

Walking with Jesus to Calvary

Sermons are often meant to inform or persuade. Today's sermon is different. We are not looking at one specific text, but rather at a period of one day in the life of the Savior. Our desire today and next Sunday is to gain a sense of what Jesus went through for us, so that we might love him more.

So come and walk the steps of Jesus with me. Walk the dusty roads. Feel the cool spring air. Smell the aroma of bread baking as you walk through the villages in mid-day. Feel the warmth of the sun. Breathe a little heavier as you reach the top the Mount of Olives. See the city of Jerusalem as you crest the hill, looking down into the valley of Kidron. See the Temple, and hear the crowds as they shout "Hosanna." And know that in this crowd, there is only one who knows and understands what the following 7 days will bring.

It is spring in the Year of our Lord, 29. The rainy season is over. The hillsides of Judea are alive with color and flowers that bloom for only a few weeks every year. Poppies, and daisies are in bloom, and so are the almond and fig blossoms. The temperatures are the most moderate of the year, just warm enough to be comfortable. Walk with me down the path's that Jesus walked to Jerusalem.

His journey actually began in the fall of the previous year. After 3 years of ministry, the purpose for the Savior's descent to earth is now upon him. Jesus is in Galilee, just prior to the Feast of Tabernacles, the most joyous of all of the Jewish Feasts. After resisting the attempt of his brothers to go up to Jerusalem and boldly announce a rebellion against Rome, Jesus goes up quietly in the middle of the feast of Tabernacles (John 7:14). As a companion to this event, the Savior's emotions are described in Luke 9:51 *"As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem."* The KJV says that he "set his face toward Jerusalem." Jesus knows that this departure to Jerusalem will lead him to his final days of ministry and to his death at the hands of sinners.

Jesus spends these months in relative obscurity, maintaining a much lower profile. His arrival in Jericho, just prior to Palm Sunday is from the region of Perea, east of the Jordan (current day Jordan). We read of this in Matthew 19:1.

Jesus stops at JERICHO, the city of palms. Two blind men encounter Jesus there. One is named Bartimaeus, and pleads with Jesus to heal him. Jesus has compassion on Bartimaeus (Luke 18:35-43). While passing through Jericho, Jesus is overwhelmed by the crowds. A tax collector named Zacchaeus does a bold thing and climbs up a tree to get a better look at Jesus. Jesus calls Zacchaeus and confronts him with his sin, and Zacchaeus believes in Jesus (Luke 19:1-10).

From Jericho Jesus walks the 8-9 mile journey through the Judean hills to Bethany, a village just outside of Jerusalem. Passover is approaching, so many other travelers would have been on the same road. We read that Bartimaeus comes along, enjoying his first walk with new eyes! Not only can Bartimaeus see the world around him, he also has new spiritual eyes.

Upon arriving at the home of Lazarus, Mary and Martha, a wonderful dinner is hosted for him (John 12:1-8). At the end of dinner, Mary takes a precious container of nard, a beautiful perfume and anoints the feet of Jesus. Judas protested because he saw money being “wasted” on Jesus - money that could have been put into the coffers so that he could skim off of it, like he did with all of the other money for which he had oversight.

That evening, crowds came from Jerusalem when they heard that Jesus was there (John 12:9-10). They came not only to see Jesus, but also Lazarus who had been raised from the dead. It was a busy and eventful day. Here, in the quiet hills of Bethany, Jesus rests in the home of his close friends. He fully understands that the attention of the crowds does not eliminate the coming necessity of the cross. He knows that the people will turn against him, that he will be offered up on the behalf of many.

On Sunday morning, Jesus departs from Lazarus' home. It is less than 2 miles to Jerusalem. The path will lead UPHILL to the Mount of Olives, then DOWNHILL into the Kidron valley just below the massive walls of the city and Temple Mount. Finally, a short climb up the slopes of the Kidron, into Jerusalem entering at the Eastern Gate, riding on a donkey. From Bethany, it would take approximately 1-2 hours to cross all of the Palm Sunday route.

As Jesus left Bethany, he sent 2 disciples ahead to fulfill the prophesy of Isaiah 62:11 and Zechariah 9:9. This event is described in detail in Matthew, Mark and Luke, and the entrance on a donkey is also mentioned in John's gospel. (Luke 19:28-35, for example). Jesus would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey, the picture of a King peacefully entering a conquered city. Jesus was coming not to bring judgment, but to bring peace. This thought was not understood by the throngs of people.

The disciples did just as Jesus had told them, and found the donkey and her colt just as Jesus described. They returned back and met with Jesus and the rest of the crowd coming from Bethany. About this same time, followers of Jesus from JERUSALEM came out of the great city to meet them (John 12:12-14). From here, the crowd swelled, and attracted great attention. They shouted HOSANNA! (Luke 19:37-38). Their shouts and their praise were familiar quotations from Psalm 118:25, a Messianic Psalm. This messianic passage was recited at all of the gathering feasts in the Temple. It was recited at the slaying of the Paschal Lamb during Passover, it was recited at the pouring of the water offering during the feast of Tabernacles, it was recited during the feast of Pentecost, and at the Feast of Dedication, which we call Hanukkah. This Passage from Psalms 118 was also recited by the residents of Jerusalem as Pilgrims arrived from around the world to worship at these feasts. It was recited antiphonally, with residents sitting up on the city walls, or on their rooftops. It was a joyous cry, but the significance of their words were not lost. They were welcoming a king, one they hoped would lead them in overcoming the Roman oppression, and bring in a day of prosperity.

