



“Big Moments Be Holy”

2 Kings 9:11–13; Zechariah 9:9; Luke 19:29–40

Few moments are bigger than Palm Sunday!

This week we wrap up this series, *Every Moment Holy*. And if we are going to strive to make our meals holy, our families holy, our routines holy, and our thoughts holy, then we are surely going to strive to make the Big Moments holy. This might be tougher than it seems, for the Big Moments can take over.

The excitement and busyness can easily overwhelm

our awareness of God’s presence. Just think of Christmas and you’ll get my point. So, on this Palm Sunday, we will strive to be aware at every turn that we are celebrating God’s gift of a Messiah, the true king who would usher in God’s rule and usher out the age of sin and death.

The crowds are gathered outside the city walls of Jerusalem, at the eastern gate. They are ready and they are pumped! The day has come. At long last, when it seemed that God would never hear their cries, God has sent his Messiah, his Anointed One. This king from the house of David would inaugurate a true God-ruled kingdom and set about to put the world right. At long last, the Jews would be free of their hated Roman oppressors. At long last, the temple would be cleansed of all the money-grubbing, ambitious pagan influences. At long last God’s king was arriving, ready to be welcomed into the city as a king should be welcomed. Hosanna,¹ indeed! As for Jesus, he purposely wraps all these messianic symbols around himself: the colt, the ride through the city gates, the palm branches, the cloaks laid out in front of him, the shouted Hosannas. All of it. And for the first time, Jesus refers to himself as “Lord”. The waiting is over; the time has come.

I bet you like a good party as much as I do. Who doesn’t? And that Sunday in Jerusalem was supposed to be the beginning of the biggest and best party ever -- as big a moment as they come. A celebration of salvation. A freedom party. The arrival of the most amazing gift of all – God’s rescue of Israel from the oppressors and the pagans.

You see, it was Passover Week. Every spring, Jews from all over converged on Jerusalem for this festival. It had been instituted by the LORD God Almighty more than a thousand years before. Ever since, God’s people had remembered and participated in the rescue of the Hebrews from Egypt as they gathered in homes on a spring evening each year.

And this year promised to be the Passover to top all Passovers, for God was about to do his big thing. The time had come. The day had arrived for the keeping of all the promises God had made through his prophets. And it all started with one man from Galilee.

It seemed almost impossible to believe, there had been so many disappointments. But the momentum had been building. Crowds had escorted this man, Jesus was his name, through Jericho, not far from Jerusalem. There, Jesus had brought salvation even to a hated tax collector named Zaccheus. It seemed that everyone, really everyone, was invited to participate in this party.

And now Jesus had arrived at Jerusalem and was preparing to wrap himself in all the messianic symbols available. No one was to misunderstand the meaning of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. . . . but what *did* it really mean?

The arrival

Meredith Wilson’s Broadway musical, *The Music Man*, is set in the Iowa town of River City around the turn of the twentieth century. In one scene, the whole town turns out to await the arrival of the Wells Fargo wagon,

¹ “Hosanna” means “Save us!”

the weekly UPS truck of the day. No telling what treasures were on that wagon. What dreams would be fulfilled when the wagon stopped and unloaded its cargo?

The Jews of Jesus' day were waiting for a Wells Fargo wagon. And what would be on that wagon when it arrived? It would carry a Messiah, who would in all power and might and wonder and glory throw out the pagan oppressors and cleanse the temple, restoring it to a proper dwelling place of God. The wagon would carry all the nations of the world who would stream to Jerusalem to acknowledge and worship the LORD God. The wagon would carry all those who had died and would now be resurrected, reembodyed to new life. Sons would embrace their long-dead grandmothers and mothers would meet their children who had died during birth. There would be no more tears, except of joy. There would be no death and no mourning, no wars and violence, no hatred or arrogance, no privilege nor division. All would live in peace, enjoying a renewed and restored land, worshipping without end the one who had made them and who was now making all things new. That was the wagon the crowds thought they were welcoming on that Sunday in Jerusalem. The work was over; the party was just about to get rolling.

Of course, five days later, all those expectations had been dashed against a rock called Golgotha. Most turned away, hoping to pick the right wagon another time. Even after the Sunday morning of the empty tomb, only a few believed that they had welcomed God's wagon after all.

But those few, Jesus' disciples, had met the risen Jesus. He had given them work to do. To be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. To make disciples. To baptize people into a newly born community that would not simply wait for God to finish his work, but to accomplish work of their own. They were to build for the kingdom of God. They were to live out the reality of their claim that, in Christ, they had been reborn. It was as if they were to found and then grow colonies of a new human race, a chosen people, a holy nation.

The shape of these Spirit-of-Christ-empowered new colonies was clear. They were to pray together, to learn together, to worship together, to share the Lord's meal together. They were to feed and clothe, to ensure that not a single person among them was in need of the basics. They were to be aware of God's presence with them in every moment. As best they could, they were to enact heaven-on-earth in all that they did – this was how they were to do life together.

You and I may be living 2,000 years later, but the mission is unchanged. We are to be disciple-making witness to the living Lord. We too are to feed and clothe, to love our neighbor, recognizing that our neighbors include those we dislike or even hate or are even our sworn enemies. Jesus came for all and his kingdom is for all who will respond to his invitation.

In Christ, we experience the fullness of God's eternity – here and now. This is one way we "out live" our lives. But in another sense, we out live our lives by living outwardly, embracing the world around us and all those who share it with us. Palm Sunday is not an ending at all, but always and ever, a vibrant new beginning. A holy beginning.