**Notes for Next Sunday**

Palm Sunday

**The Point of this Week’s Readings**

Christ is going to enter this world and greatly change things. There will be varying responses to Christ’s work, but make no mistake all the world will ultimately acknowledge and “confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:11).

The Psalm (118:19-29) is an open and unashamed acknowledgement of Christ’s work of salvation. It becomes a litany of praise and thanksgiving. In the middle of these verses it is obvious that the religious leaders will not accept Christ’s work. Their rejection will become a stumbling block for them. But, His work will be a cornerstone of Christ’s followers.

The Old Testament (Zechariah 9:9-12) pictures Christ entering Jerusalem on Psalm Sunday. In His gentle humbleness Christ seeks to restore all of Israel to the united nation it was before the split. All of the hurts and pains that have been suffered from being exiled are now to be healed and made twice as good.

The Epistle (Philippians 2:5-11) points to Christ coming in great humility. Jesus did not forcibly hold on to His rightful god-hood but gave it up for our salvation. But the Father does not forget Jesus but exalts Him above every name. There is also the implication that some would not accept that manner of salvation work. They, however much to their chagrin, will most certainly one day bow before the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel (John 12:20-43) responds to the Greeks seeking to see Jesus. This leads to Jesus’ teaching all who were present about His upcoming death. Jesus’ teaching is very plain and straight forward. The Father confirms Jesus through what some thought was thunder. Though Jesus had done many miraculous things for all to see, the Jewish leaders refuse to believe in Him. This, too, confirms the prophecy Isaiah had made in Isaiah 53:1.

*For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.*

**Psalm 118:19-29**

**19﻿ Open for me the gates of righteousness; I will enter and give thanks to the LORD. ﻿20﻿ This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter. ﻿21﻿ I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation. ﻿22﻿ The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; ﻿23﻿ the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. ﻿24﻿ This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. ﻿25﻿ O LORD, save us; O LORD, grant us success. ﻿26﻿ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you. ﻿27﻿ The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine upon us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up﻿ to the horns of the altar. ﻿28﻿ You are my God, and I will give you thanks; you are my God, and I will exalt you. ﻿29﻿ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.**

The courts of the Lord (ESV) were various and surrounded the tabernacle and temple. They were restricted by the various standards of holiness. To enter these holy places was to enter into God’s presence. (TLSB p. 842)

In its original setting, this psalm pictures priests, or Levites, approaching the Lord, who alone is righteous and gives righteousness to those who believe in Him. (TLSB)

The “capstone” mentioned in verse 22 means “head of the corner”—either a capstone over a door (a large stone used as a lintel), or a large stone used to anchor and align the corner of a wall, or the keystone of an arch. By a word play (pun) the author hints at “chief ruler” (the Hebrew word for “corner” is sometimes used as a metaphor for leader/ruler. This stone, disdained by the worldly powers, has become the most important stone in the structure of the new world order that God is bringing about through Israel. (CSB)

The psalm closes as it had opened with thanksgiving.

**Old Testament – Zechariah 9:9-12**

**9﻿ Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. ﻿10﻿ I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. ﻿11﻿ As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit. ﻿12﻿ Return to your fortress, O prisoners of hope; even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you.**

Verse 9 is quoted in the NT as Messianic and as referring ultimately to the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (Mt 21:5; Jn. 12:15). (CSB)

Jesus will bring the great forces of evil to an unconditional surrender (v. 10). It takes faith to accept this King now. It will not take faith to believe in Him as King when He returns in the clouds of heaven to claim His undisputed rule.

Israelites typically rode donkeys (v. 10). Horses were reserved for military use. (TLSB)

All apparatus of war will be removed. The Messiah’s rule is not being established by physical force, or maintained by military defenses. This state will as we know, be achieved in perfection only when the new heavens and the new earth shall have come into existence.

Ephraim (v. 10) represents the 10 northern tribes and Jerusalem includes the two tribes of the south (Judah).

