

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 10 April 2022

Sermon Title : Hosanna! Lord, Save us!

Speaker : Rev Eddie Ho

Text : Matthew 21:1-11

INTRODUCTION

All of us view life through our own lenses or perspectives. Depending on the lens we use, even though individually we are viewing a same situation, we may understand or perceive it differently, depending on our culture, education or past experiences. Similarly, the Palm Sunday event 2000 years ago looks different depending on whether you are a Jew in Jerusalem then or a Christian now in Singapore. Today, we shall re-read this Palm Sunday event using different lenses.

God gave us His Word to reveal who He is, who we are in relation to Him, and what He has done so we can be restored to Him. In order to understand God's truth, we need to use or put on the correct lenses:

- First, we need to use the lens of context to understand the situation in which it was written.
- Next, we need to use God's lens to understand God's heart and His actions.
- Lastly, we need to use our own lenses to apply God's word into our life.

1) Matthew 21:1-5 – God wants us to know and understand His nature (vv. 4-5)

The prophet mentioned here refers to the prophet Zechariah who prophesied this event in around 520BC. Similar to modern day Christians, the Jews in Jesus' time had been hearing this prophecy of a Saviour year after year for more than 500 years.

Using the lens of the context of the Jews, we can look at the circumstances in which the prophet Zechariah gave this prophecy - At that time, in 500BC, the Israelites were still in captivity in Babylon, and they had lost their country and their freedom. There was no future for them or their children as they were made to serve their enemies. It was at this point that God spoke to them through prophet Zechariah. (Zechariah 9:9)

- In these verses, God was promising the Israelites in captivity that He would send a king to save them and would bring His promises to pass, regardless of how long it might take.

Now, 500 years later, God is delivering what He has promised.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

2) Matthew 21:6-7 – God’s promise of deliverance for the Israelites was fulfilled

If we read this passage with our own lenses, we may ask, “Why would a king be riding on a donkey?” We may also jump to conclusions that this was not fitting for a king or even question the authenticity of the king, and this is exactly what the crowd asked when they realized He was not going to do what they expected Him to do.

Using the lens when Zechariah spoke on behalf of God to the people in captivity – When the Israelites in 520BC heard this promise from the prophet Zechariah, they would recall how king David’s son Adonijah had desired to be king and schemed to take over his very old father’s throne. Just a few years before this, David’s eldest son had also wanted to take over his rule by raising an army to kill his father. After all these and some political manoeuvring, king David ordered his priest and prophet to have Solomon mount his personal mule and appoint him as ruler over Israel and Judah. (1 Kings 1:32-33)

- Contrary to our modern lens of understanding, donkeys were often used by the royal family in coronation ceremonies and other occasions in ancient Israel.
- Horses often represented power and war, but donkeys represented peace and resolution. Hence donkeys were also used by kings instead of horses for coronation, as a symbol of peace and prosperity for their reign. We see this in 1 Kings 1 when Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet appointed Solomon as king while he rode on a donkey.

Using our own lenses, we may sometimes not understand or misunderstand the solution God had promised.

3) Matthew 21:8

Using the lens of the Jews 2000 years ago – The act of the crowd throwing their cloaks on the dirt and the road showed honour, respect and submission. It also showed the seriousness of the crowd as they used a personal item instead of just using branches or leaves that could be plucked for free from the palm trees on the road. In addition, it was a genuine gesture of commitment as they needed their cloaks to keep them warm especially since it was early spring in Jerusalem, a chilly time of the year.

4) Matthew 21:9-11 – Understanding God’s heart

The cries of the crowd proclaiming “Hosanna” was an urgent call to God, as they wanted Jesus to save them. Although Zechariah prophesied that a man riding on a donkey would be crowned king but he did not mention that they would be shouting for his help. So why did the Jews shout “Hosanna”?

