

## Reflections on Palm Sunday - Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2014

*<sup>6</sup> The disciples went and did just as Jesus had instructed them, <sup>7</sup> and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid their coats on them; and He sat on the coats. <sup>8</sup> Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road. <sup>9</sup> The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting,*

*“Hosanna to the Son of David;  
Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord;  
Hosanna in the highest!”*

*<sup>10</sup> When He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, “Who is this?” <sup>11</sup> And the crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.”*

*<sup>12</sup> And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. <sup>13</sup> And He \*said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’; but you are making it a robbers’ den.” (Matthew 21:6-13)*

Beloved in The Lord,

On Palm Sunday, we commemorate the day that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. This was the last time that Jesus would come into Jerusalem, because not long after, the same crowd that greeted Him with shouts of “Hosanna”, rejected Him and shouted: “Crucify Him – away with Him!”

One of the very first things that Jesus did when He came into Jerusalem, was to go to the Temple. Arriving at the Temple, He was overcome with righteous anger at the scene that was before Him. The Temple resembled a market place and not a house of worship. The emphasis was not on glorifying God, but on making a profit. It was no longer a prayer house, but a business.

The religious leaders, prying upon the weakness of the people had turned sacrifices into a money spinner to line their own greedy pockets. Jesus, upon seeing what was going on, hearing the shouts of the traders and money lenders, being angry, drove them all out. Naturally this did not gain Him many votes in the popularity stakes. In fact we read that the religious leaders became indignant. They were furious.

It is important for us to see that the only group of people Jesus ever criticized, or showed anger toward were the religious self righteous leaders. Jesus never castigated a sinner, but always showed mercy. He forgave and demonstrated His amazing grace and love.

The problem with the religious people was their pride and self righteous attitudes. They should have known better. They had God's Word, but instead of honouring and obeying it, they twisted it to suit their own ends.

Festival time in Jerusalem was always a bad time. This was a time when many pilgrims arrived in the Holy City and the religious leaders cranked up the prices for sacrifices and exchanged money at higher rates than normal. This sort of peak time pricing is normal in the business world, but not acceptable in the Church. This was nothing but pure greed. That is what made Jesus blood boil.

We have to be very diligent to ensure that our religion does not make Jesus angry. I believe that there are many Churches today that make Jesus angry. So many Churches are nothing more than a business that uses religious language.

To safe guard against this, we need to be in continual fellowship with God The Holy Spirit. We need to be continually led by God The Holy Spirit. We need to have Jesus front and centre in all things that we do.

We need to allow Jesus, through the work of The Holy Spirit, to continually cleanse and renew us. To remove all things from us that do not bring Him glory and honour.

We live in a filthy world, in a dirty ungodly environment. The pressure to water down the truth, to compromise, to twist the truth is unrelentless.

Jesus said to His disciples: ***"Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."*** (Matthew 16:6)

Watch out and beware. This is a call to action. Something that we need to do continually. Be aware, be on guard. We need to be watching out all the time, guarding our faith, guarding our walk with Jesus. We need to be alert and watching over our Church.

A little leaven leavens the dough. It doesn't take much yeast to get things going. Understand, that what happened in the Temple was not overnight. It was a slow decline from prayer house to market place. One started to see business potential and made a little profit, then another, yet another, and before you know it the focus is the bottom line and no longer God. Yeast doesn't leaven the bread instantly. It slowly works its way into the dough.

Palm Sunday is the beginning of Holy Week. Traditionally Holy Week is a time of solemn reflection amongst believers. A time to meditate upon the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ and what He did for us out of His tremendous love.

Holy week is a great time to take stock. To simply stop and make an assessment of the state of our temple, our own personal temple –our lives – and also our corporate temple – our Church.

We read in 1.Peter:

***Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, <sup>15</sup> but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; <sup>16</sup> because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” (1.Peter 1:13-18)***

You see God is inviting us, no – commanding us to BE HOLY. Many rebel and say “I can’t be holy!” But before we over react let us ask what does being holy mean? To be holy is to be set apart. To be dedicated to God. A holy life is a life committed to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

To live a holy life simply means to follow Jesus and not the world. A holy life is a blessed life. It is a life that brings honour and glory to God. Over the last few weeks we have been looking at the Beatitudes. We have considered that blessed are they who live in close fellowship with Jesus and obey His Word.

Our motivation to be holy should be love. God loves us with an everlasting love and our reaction to His love should be reciprocal love.

Peter continues:” ***If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; <sup>18</sup> knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, <sup>19</sup> but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. <sup>20</sup> For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you <sup>21</sup> who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.” (1.Peter 1:17-21)***

Out of His tremendous love for us, Jesus died on a cross, shedding His Holy innocent blood, in order to redeem us from the power of sin, to take us from a life that leads to eternal death, to give us eternal life in glory. He has transformed us from a life of sin, to a holy life.

***“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)***

God has so loved each one of us, that our only response should be love. Jesus gave everything for us to save us from hell. How can we not surrender all to Him in gratitude?

In calling us to a holy life, Jesus is calling us to a blessed life. To a life that is fulfilling and honouring to God. What are we called to leave behind – not good things, but to use Peters term – a futile way of life.

A life that is not surrendered in faith to Jesus is a futile life. It does not honour God. The same can be said for a religion, congregation or Church. If it is not surrendered in faith to Jesus in total obedience to Him, it is futile.

Jesus cleansed the Temple when He arrived in Jerusalem. This Holy week, let us ask Him to come in and cleanse our temple, our hearts and minds. To take out all that is sinful and not good. Let us ask God The Holy Spirit to speak to us, to show us what needs to be dealt with. As He points out sin let us confess it, and get rid of it in Jesus name. Let Jesus blood wash it away. Let us fill our lives with the Spirit of God.

When the Jews celebrate the Passover they are to eat unleavened bread for 7 days. This is because leaven is a symbol of sin.

As we prepare for Good Friday and Easter morning, let us clear out all the spiritual leaven from our hearts and make a commitment to live a holy life that honours God.

Let us respond to God's love, with love and humility. May we live holy and not in rebellion. Let us not try and patch up our old life with religious activity, but let us be crucified with Christ and rise with Him in new life.

Then not only will this week be holy, but the balance of our life here, and into eternity will be blessed and holy.

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.