

PALM SUNDAY 2008
SERMON - CHRIST CHURCH PARISH
FATHER JOHN ALTBERG
ZECHARIAH 9.9 MATTHEW 21.1 27.1



JESUS TAKES ON THE GOVERNMENT... subtitle for Palm Sunday!

Jesus spent three years preparing for today...

We spent five Lenten Weeks preparing for today...extra study, reconsideration of things we have long known but may get a bit hazy in a year's time. Lent is the Church's way of being our parent...not in any nagging manner but reminding us of things we need to make life make sense...and better...!

Our Palm Sunday Procession brings into sharp focus the final days of His ministry...Jesus entered Jerusalem...500 years prior, Zechariah the Prophet said this would happen. Little is known about Zechariah but what **IS** known is that what he said came true!

Palm Sunday is marked by contrasting Gospel readings...Jesus the surprise King enters Jerusalem to cheering crowds...then the same crowd turns ugly...

Palm Sunday is indeed a depiction of ultimate contrasts...Jesus is first hailed...then subjected to manipulated hatred. He is executed by the altered opinion of the SAME people who declared him King days before.

Why did he go to Jerusalem...he knew full well it was a dangerous decision. Two things took him there...as a man he was a devout Jew and it was in strict conformity that he and his disciples went for Passover...it was his obligation to be there...just as with Catholic Christians we are here. The second reason is that as the Son of God he was on a mission...that of self-sacrifice...something for which he had spent three years preparing himself and his followers...something they could not comprehend.

Passing through Jericho, Jesus stopped for a private conversation with the twelve...*WHEN WE GET TO JERUSALEM SOMEONE WILL BETRAY ME AND I'LL BE KILLED...BUT I WILL RISE FROM MY GRAVE IN THREE DAYS...*

We listen in on some likely private comments among the disciples...

Just what kind of nut case talk is this...? *Peter, please, just cool it...stop shooting off your mouth...Well I've had about enough...he's acting crazy...*

Jesus and the disciples went on through Jericho...got to Bethphage...Jesus said there's a donkey in that village...go get it. *James what's this about...Steal a donkey...he's lost his mind.* They got the donkey...Jesus got on and they all started down the mountain... *This is absurd...Jesus on a donkey against the Roman Army...we're going to get killed ...Andrew...get your brother to do something.*

News reached Jerusalem something was happening...crowds rushed to the street as they approached...word spread that finally the Messiah was appearing...a King and an army...*Those Romans and Temple thieves are about to get it.*

He did not tell us about this part...*James, we tried to talk to him...he just wouldn't listen...*

"Hey...look...it's just a guy on a donkey...where's this 'King'...? You must be kidding...well maybe it's a disguise...oh sure..."

No army, no snappy uniforms, no trumpets, no chariots...just a man on a donkey with a rag tag band wandering through Jerusalem waving palms...another group of religious extremists that always show up for Passover...

Reaching the Temple...the drama escalated...he threw the money changers/dove peddlers into the street. Next Jesus started healing people on the spot...the priests and the Pharisees were outraged. Bigger trouble was on the horizon!

The disciples were terrified..."We didn't sign up for this...Peter can you talk some sense into him...? I don't know...I doubt it...he seems really determined..."

