

Sunday, April 2, 2023 Lent 6- PALM SUNDAY

This is Jesus! Part 6: Jesus is Saviour (and Secures my Eternity)

Psalm 118 and John 12:12-19, 27-36

Who do the people say I am? Asked Jesus to the disciples. They answered some say Elijah and Moses a prophet; But who do you say I am? Just who is Jesus? Throughout this Lenten season we have been exploring this question. As believers, Christians who follow Jesus' teachings we are still trying to figure this out and will do so until that day when We are called home to His presence for eternity. For at that moment we will be welcomed into His embrace and our eternal life. But who is Jesus? He has been given many names, titles and honours-- the Lamb of God, Rabbi, Master, healer, teacher, the King of the Jews, Son of Man and Son of God. And yet Jesus still fills us with wonder even though His Spirit dwells within all who believe. On this Palm Sunday we consider again, "Who do the people say that Jesus is?" and most importantly answer the question, "Who do you believe Jesus is?" as Holy Week begins and our hearts and minds focus on Jesus the Messiah, the Christ and Saviour. What does Jesus as Saviour mean to us as he enters into the city of Jerusalem on a donkey?

In 2 Timothy 1:10 we read "Now God has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus our Saviour. But what does this mean? Jesus is the name the angel gave to Mary and Joseph to give their son. It comes from the Hebrew "Jeshua" or Joshua and the Christian Messiah, "Jesus" and it means "saviour" or "the Lord is my salvation". Because the New Testament was originally written in Greek, not Hebrew or Aramaic, Greeks did not use the sound sh, so the evangelists substituted an S sound. Then, to make it a masculine name, they added another S sound at the end, thus giving us JESUS. This baby, Jesus is the One that the Jewish people had waited generations to come. But for whom did Jesus come to save?

Jesus came to save those separated from God but this saviour did not come in the way they thought he would. The people were looking for a strong military or political leader who would come and free them from oppression of the Roman Empire. They were looking for somebody who was going to overthrow the Roman Government and bring freedom. But Jesus did not come just to save the Jewish people, but all people from sin. As a carpenter in a small town he knew the way of life of people, good righteous people who needed hope. But he also knew that sin entered the world separating us from God and creating an emptiness, a sense of loss and being broken. But we cannot fix this on our own, we need someone to come and bridge the gap and reconcile us to God. This is why Jesus came.

So Jesus took the consequences of our sin upon himself; He took that separation from God which we have as people and punished himself for our sake. He saved us from death by his death. This is why we call Jesus, Saviour.

On the day Jesus entered Jerusalem he was being honoured by the people who believed him to be the one who would bring about change for them all. He knew what His mission was- to die but those people who waved palm branches and who put their cloaks on the ground creating a carpet of sorts did not know what was to come. Jesus knew and he prepared himself for this even as they shouted Hosannas and were filled with joy.

Jesus knew that he would be betrayed, denied, arrested tried and killed. He would die the most humiliating death possible- hanging on a cross in pain. So what occurred after the Hosannas stopped is part of Jesus' Passion Story. From the time of joy to the time of his anger on display at the temple to when he ate the Passover meal, Jesus knew what was happening. And soon he heard the cries of Crucify.

As we continue in the story we learn of Jesus death on the cross. But as Paul wrote, "The cross seems foolish if you don't believe. But those who believe know it is the power God." The cross is the central point of the Christian faith because Jesus died not for what He did but for us. Jesus stepped in and took the punishment that was meant for us. Jesus took the separation from God that we deserved and overcame it. How? He died on the cross. He demonstrated to us God's love. He provided a way for everyone who believes in Him to be saved- that is to have the gift of reconciliation with God made possible.

Salvation is not about being perfect, never messing up, or being a good enough person. It comes when you recognize that you cannot save yourself and need a Saviour. You cannot make your life work apart from God and so you turn to Jesus; leaving the old way and turning towards a new life. This is repentance and following Christ your whole life through.

How do understand this? Jesus had shared this parable from Luke 18. Two men went to the Temple to pray- a Pharisee a leader in the Jewish synagogue and a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed looking up proudly and loudly spoke, "I thank you God that I am not a sinner like everyone else – I don't cheat, sin, commit adultery and am not like that tax collector; I fast twice a week and give you a tenth of my income."

Then the tax collector keeping his eyes low, beat his chest in sorrow and says, “O God be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.” Jesus then said, “This sinner returned home justified before God.”

When we speak of Jesus as Saviour, we need to remember what He did for us on the cross. Salvation comes when we recognize sin and need forgiveness. That is you feel inside a broken heart and that you have turned away from God and seek forgiveness. And this is a key moment in our faith. Jesus is the One who saves—this is why we call Him Saviour. But you must be ready to receive Him as your Saviour. This is where you listen and sing Hosanna- save us and believe that Jesus came to live, die and rise again for your sake. You are asking Jesus to direct your life, and give you purpose.

For if we believe and accept Him, we have the right to become children of God. (John 1:12) Yes “we’re all children of God, because God created us, but we are not all God’s children unless we believe and have faith. Sometimes we wonder about really letting God take control of our lives and calling Jesus Saviour. But if have faith in Jesus we have nothing to fear. As Saviour, Jesus secures our eternity with God in heaven. As we hear and hear again Jesus’ passion story we may be moved to receive this gift of salvation for eternity. When we choose to make Jesus the Lord, Christ and Messiah of our lives, our future is secure with God in heaven. Jesus said “Don’t let our hearts be troubled, trust in God and me.” Heaven’s waiting for you and in time I’ll come and get you. Jesus is the way to heaven. As Christians we believe that salvation comes when you say yes to Jesus, and you follow him, when you trust Him with your eternity.

This is Palm Sunday and through the story of Jesus Passion as described in the passages in your worship bulletin you can read what occurs and be reminded of Jesus’ love for others. We will share in worship on Thursday at Emmanuel UC and on Good Friday we will gather to worship here to remember Jesus trial and death. Next Sunday is Easter and if we believe Jesus to be our Saviour, we need to tell this story. We are responsible for sharing the hope that God has for the world, for our living and eternal life. And it is up to us to tell the story of Jesus who is your Saviour, Christ, Teacher, healer, Messiah for this is Jesus.

Today we also remember him and what he did with his disciples after they ate the Passover meal. He took bread and broke it; he raised the cup and blessed it. He said this is my body; this is my blood of the new covenant. This covenant made in my name calls you to love

one another. As we share in this holy meal today let us remember Jesus for by faith we believe he is our Saviour.

Let us pray

God of love, we praise you and thank you for Jesus your beloved Son who came to save us from sin and reconcile us to you. Show us your way O God. Help us to see him as Saviour, Christ, and Lord. Enable us to follow him in faith and with hope. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.