

Welcome to Germantown Church of God, in Cascade, MD. I am glad that you are joining me today for this Video Message. Thank you.

Tomorrow is Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week. Our observance of this special season culminates next Sunday as we celebrate Easter, the day of Christ's Resurrection from the dead. This is a season when we are used to gathering together with a Church Community for special times of Worship and Remembrance. On Palm Sunday we traditionally gather together to celebrate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. We join the crowds of Worshipers who sang Hosanna, waving our Palm leaves in celebration of Jesus. Thursday of this week is Holy Thursday, or Maundy Thursday, when we would traditionally gather to remember Jesus' last supper with His disciples. We would observe the Ordinances of Washing one another's feet and receiving the Bread and the Cup in remembrance of Him. On Friday – Good Friday – we would gather to remember Jesus' crucifixion, His death on the cruel cross. And then on Easter Sunday we would traditionally gather for a Sunrise service, or a special Easter Sunday time of Worship to celebrate God's victory over death and the grave. And then we would likely gather with family and friends for a joyous time of fellowship and feasting. But this year, we cannot do those things. We understand why. We understand the importance of not going out, staying away from large gatherings of people, in order to protect ourselves and to protect others. We understand, but we grieve the loss of those traditions for this year. But remember, Easter is not cancelled. Jesus is still alive! Perhaps we are given the opportunity to reflect more deeply on the significance of the events of Jesus' life during that last week of His life, to reflect on His cross, and to reflect on the significance of His resurrection. In your grief and sadness over what we are losing out on this year, don't miss the opportunity to discover again, or discover for the first time how much God has done for us to restore us to relationship with Him. Take some time this year to read through the gospels – especially focusing on the passages that tell about the events of this week in Jesus life. Remember the challenge I shared a few weeks ago – that we commit ourselves to come out of this better people, and stronger in our faith and relationship with the Lord.

I have a couple of pieces of information to share with you before we look at our text for today.

- Just a reminder that you can access information about our Church on Facebook page (Germantown Church of God), and on our Church Website (www.germantowncog.org). And you can access these video messages on Youtube, on our Church's Youtube channel.
- We have begun a Thursday evening Conference Call, by telephone. At 7:00, you can dial in and be connected to a call, joining other friends. We cannot see each other, but we can hear each other's voices. We can check in and pray together. To get the telephone number to call, please call me, email me, text me and I will give you the number and an Access code that you will need to participate. Please don't feel like you are bothering me by calling the parsonage! I'm staying in just as you are, and will be available to answer you call.
- This Thursday is Maundy Thursday. We cannot be together physically, but we can connect by telephone. We will observe the ordinance of the Lord's Supper as a part of that Thursday evening call. Have some bread and juice available near the phone and we will partake of the bread and cup together. (If you don't have juice, you may use another beverage).
- I do want to thank those of you who have mailed or dropped off offerings to the Church during this time when we cannot meet together. If you practice regular giving to support the work of the Church, you can continue to do so during this time. Please mail your tithes and offerings to the Church and they will be processed as they usually are. Thank you.

Prayer

Scripture Reading

Matthew 21:1-11

I want to look with you today at this passage which tells us about Jesus' Triumphal Entry to Jerusalem. Some of us are familiar with the stories in the gospels that tell us about Jesus' final days before His crucifixion, death and resurrection. We may have read the accounts ourselves, heard the stories in Sunday School, seen the stories played out in movies. Even though we are familiar with them, and we hear them read to us every year

during this season, we are drawn to them again, to think about their significance and what they might mean for us, and even more, what they might mean for us in this challenging season that we are currently going through. There are a couple of things to note in this story.

More than a Donkey Ride: The story begins with Jesus sending two of His associates to fetch a donkey and her colt. We don't know all of the details of Jesus' life on earth, but we generally assume that Jesus primarily got around on foot. He walked everywhere. We don't read anywhere else of him riding a donkey. Is Jesus now so tired that he needs to ride? That would not be unexpected after all He has been through. **BUT, this is more than a Donkey Ride.** The Old Testament prophet Zechariah, wrote about a King riding on a donkey.

*Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!
Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!
See, your king comes to you,
righteous and victorious,
lowly and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zech 9:9)*

As Matthew is recording this story, he informs us that Jesus donkey ride is actually a fulfillment of this prophetic word of Zechariah. **For Jesus this is more than a Donkey ride.** It is a **public, declaration** that He was in fact the Messiah-King that God's people had been waiting for. Throughout His ministry, Jesus has instructed people that He helped not to tell others who He was. When people wanted to make Him King, He withdrew. **But now the secret is out** (as one commentator states). Jesus is letting the world know that he is a King, an Authoritative Ruler. If you continue reading in this 21st chapter, we see Jesus acting authoritatively, He presents Himself as King. He moves to the Temple, and drives out those who were using this place of prayer as a market and money exchange. He enters into debate with the leaders about who He was, rebuking them for not recognizing Him as the divinely appointed King. His rebuke of the leaders includes two parables – the parable of the 2 sons and the parable of the tenants – which further demonstrates to them His position as the anointed king. Jesus is presenting Himself as the One God promised to send, to be the Ruler of God's people.

He is presenting Himself as an alternative to the leadership of the religious leaders. He is an alternative to the military rule of the Romans. He is giving the world an alternative. Jesus' action is really a defiant act. In the Jewish world, the religious leaders believe that they were the final authority. They knew best. They were to be respected. In the Roman World, Caesar alone is King. He is god in the flesh. But now Jesus is challenging the authority of the Jewish leaders, and the authority of Caesar and declaring, "I Am Your King!"

Hosanna! There were a variety of response to Jesus' actions here. The religious leaders scoffed. Luke tells us that they told Jesus to tell His followers to be quiet. I'm sure there were some who did not engage. They watched, but did not join in the celebration. There was joy and celebration. Jesus' followers were thrilled. Finally Jesus was stepping into the role that they had expected. He was the ruler and was about to set things right. They did not understand yet that Jesus is a **Different Kind of King.** He is not coming as a Political king, challenging the Roman government. He is not coming as a Warrior King who will wage war with the enemies of God's people. He is a Gentle and Humble King. His rule and reign would be characterized by righteousness, rather than violence and corruption. While they were yet to learn that Jesus' Kingdom was not of this world, we must not miss the significance of their shouts of **Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!**

Hosanna! The literal meaning of the word Hosanna is **Help, or Save, I Pray!** The word is used in Psalm 118, where it is translated **"O Lord, save us;" (118:25).** It came to be a Liturgical word, that was used in worship. It is a word that expresses a longing, for God to step in and intervene with Help and Salvation. As Jesus' followers celebrated His ride into Jerusalem, they were convinced that this was the moment when God was going to deliver, and save them. They were convinced that Jesus was the instrument by which God would Save and Help them. He would restore things to the ways they were in Israel's golden days. But, Jesus does not present Himself in that way. His Help and Salvation would come in other ways. Some of them never got that and they were disappointed an abandoned Him. Some who shouted praise to Him on this day, may have

been among those who shouted **Crucify Him**, a few days later. His followers eventually understood, and recognized Him as their Spiritual ruler and King.

As we think about the response of Jesus' followers on this day, who are pledging their allegiance to Him as their King, we must understand the significance of that. They were living in a day when corruption among religious leaders was rampant. They were living in a time when an enemy nation was ruling over them. I'm sure that as they are walking with Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem, there was a heavy presence of Roman soldiers ready to move in and bring to an end their rebellious celebration. They were living in a world where someone else had presented Himself as ultimate authority and Ruler – Caesar. It did not look like Jesus was in control. And yet they sang, and prayed and shouted to their King and were ready to live under His authority. It always takes courage and faith to recognize a new King when it looks like someone or something else is still in charge. It took some time, but eventually Jesus' followers understood that His Kingdom is not of this world. They learned to recognize that He is King and He is the ultimate authority, even when they could not see evidence of that. **That's what following Jesus is all about.** As the community of believers grew and expanded, they continued to live in a world where someone else was King and Ruler. But Jesus followers knew better. They chose to live their lives under His authority and rule, no matter what that might cost them.

We know that we are living in a turbulent time. Things are out of order, or what we have come to understand as normal. Corona Virus is a deadly enemy. The number of people who are sick from the virus, and who are dying from the virus is growing exponentially every day. Our lives have been thrown into turmoil. People are fearful of sickness. They are fearful about the future. Retirement savings have taken a hit. But in the midst of all of this, we are challenged by Jesus' followers to affirm together that Jesus is our Ruler and King. He is in control. Our best choice in this world is to place ourselves in subjection to Him, and allow Him to control our lives.

Let me close this message with the affirmation of faith that Paul writes in **Philippians 2:6-11**.

Invitation – Trust Jesus today. Invite Him to be your Savior. Prayer

Benediction -