tell him whether John the Baptist had received his authority from heaven, i.e. from God (15:18), or from men. If the group had replied 'From heaven' Jesus could have asked them why they did not accept him (Mt. 21:32); it would also have implied that he himself also had divine authority. But if they denied the authority of John, they would have landed themselves in trouble with the people who had certainly regarded John as a prophet. Their answer, "We don't know," was pitifully weak, and Jesus in effect won the argument. Yet the story is not about Jesus outwitting people in argument. Rather it shows how the questioners were unwilling to admit divine authority when they saw it and could not make up their minds what to do in the situation.
- The issue they discuss is not the truth, but appearances. The Jews decide to take a safe route and punt, claiming they do not know. The refusal to take a position leaves the door open for Jesus to refuse to commit himself, not because he does not wish to make a claim, but because the answer is obvious and need not be debated. They refused to recognize John, and now they are maintaining their distance from Jesus.
- Application: Do we believe that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life? That is the all-important question. Or are we concerned about appearances, of what people might think. If Jesus is who He says He is, and He proves it later with His incredible death and powerful resurrection.

Discussion:

1. What have been some of the questions along the way as you have come to commit your life to Jesus Christ?
2. What are some of the questions and doubts that you may have? Don't worry about having to answer them in your small group time. Sometimes just putting them out there is helpful.
3. Pray together that the Holy Spirit will help with answers and peace in the midst of questions and doubts.

Authority Emphasized in the Parable of the Tenants of the Vineyard

- In the owner's absence, the tenants decided first to withhold the fruits from him and then to ensure that they would take over the vineyard. In certain conditions the property of a Gentile or a proselyte who died without making a will would pass to the first person who gained possession of it. The tenants may have been relying on some such custom, or simply hoping that the landlord would not follow up on their action. So, they killed the heir and sat tight on the property. The story reflects the situation of the time when large estates in Galilee were owned by distant landlords. It also portrays allegorically the history of Israel and its leaders who had continually rejected the messengers of God. It was most likely clear that the owner's son represented Jesus.
- The listeners were shocked that the owner would come and kill the tenants, or that even this story could happen. Jesus pushes the point forcefully.
- The stone that builders rejected. Many will stumble over the stone - it will crush those who stumble over it. This remark is similar to an old Jewish proverb, "If the stone falls on the pot, alas for the pot; if the pot falls on the stone, alas for the pot!" Either way it is a problem to oppose the precious stone whom God has exalted — his Son Jesus.

Discussion:

1. Share of a time in your life that you resisted the work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit in your life.
2. Is there anything that you are hesitant or unwilling to trust your Heavenly Father with? Is there something in your life that is troubling and you are having trouble with faith and trust?

3. Authority over Government - money: the power of rule (20:20-26)

- The portrait on the coin represented submission to Rome. Jesus' statement may seem ordinary to us, as we have become so used to the saying. But it was an unexpected and telling response to the question. Jesus' questioners were sure his answer would alienate either the government officials or the pious people and zealots who opposed foreign domination. Actually, Jesus appealed neither to those who preached revolution nor to the political compromisers. He stated a principle, not an accommodation or a compromise. To give what the government requires is part of one's religious duty. In spite of Jesus' balanced position, he was later accused at his trial of promoting an insurrection against Rome.
- But then Jesus went beyond the original question. People also have a parallel debt to God. Perhaps there is the thought that people are God's coinage, for they bear God's image. We are created in God's image; He made us. Will we give to God what belongs to God? Our very lives!

This is a great encouragement for us to persevere, no matter what is happening in our lives. What is troubling you; what is discouraging you from trusting Him, what's holding you back from fully following Him? I invite you to trust Him.

Pray for each other. Pray for a great week of Easter, that this Easter Season would become incredibly meaningful.

Weekly Reflection:

1. Read the accounts of the Palm Sunday Week before Friday
 - Monday: Matthew 21, 26-27
 - Tuesday: Mark 11, 14-15
 - Wednesday: Luke 19:28-20:26, 22-23
 - Thursday: John 12, 18, 19
2. Watch a movie: "**Jesus**" by "The Jesus Film Project" (Free on YouTube) or "**Son of God**" Movie (2014)
3. Watch one of the videos by Kirk Durston on the "Resurrection"
4. Read "Jesus: An Intimate Portrait of the Man, His Land, and His People" by Dr Leith Anderson

Jesus has the authority to put His life down and to take it up again. We will see that as we remember Good Friday. John 10:18 *"No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded."*