Just before reaching the crest of the hill and the view of the holy city, the Pharisees demand that Jesus silence his disciples (Luke 19:39-40). Jesus rebukes them that if his followers do not proclaim his worship, the very rocks would cry out. Jesus will be worshiped. It is our duty and privilege to do this. If you don't, you just might be replaced by a rock!

No doubt, it is also at this time that Jesus weeps over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44). The word used here means a deep sobbing. It is a different word than John 11:35, the shortest verse in the English Bible. There, Jesus cried. Here, his heart is broken for the city, as he knows that he will be rejected by his own people. There is tremendous emotion in the city of Jerusalem. Every since King David established this as his throne, the promises given in the Davidic Covenant are focused on this place. Jesus is the rightful heir to David's throne and the only one that can bring peace and prosperity to Jerusalem.

Finally, the journey is complete as Jesus enters Jerusalem. Can you see the people on top of the city walls and on their rooftops trying to get a better look at the source of all the noise? The whole city is stirred up. "Who is this?" they ask (Matthew 21:10-11). Their reply reveals that they were seeking a political reformer, as they declare him "Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth." Their emotional cries serve only to further their condemnation, as they fail to see him as the Son of God.

The day has been long and emotional. All that Jesus does at this point is to enter the temple and look around. There is not enough time in the day to do anything more. He will return tomorrow and throw out the money changers. He will speak more, and perform miracles. But for now, he merely looks around, and then returns to Bethany (Mark 11:11).

Later that week, the religious leaders object to the children's shouts of "Hosanna." Jesus replies by quoting Psalm 8:2 *"From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger."* Just as he told the Pharisees on the Mt of Olives, he replies again that Jesus will be praised (Matthew 21:15-16).

One final passage bears mentioning. It is a reference to Greeks worshiping at the Passover who wanted to see Jesus. His reply to them is that "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (John 12:23-27). He spoke of his death.

The journey that began in Galilee last fall is now complete. Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem, knowing that the hour of his death had come. This was the entire reason that He came to this planet. His own creation. Now, only his sacrifice can save us from our sinful condition.

He did all of this for you and for me.

Palm Sunday Events

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Leaving Jericho, 2 blind men healed (20:29-34)	Leaving Jericho w large crowd, Bartimaeus is sitting by the side of the road and shouts "Jesus, Son of David.." People rebuked Bart. Jesus said "call him." Bart is healed and follows w Jesus on the Road. (10:46-52)	A Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man begged for mercy. Jesus healed him and the people praised God. (18:35-43)	
		Zacchaeus in Jericho (19:1-10)	
(Matt 26:6-13)	(Mark 14:3-4)		Six days before Passover (Sat night) Jesus arrives in Bethany. Dinner at Lazarus home. Mary anoints Jesus. Judas objects. 12:1-8
			Large crowd comes to see Jesus and Lazarus at Bethany. 12:9-10
"As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mt of Olives, Jesus sent 2 disciples" (21:1-3)	"As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mt of Olives, Jesus sent 2 disciples" (11:1-3)	"as he approached Bethphage and Bethany, he sent 2 disciples..." (19:28-31)	
Bring donkey & colt (21:6-7)	Find colt tied to door (11:4-7)	The colt's owners ask, disciples answer "the Lord needs it" (19:32-35)	
		"when he came near the place where the road goes down the Mt of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples joyfully praised God for the miracles" (19:37)	Crowd comes FROM Jerusalem shouting Hosanna! And meets the Bethany crowd (12:12-14)
(21:5) people shout. Quotes Zech 9:9, Isa 62:11	people shout. Quotes Zech 9:9, Isa 62:11 (11:9-10)	people shout. Quotes Zech 9:9, Isa 62:11 (19:38)	
		Pharisees demand that Jesus silence his disciples. Jesus replies "if they keep quiet the stones will cry out" (19:39-40)	
		Weeps over Jerusalem (41-44)	
"This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee" (21:10-11)			
	Entered the Temple and looked around at everything, but it was already late, so he retired to Bethany. (11:11)		

Passion Week - Monday and Tuesday

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
	Leaves Bethany. Curses fig tree. 11:12-14		
Entered the Temple and drove out the money changers (21:12-13)	Drives out money changers. (21:15-18)	Drives out money changers (19:45-46)	
		Teaching daily in the Temple, Priests try to kill him. People cling to his words (19:47-48)	
Blind and lame came to Him and He healed them (21:14)			
Religious leaders object to the children's shouts of "Hosanna" (21:15)			
Jesus replies with Ps 8:2 "from the lips of children you have ordained praise" (21:16)			
left for Bethany (21:17)	"When evening came they went out of the city " (11:19)		
	Return to Jerusalem		
	fig tree is withered (11:22-26)		
			Greeks worshiping at Passover ask to see Jesus. "The hour has come for the son of man to be glorified" (Jn 12:23-27)