



SERMONS AT SAINT MARK'S

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THE SUNDAY OF THE PASSION, PALM SUNDAY, MARCH 29, 2026

ISAIAH 50:4-9a; PSALM 31:9-16; PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11; MATTHEW 21:1-11; 27:11-54

ONLY ONE KING

It's not a set-up. That's the best news I can offer this morning. In other words, we're not jerking you around today, emotionally manipulating you to feel good one minute just so we can make you feel horrible the next. I've been to that kind of church. Maybe you have too. That's not what we're doing. We can wholeheartedly celebrate Jesus as our only king today and then follow where he leads – because even when we change, he doesn't. In his way of love for all people and the kingdom he proclaimed, he has led us here, and he can be trusted to lead us through.

To be honest, I've always felt a little queasy waving my palm on Palm

Sunday, knowing what's coming next. In a matter of minutes, we jump from "All glory, laud and honor" to "Let him be crucified." If today is only about our fickleness, our scapegoating, our complicity with evil, then not only is that not good news – it's not even news. We know how we can set up heroes, only to turn on them when they fall under the weight of our impossible expectations. We know how dangerous it is to crown anyone as our king – to give anyone that kind of power in the name of keeping us safe. Even when we're not the direct agents of violence, we know how it feels to have violence committed against the innocent in our name – and we rightly want no part in

it. So then, what business do we have waving our palms today and throwing a parade?

Jesus' earliest followers had to wonder that, too. Matthew tells us that when Jesus enters Jerusalem, "the whole city (is) in turmoil." It's the time of the Passover, the yearly celebration of deliverance from slavery in Egypt. Yet, over a thousand years after the exodus, the people are still praying to be free. Once again, they're hoping that there's an end to the evil a government can perpetrate, that a new kind of kingdom is coming where they won't feel so powerless. Long ago, the prophet Zechariah described a king who would ride into Jerusalem, not pompous on his warhorse, but humble on the colt of a donkey. This king would reject "power over" so he could share "power with." He would offer a just and lasting peace. Jesus knows this image, and he brings it to life. He doesn't just wander into town and get swept up in a case of mistaken

identity. He knows the hopes he's raising. He's been talking about a kingdom for years now, where the last shall be first, where the love of the Creator of us all is what unites us – not nation or culture or creed, where the poor and outcast are embraced and welcomed as family. In this symbolic action, he welcomes anyone who's on board with that to join him in making it real. Any realization of this kingdom of God on earth – no matter how long it lasts - is a cause for joy. And joy is an act of resistance. The powers that be want us to be isolated and afraid. They want us to hide and play small. Palm Sunday, among other things, is Jesus' way of helping us to say No to all that – so we can say Yes to something better and more life-giving for all.

So, we can wave our palms this morning and sing our hymns of love and praise and laugh at the devil while we're at it – because the kingdom Jesus embodied is still worth living for. Not

even the worst death imaginable can kill it. 2000 years later, it's still our north star. We are still guided by Jesus - in his radical example of humble service, his nonviolent, active resistance to evil, and his utter refusal to abandon us to our cowardice and fear.

Besides, we know this story doesn't end with the cross. Those who rely on bribery and intimidation and violence to compel obedience don't win in the end. Over the course of this week, we are pulled through the silence and

shadow of death into the music and light of Easter - so that we too might walk in newness of life. We see hints of it already. Matthew's Passion doesn't end with the cross - but with an earthquake, a temple curtain forever torn, rocks split, tombs open, saints raised. God has thrown open a door that will never be closed again. Good news is here already; but hold on - the best is yet to come. Stay tuned.



SAINT MARK'S
EPISCOPAL CATHEDRAL

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