

Palm Sunday Joy – *Luke 19:37-40*

Introduction – Joy, it seems, is elusive. It seems to be directly connected to circumstances and yet the scriptures teach us that it is a fruit of the Spirit, that it should and can transcend immediate circumstances. And for Christians, if we remind ourselves of what Palm Sunday was leading up to, what was going to be accomplished, we of all people should be filled with more joy than could ever be contained. Their overflowing joy was an anticipatory joy before Jesus was crucified. How much more ought we experience such joy after His crucifixion and resurrection? As Peter would write, ours is “*joy inexpressible, and full of glory.*”

An Eruption of Praise (v37) – Three years after Jesus began His ministry, He comes into Jerusalem descending from the Mount of Olives. The multitudes could have lined a path over half a mile to the city gates. This Man Who had healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, who had fed 5000 men on one occasion and 4000 on another, was openly coming into the city on the week leading up to the Passover. The crowd did not understand the twists and turns this week would take, but they knew and rejoiced that something was coming. They rejoiced, praised God, and did so with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen Jesus do.

Blessed King (v38) – As they sang, Psalm 118 filled the air (“Hosanna”, meaning “Save, O Lord”), and Luke records that they made a slight change to the wording – Blessed is the King! Jesus rode in like Solomon, the son of David, seated on a donkey (1 Kings 1:33-44). The crowds cast down their garments as those who rejoiced at Jehu’s coronation as king (2 Kings 9:11-13). When they saw scripture that they believed and sang for generations, longing for its fulfillment, coming to be fulfilled, it brought great and loud joy.

Intrusive Objections: Theirs and Yours (v39) – That noise, that multitude, and the declaration of a king coming worried some of the Pharisees, and they warned Jesus to tone it down. Calling Jesus “king” as He comes into a city – well that smacks of Christian Nationalism. King of my private heart, that’s allowed. But not King of kings and Lord of lords. This was getting out of hand.

Can’t Stop the Music (v40) – This is a very important reply. Jesus knows God’s sovereign plan cannot be thwarted. He knows the praise and glory is coming. He knows the cross and the crown will be His. He knows that loud praise is going to fill the earth. Saying that the stones will cry out is a superlative – but of course it means something. Praise must come forth now; it absolutely demands expression. And He might be pointing to the stones of the wall and the temple which will soon cry out in His vindication when those like the unbelieving Pharisees will see God’s victorious destruction of their idolatrous city and temple (consider how Luke continues in vv41-45).

The Origin of This Joy? – This is the joy of the LORD and it is our strength. This joy is the joy of the Gospel, the story of the salvation of the world. This is a joy that does not come forth from man but from God. This joy is the eternal love between the Father and the Son and is the Person of the Holy Spirit. You could also say this joy came upon the Son at His baptism. Jesus, for the joy set before Him, gave Himself for His people, His church, His bride. And so, as Jesus publicly reveals Himself, there is an eruption of Joy. Those with eyes to see cannot withhold that joy for it comes upon them from above. So, the point is, this joy does not come forth from circumstances although it does manifest itself in the midst of circumstances. This joy resides outside of the creation in the Creator and then is given by the Spirit in the revelation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Blessed Joy – This joy has an object and it is Jesus Christ. “*Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD*” they shouted for joy. It was not enough that thousands had gathered, they had to shout, they had to sing. They had to throw down their cloaks and their palm branches in joyful surrender. But it wasn’t enough. “*Peace in the heaven and glory in the highest!*” “*Peace on earth*” was declared at Jesus’ birth and now an antiphonal cry “*Peace in heaven*” answers. How high can glory go? Can we sing that high, that far, that long? Don’t we need more? When we sing “*world without end*” in the Gloria Patri, how long is that?

Experiencing that Joy – God has that joy for His children to experience and express. While this passage is a narrative about a particular moment, we must note -

Joy Inexpressible (1 Pet 1:8-9) – Peter assumes that this joy is for all Christians, and he is writing to Christians who are specifically in difficult circumstances (see vv6-7). This is what the disciples, receiving Jesus into Jerusalem, experienced. It is why we gather to worship God every Sunday. We need to vent – and we need to vent together. This joy needs to burst out

and it needs to burst out with others to begin to be enough. This is joy beyond my ability to express, full of glory. That is what the seraphim say about the earth (Isaiah 6:3).

Sober Joy (1 Pet 1:13) – At the same time, this joy is not something we gin up. We cannot whistle up the Holy Spirit for a revival. The history of the church is full of crazy enthusiasts pulling off all kinds of shenanigans in the name of revival. But this is something that God gives and sovereignly controls, not men. What He tells us to do is to “*gird up the loins of your mind, be sober...*” This sober joy, yet which cannot be contained, drives us to gather together in Jesus’ name, to confess our sins, to hear that our sins are forgiven (glory!), to sing psalms and hymns, to have the Word preached that our hearts and minds would be more fully aligned in holiness (again, glory) and then to commune with Him at the Table of Grace (more glory and joy).

Palm Sunday Joy – If we are to celebrate Palm Sunday, we must celebrate the coming of Jesus into our midst and into a week that will be full of twists and turns. But it’s Jesus. King Jesus. He is the One who “*for the joy set before Him endured the cross*” and so we are told to run a similar race. His week was full of hardship. Yours may be as well. What will hinder your joy? Not the circumstances. It will be the weight (think distractions) and unconfessed sin which will entangle you (Heb 12:1-2, Psalm 51:10-12). Run the race with anticipatory joy. There is a cross, but there will be a crown. There is a death but there will be a resurrection. There is an exile but there will be a return. Run like Eric Liddel who said he ran because when he did, he felt God’s pleasure.

Transcending Circumstances – Your life, whether it appears to be successful or a dud, is just a whisp, a vapor. At any moment, your circumstances cannot make any sense in and of themselves. But if you are in Christ, you aren’t to see your joy in light of your circumstances, but your circumstances in light of His joy. And God has promised fulness of joy at His right hand (Psalm 16:11) which is where we sit with Christ now (Eph 2:6). You cannot begin to imagine what God is doing in and through those circumstances and in you (1 Cor 2:9, Rom 8:18, Eph 3:20-21).

Dave Hatcher – Palm Sunday, March 29, 2026