About 168 years before Christ, a Greek ruler Antiochus Epiphanes invaded Jerusalem and desecrated God’s temple by sacrificing a pig at the altar to worship Zeus, just to humiliate the Jews. A Jewish priest called Judas Maccabees brought

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

about a revolt and delivered them. He was later crowned king as he rode into Jerusalem with the people welcoming him with palm leaves, and his dynasty reigned for 100 years until Pompeii invaded the Holy Land and massacred 12000 Jews and brought Judea and Galilee under Roman control. Now, 50 years after Pompeii sacked Jerusalem, in Jesus' time, the people still fondly remembered the procession of Judas Maccabees. With the hope that history would repeat itself, the crowd and the whole city were stirred up as they could not wait for God to set things right for them once again. Now they say a prophet, Jesus, is riding into Jerusalem and He will surely be able to deliver them.

Unfortunately, they were using their own lens to understand Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and that created a problem:

- They assumed God's only concern was to set up a physical kingdom on earth.
- They expected God to meet them on their own terms; to deliver them from the Roman oppression.
- And when they realized that Jesus was not going to do what they expected him to, they turned against him.

We need to put on God's lens in order to see and understand God's heart:

- When Jesus came 2000 years ago, God's plan was very different from the people's desires. God's plan was not for Jesus to rule and to be King of the land yet, but to be King of our hearts and to rule in our heart.
- We want God to solve the problems in our life and to make things or the other person right. However, God's purpose of Christ's 1st coming is to make us right.
- The date that Jesus rode into Jerusalem was on Nisan the 10th, which is the day the Jewish people chose for the lamb to be sacrificed for the Passover. Hence, Jesus riding into Jerusalem that day marks the beginning of His journey to the Cross as 5 days later, Jesus Himself became the sacrifice.

Jesus was the perfect Lamb of God and He became the Passover Lamb sacrificed for the sins of the world. His blood covers us and cleanses us from our sins. He came to make us right and paved the way for His 2nd coming where He will make all things right. He will come to rule and reign and to judge.

Now is the time to use our own lens to apply God's Word in our life – What is the condition of our hearts? Have we taken the time to reflect and intentionally switch our lenses? Is there a sin to confess, a dispute to resolve, or a relationship to be restored? Do we have unfulfilled longings that we need to examine or a desire to make things right? Are we willing to give him our hearts?

CONCLUSION

Palm Sunday is the beginning of Holy Week and the final week leading to Good Friday. Jesus wants to be the King of our hearts and to transform us from within. Let us reflect on our lives and rest in the knowledge that Jesus wants to make us right.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

1.
 - a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk!?
 - b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

2. Appoint someone to read Matthew 21:1-11 slowly.
 - a. The story of Jesus approaching Jerusalem on a donkey on Palm Sunday is a familiar one. What new insights have you gained from today's sermon by putting on "new lenses"?

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 3a. Put yourself in the shoes of the crowd on Palm Sunday. How does knowing the biblical context of the Old Testament (Zechariah 9 & 1 Kings 1), change your perception of “Jesus’ riding on a donkey” into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday?
- 3b. (i) Was there a situation in the past where you have misunderstood God’s meanings/actions in the Bible through using a wrong lens in reading God’s Word?
- (ii) What helped you to gain a better understanding of what God was doing in that situation?
- 4a. How do you respond when God does not deliver you in a way that you expect Him to? Share the emotions and reactions you go through.
- (i) What causes you to respond the way you do in 4a?
- (ii) How can knowing God’s nature and heart help you respond better?
- 4b. What is one thing you can do to attain a better lens of context and God’s lens, so as to be able to know God’s nature and heart better?
- 4c. How can your group members encourage or help you to achieve 4b in the following week(s) until your next meeting?

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

C. Testimonies and Prayer

Purpose: Give glory to God and seek Him.

5. Share your personal experience on how Jesus made you right as you used your own lens to apply God's Word in your life and the transformation that has happened to you.

OR

Give thanks to God for Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God who became the Passover Lamb sacrificed for the sins of the world, so His blood covers us and cleanses us from our sins.

6. With a prayer partner, bring all that have been shared in 4a, b and c to God, asking for the Holy Spirit's revelation on areas in your life where you may need to understand God's nature and heart better. Pray for your group and our church to commit to and persevere in keeping each other accountable in this spiritual journey of anchoring on the hope that comes from Jesus who has come to make us and all things right.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7