

# The Courageous Joy of Palm Sunday – John 12:12-19

**Introduction** – Palm Sunday is a story of joyful courage. Or we could say it is a story of courageous joy. As Jesus rode into Jerusalem, the crowd was electrified with rejoicing. What is not as evident in the story at first glance is the far deeper joy in Jesus. It isn't until after Jesus was glorified that the disciples realized what they had done that Sunday (v16) and therefore the joyful courage which was now theirs. The preaching of the Gospel presents this courageous joy to be yours in Jesus Christ.

**An Entry of Courageous Joy** (vv12-15) - John records this entry on the heels of the account of raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11). This event had caused quite a stir among the Pharisees who began plotting to put Jesus to death (John 11:45-53). Jesus returned to visit Lazarus, and even more folks came to believe in Christ, which caused the chief priests to be even more worked up (John 12:9-11). The next day, a great multitude (many of whom must have been these great many Jews who believed) welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem. They waved palm branches and were singing Psalm 118, lingering upon 118:25, "*Hosanna*," meaning, "*Save us!*" Luke 19:37 tells us that the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen. Jesus also intentionally fulfills the prophecies of Zechariah, riding in on a donkey's colt proclaiming a coming victory (Zech 9:9-11, John 12:15). Luke tells us that the Pharisees complained that this exuberance was getting out of hand (Luke 19:39), and Matthew tells us that the ones who really wouldn't quit were the kids (Matt 21:15). Remember that Jesus says repeatedly that anyone who wants to enter the kingdom of Heaven must become like a little child (Luke 18:17). There is something about courageous joy, hope in the kind sovereignty of God, that causes one to look quite immature to the unbelieving world.

**Missing Out on the Joy** – Luke 19:39-40 tells us that some of the Pharisees (the religious-types, in the covenant, but refusing to rejoice) demanded that Jesus rebuke His disciples for this ridiculous joy and blasphemous claim. You will recall that Michal, David's wife and Saul's daughter, did the same thing when David brought the ark back to the tabernacle with great festivity (2 Sam 6:14-23). The way of Michal was barrenness. Then there are the stories of an alabaster of costly perfume poured over Jesus. Matthew tells us that Jesus' disciples were indignant (Matt 26:6-13); John seems to tell us that the woman was Mary, Lazarus' brother, and that it was Judas who complained about it because he stole from the money box (John 12:1-8). In a similar account (possibly the same), Luke records that Jesus turned to Simon the Pharisee and rebuked him; the woman who was a sinner loved much because she was forgiven much (Luke 7:36-50). What's the point of all this? Make light of the victory of Jesus over sin, make light of your own sin, think too highly of yourself, and the result is that you will miss out on the joy, the devotion, the love and fellowship with Christ.

**Courageous Joy that is Not Naïve** – Consider this courage and joy of Jesus, "...*who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame...*" (Heb 12:2). He rode into Jerusalem knowing full well what He was riding into and He did it with joy. Jesus teaches us that our circumstances do not have to knock away a courageous joy like a billiard ball being knocked away. He still would weep over Jerusalem because of the judgment to come (Luke 19:41-44), and go in and make a mess of the den of thieves that the Temple court had become (Luke 19:45-48). Courageous joy, faith in His Father's faithfulness, led Jesus to ride in with rejoicing, to weep over the city He loved, to toss tables in righteous anger, and to lay His life down for sinful men.

**Take Heart! Take Courage! Cheer Up!** – There is a word in the Greek, *tharrein*, which is translated, "Take heart" but which also means, "Cheer up" or "Take courage" because it all goes together. It is what Jesus said to the paralytic when He healed him (Matt 9:2), and to the woman with the flow of blood (Matt 9:22), the blind man (Mark 10:49), and when His disciples saw Him walking on the water (Matt 14:27). It is what He commanded of Paul when He sent him to Rome (Acts 23:11). In other words, Jesus expects us to have this courageous joy and gives it to us. It is what keeps us from fearing even death (2 Cor 5:6, 8), knowing that man cannot do anything to us (Heb 13:6).

**"The World Has Gone after Him"** (John 12:17-19) – Returning to our passage, nothing stops this courageous joy. Jesus said, "*In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33). The secular world tries to have this courage by looking deep within oneself or by determining to prove oneself. But Christ and His disciples derive *tharein* from the faithfulness of the Father and victory of Christ which overcomes the cosmos. The Gospel is that Jesus Christ rode into this world and broke the guilt, shame, and power of sin and death. The Gospel is that there is no other joy or happiness in the world that can overcome the world. The Gospel does not deny that there are other kinds of joy or courage, but that only in Jesus we can have courageous joy that doesn't ignore our real predicament, our spiritual problem. We are not hoping in a humanistic utopia or in human evolutionary progress, or salvation from the State. Our courageous joy stands against all of that because it stands upon our hope in God the Father Who has come for us in His Son to make us His children forever. "*Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!*"