The peace (shalom) (v. 10) referred to here, includes more than the cessation of warfare. “Peace” is in itself a much broader concept. It includes that wealth of spiritual treasures which He alone is able to bestow, and which is referred to in the statement: “Peace I leave unto you.”

There was hope (v. 12). None need despair of relief today either, no matter how desperate the situation.

**Epistle – Philippians 2:5-11**

**﻿5﻿ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ﻿6﻿ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ﻿7﻿ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature﻿ of a servant, being made in human likeness. ﻿8﻿ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! ﻿9﻿ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ﻿10﻿ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ﻿11﻿ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

The Epistle for today is pivotal, providing a bridge from death to life while giving us both promise and reason for following where Christ leads.

The Beck Bible for attitude (v. 5) is: “Think just as Christ Jesus thought.”

To totality of Christ humbling himself is found in verse 6 where it states: “Who, being in very natureGod, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.” The word “grasped” means to forcibly retain. Jesus gave up His glory.

Verse 7 continues the thought of verse 6. It is said that Jesus “made himself nothing” (v. 7). Nothing literally means to “empty Himself.” He did this, not by giving up His deity, but by laying aside His glory and becoming a man. Jesus gave up all His heavenly rights and privileges.

Jesus was “obedient to the point of death” (8). But God raised and exalted Him to the point where “every knee will bow” and “every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (vv. 10-11).

The word “exalted” means to elevate above others to the highest position. Even those who on earth despised Jesus while here on earth will have to recognize Him as Lord of all.

**Gospel – John 12:20-43**

**20﻿ Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. ﻿21﻿ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” ﻿22﻿ Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. ﻿23﻿ Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ﻿24﻿ I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ﻿25﻿ The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ﻿26﻿ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. ﻿27﻿ “Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. ﻿28﻿ Father, glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” ﻿29﻿ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. ﻿30﻿ Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. ﻿31﻿ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ﻿32﻿ But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” ﻿33﻿ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. ﻿34﻿ The crowd spoke up, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever, so how can you say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this ‘Son of Man’?” ﻿35﻿ Then Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. ﻿36﻿ Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light.” When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them**

The mood of this text is one of somber anticipation. Chronologically, the text occurs between the triumphant entry into Jerusalem and Jesus’ washing of the disciples’ feet. The narrative is rapidly moving to the events of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

The coming of the Greeks is important (vv. 20-23). The Greeks were probably “God-fearers”—Gentiles attracted to Judaism but not ready to convert and accept the requirements of the Law such as Sabbath observance and circumcision. Regardless, they came to worship in Jerusalem during the Passover celebration. On the Jewish Pentecost or Feast of Weeks, there were people in Jerusalem from “every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5) “both Jews and converts to Judaism” (Acts 2:11).

The arrival of Gentiles seeking him prompts Jesus to declare that His hour has now come. It is time for him to be glorified in the death and resurrection for the whole world. There is no turning back.

The principle of the kernel of wheat is that it must die to produce fruit (vv. 24-26). Just so, Jesus must die. His fruit is eternal life.

Jesus knows what is coming in the days ahead. Verse 27 reveals two things: Jesus' intense agony and His willing obedience, no matter what the cost.

The glory spoken of by Jesus (vv. 28-33) and the Father is nothing less than the cross. This is no earthly glory or fame.

The light (vv. 35-36) is closely identified with Jesus, as seen from the call to believe in the light. (CSB)

**37﻿ Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. ﻿38﻿ This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet: “Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”﻿39﻿ For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: ﻿40﻿ “He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them.”﻿41﻿ Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him. ﻿42﻿ Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; ﻿43﻿ for they loved praise from men more than praise from God.**

The faith of many on Palm Sunday was fickle. Even though Jesus had done His miraculous signs in their presence, including the raising of Lazarus, they continued not to believe in Jesus.

Verses 38-40 are quote from Isaiah 53:1. They would not believe then and they purposely rejected God and chose evil at Jesus’ time. This denial continues today.