

Sermon Draft

Text: Isaiah 50:4–9a

Sermon: Forward Focused

Our text for this Palm Sunday is our Old Testament reading from Isaiah. Isaiah summarizes the whole life and ministry of God's Servant in six verses. We hear that God's Servant learns (v 4b), he teaches (v 4a), he is obedient (v 5), he prepares to contend with his adversary (v 8), he suffers (v 6), and he is confident in his vindication (v 8). The Servant goes forth to preach and to die.

That is the ministry of Jesus summed, and it is the purpose of his advent among us. Why does our God come lowly into Jerusalem, seated on a donkey's colt? To contend with our adversary the devil in obedience to his Father's will, to suffer, and to die.

Palm Sunday marks the beginning of this, the holiest of weeks of the Church Year, the week we celebrate Christ's Passion, death, and resurrection for us and for our salvation.

Today as Christ comes to us, we mingle our songs and our shouts of praise with those of the first pilgrims who welcomed our coming King: ***“Hosanna!”*** we cry, ***“Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”***

But who is King Jesus anyway? What kind of a king is he? And what has he come to do? We look at him, and we see a strange king, no doubt, a lowly king. Lowly he rides. Humble, mounted on a donkey. What king comes riding in like this?

But Jesus is not like other kings. Jesus hasn't come to conquer any nations, to ascend any golden thrones, to live and reign as the mighty ruler of some spectacular earthly kingdom. He's come to die. Jesus hasn't come to be served, but to serve, to give his life as a ransom for many. This is who he is: The Father's humble Servant, on a mission. And that mission is to die.

So, lowly he comes; obedient he comes; humble he comes, with his face set toward the cross, our Servant-King, trusting that his Father will deliver him from his foes. Who is Jesus? He is the Father's Servant, come to do his will. He's headed to the cross. And now, there's no looking back.

Jesus Sets His Face toward the Cross as his Father's obedient Servant, trusting that in all things his Father will deliver him from his foes.

In the Old Testament reading we hear the willing voice of the Father's Servant speaking. He is God's servant, a disciple and a learner, a student. Hopefully we all can identify with this description for are we not all God's servants serving him and those around us and are we not disciples of Jesus living and sharing the Gospel in our lives. And it is said the day we stop learning is the day we die.

The servant in our text is also a willing servant who knows and trust that God helps him throughout his journey. He knows that he will not be put to shame. As long as we hold onto God's hand and let him be our guide and strength we have nothing to fear, we have no worries.

God's servant has come for a purpose, He has come to preach, **"to sustain with a word him who is weary"** (v 4), to comfort sinners with the good news of salvation. He shares God's Word and through that Word comforts and enlightens those who hear the wonderful message of the Gospel.

The world doesn't want God's servants to share the message of Christ and His Gospel. And they will do anything to impede and even stop the sharing and spreading of Christianity. But the servant of God tells us he gave his back to those who strike and his cheeks to those who pull out the beard.

It's tuff sometimes to take the ridicule and abuse that Satan and the world dish out to God's children, his servants, his hands, voice and feet here upon the earth. But the servant tells us he did not hide his face from the disgrace and spitting. He stood up against his adversaries in the time of trial.

As we enter Holy Week we of course picture Jesus do these very things. He will endure their abuse, as they whip and beat him and as they shame him and spit on him and on Good Friday nail him to the cross and kill him. Why does he do it? For all this, he will die. This is why He came.

He is faithful and will submit to the suffering and even death in willing obedience to God. He knows that God will vindicate him so in perfect faith he focuses forward on the mission. He will go willingly and confidently into that great contest with his adversary. And he will never look back.

Now indeed we see the Servant coming on Palm Sunday. A lowly servant, riding on a colt, the foal of a donkey and yet a King, the Christ, the Son of David. Even more, he is the Son of God. Paul says he is the one who left his Father's throne and emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men (Philippians 2:7).

It is now coming into focus, why he's come, to preach and teach. His earthly ministry is but for three years but all the while Jesus is fulfilling the purpose of his ministry all according to His Heavenly Father's plan. A plan that yes, would lead to death. This week we will witness his trial, his Passion, his suffering and his death. We see his faithfulness, following the road that leads to Calvary. As the perfect man of perfect faith and obedience to God he goes forward focused on what lies ahead never turning back.

This Servant who died for us on Good Friday, is the very Son of God who we hear praying in the garden, ***"Thy will be done."*** And realize by faith that this bloodied one is God's Suffering Servant. We hear his voice cry out from the cross, even though forsaken, ***"My God, my God!"*** Yes, Jesus obeys the Father's will and accepts the horrible suffering as the perfect, trusting, faithful, obedient Servant of God.

So then, why has the Servant come? To die. He came to suffer condemnation we deserved for sin, as the Lamb who takes the sin of the world takes away our sin. To make us righteous. Through faith in his sacrifice for us, we are justified and have heaven. And to rise. On Easter, Jesus is vindicated as our Lord of life—just as he had trusted the Father would do. That is the assurance that we who are in him by our Baptisms will also be vindicated, raised again to life.

On Palm Sunday, we raise our voices in praise to the Father's obedient Servant, going to the cross to fulfill the Father's will and give his life for our salvation. We cry, "**Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**" No looking back for him!

Hosanna, that!

Amen