

SERMON FOR MARCH 24, 2013

The First Chinese Church of Christ in Hawai'i (UCC)

PALM SUNDAY 2013

7:45 & 10:30 Worship Services

Scripture: Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; **Luke 19:28-40 (Focus)**

Message: ***"What Does Jesus' Passion Make of Us?"***

Kekapa P.K. Lee



Gathering in the Word

Mahalo and thanks to our children and youth (and others) for helping us this morning with our Procession of the Palms!

Palm Sunday is the first day of Holy Week—an interplay of celebration and passion (*strong feelings, zeal, fervor, excitement, outburst*). Today is the theological as well as the chronological entry point for the spiritual maelstrom (*an event marked by confusion, turbulence, strong feelings and emotions; sometimes frightful and powerful*) on the horizon for us and Jesus in the days ahead!

Holy Week encompasses and takes in the full spectrum of Jesus' public and private life, the adulation and abandonment, the celebration and conflict, the integrity and suffering. Jesus is *lured* and *drawn in* toward the City of Jerusalem **and** the cross! Jesus' whole life has been aimed at redeeming and saving us on the cross at Calvary. Lots of characters take part in God's plan of salvation. We are remembering again what has already taken place—which reminds us all of God's faithful vision of Shalom (*Jewish word for peace*)—that shapes our lives even today in 2013!

Palm Sunday marks Jesus' final week of his earthly ministry! Jesus is beginning a slow and steady march toward death. Palm Sunday is a perfect setup for all that is to come!

Hearing the Word

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 (The Message Bible)

¹⁻² Thank GOD, because he's good, because his love never quits. Tell the world, Israel, "GOD's love never quits."

¹⁹⁻²⁰ Swing wide the city gates—the *righteous* gates! I'll walk right through and thank GOD! This Temple Gate belongs to GOD, so the victors can enter and praise. ²¹⁻

²⁵ Thank you for responding to me; you've truly become my salvation! The stone the masons discarded as flawed is now the capstone! This is GOD's work. We rub our eyes—we can hardly believe it! This is the very day GOD acted—let's celebrate and be festive! Salvation now, GOD. Salvation now! Oh yes, GOD—a free and full life!

²⁶⁻²⁹ Blessed are you who enter in GOD's name—from GOD's house we bless you! GOD is God; he has bathed us in light. Festoon the shrine with garlands, hang colored banners above the altar! You're my God, and I thank you. O my God, I lift high your praise. Thank GOD—he's so good. GOD's love never quits!

Psalm 118 is our OT lesson chosen for the celebration of Palm Sunday—it is a psalm of thanksgiving and celebration—befitting Jesus as he enters the City of Jerusalem!

Psalm 118 reminds us again, “***This is the day that GOD has made and we will rejoice and be glad in it.***”

Luke 19:28-40 (NIV 2011)

Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King

²⁸ After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹ As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ³⁰ “Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it.’” ³² Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. ³³ As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” ³⁴ They replied, “The Lord needs it.” ³⁵ They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. ³⁶ As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. ³⁷ When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise GOD in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: ³⁸ “*Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!*” “*Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!*” ³⁹ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!” ⁴⁰ “*I tell you,*” Jesus replied, “*if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.*”

There are some ominous and dark events taking place here. Jesus knew what he needed to do and going into the Holy City (Jerusalem) was part of all of that! Jesus knew that it was his Father's will in all of this and that he'd have to endure to secure peace and glory for all humankind!

On this Palm Sunday—let’s remind ourselves to look deep in Jesus’ eyes!

- ✓ How many times have you come to worship with songs of praise on our lips—and wrenching hurt and anguish pains and grief in our hearts?
- ✓ How often for me as your pastor—that as we are singing a hymn that I found my own voice choking and my eyes with tears remembering the death of my mother and others?

So often our worship is tinged with our tears of memory and love for family and others.

- ✓ We know Jesus redeemed us.
- ✓ We are right to celebrate Jesus as our King—and know the cost to Jesus as all that happened in Holy Week!
- ✓ We’re all properly sobered and thoughtful to feel the pain of this ***in-between time of the already and the not yet!***
- ✓ We all have experience the pains and joys in our lives!

Yes—Jesus has pointed us forward to a day when the promise will come true for us—and **Jesus will wipe every tear from every eye!**

- ✓ **Jesus reminds us that salvation is for all of Creation and not just for us humans!**
- ✓ **All of Creation will be liberated and freed from bondage and decay!**

You must note that in our Luke 19 text this morning—there are no palm fronds mentioned. Maybe we should call it “Coat Sunday” because lots of coats were thrown down before Jesus as he rode on the donkey. The other gospels mention the palms.

Doing the Word

So on this Palm Sunday, what is the Word of GOD for us?

1. ONE: ON THE CROSS—GOD SAVED US IN JESUS!

- ✓ On the cross we see the paradox and contradiction.
- ✓ Today because we know Easter—we see Jesus’ entry into the City of Jerusalem as Jesus’ own funeral procession.

- ✓ **Jesus' death on the cross brings life and solves all that has ever been wrong with this world.**
- ✓ **THEREFORE . . .**

2. TWO: CHRISTIAN JOY HAS COME THROUGH CHRIST'S DEATH ON THE CROSS!

- ✓ Joy for us Christians is a last feeling—not the first!
- ✓ We too must walk the path of death as Jesus did.
- ✓ **HOW CAN WE HAVE JOY?**
- ✓ **BUT WE DO IN JESUS!**

3. THREE: TRUE JOY IN JESUS COMES TO US AS A MIRACLE OF GRACE!

- ✓ GOD in GOD's grace just gives **JOY** to us all the time!
- ✓ Let us be thankful as we share this Holy Week and remember the story of Jesus again.
- ✓ If you are able—come to Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services with our sisters and brothers; and on Good Friday—our sisters and brothers from UCC Judd!
- ✓ Come on Good Friday at 9:45 and walk our large wooden cross around our neighborhood and make it back for our Good Friday service at 12 Noon.

Sent in the Word

For all of us here on Palm Sunday and to make sense to twenty-first century people, Palm Sunday must be seen as a contemporary event. The hymn, "*Were you there when they crucified my Lord?*" refers to our current situation:

- ✓ We are both faithful and fickle.
- ✓ We are committed, yet turn our back on our ideals and God's dream for humankind and the Earth.
- ✓ We feel courage, yet are overcome by fear.

Still, there is hope in our ambivalence and weakness; GOD does not abandon us even when we abandon GOD. **GOD persistently and providentially provides pathways toward wholeness**, and like a

holistic physician uses every means to bring us to wholeness, regardless of our past.

We were there at the Cross and Palm Sunday; and we are reminded of Easter next Sunday, living the resurrection and transformation God envisions for us. **Through it all and all that we have and will experience in life, we can proclaim with Psalm 118, “this is the day that God has made and we will rejoice and be glad in it.”**

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