

PALM SUNDAY 2026

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements

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Scripture: Matthew 21: 1-17

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"²¹ When they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them."⁴ This took place to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet:

*⁵ "Say to the daughter of Zion,
'Behold your King is coming to you,
Gentle, and mounted on a donkey,
Even on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"*

⁶ The disciples went and did just as Jesus had instructed them, ⁷ and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid their coats on them; and He sat on the coats. ⁸ Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road. ⁹ The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting,

*"Hosanna to the Son of David;
Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord;
Hosanna in the highest!"*

¹⁰ When He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, "Who is this?" ¹¹ And the crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee."

*¹² And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. ¹³ And He *said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you are making it a robbers' den."*

*¹⁴ And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. ¹⁵ But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He had done, and the children who were shouting in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they became indignant ¹⁶ and said to Him, "Do You hear what these children are saying?" And Jesus *said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies You have prepared praise for Yourself'?" ¹⁷ And He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there."*

In the passage that we just read, there are three themes that stand out and invite our attention:

1. The knowledge that Jesus had of the Word of God, of scripture.
2. The nature of the crowd, and how easily they could say 'Hosanna' one day and then a week later, say, 'Crucify Him.'
3. His obedience to the Word, how whatever the Word required, however difficult it was going to be, Jesus was committed to doing it.

Let's look at these three areas one by one and see if we can draw from them a thought for this Palm Sunday, one that will help us to align with God's holy will for us.

1. JESUS' KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORD OF GOD.

In Matthew 21, we read about the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. It's interesting that we first encounter His very unusual instruction to His disciples to go and bring a colt for Him to ride on. We recognize that this was not random, but a clear fulfillment of God's prophecy.

What stands out here is how clearly Jesus knew what He had to do. He knew from prophecy that He was to enter on a donkey and He intentionally ensured that this would happen. So He gives His disciples what might have seemed like a strange and even questionable instruction. But the certainty with which He spoke was enough to send them. And exactly what He said would happen, happened. They found the colt just as He had described and brought it back to Him.

There's something deeply instructive that we find in this passage. When Jesus knew the will of the Father, He acted with complete clarity, certainty, and authority. There was no hesitation, no second-guessing; only obedience and purpose.

His reliance on the Word of God was so total and complete. Which must make us ask ourselves: How reliant are we on God's Word? Do we use His Word to fashion our thoughts, shape our decisions, live the kind of lives that God wants us to live? How does the Word of God influence each one of us? And when we look at the Word of God, there are so many wonderful themes that come out of it.

- "Your Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light to my path."
It's such a beautiful, beautiful picture. What would it mean for us in real life? A lamp to my feet doesn't show the whole journey. It only shows the next step. A light to my path gives direction and shows where I am heading.

That's exactly how the Word works in our lives. It guides our daily decisions, and it makes us live lives of faith as we put one step in front of the other. And in moments when we are unsure how to respond, what to say or what to do, the Word brings clarity. It checks our attitudes, our reactions and our choices and shows us the next right step.

- The Word doesn't just guide, it also guards. The psalmist says, "I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You."
The Word creates a kind of an inner boundary. Even when no one is watching, it speaks within us. It slows us down before we can act. It gives us truth to resist temptation, just as Jesus did when He said three times: It is written, it is written, it is written.
- The Word also transforms.
Romans tells us that we are transformed by the renewing of our minds. The more we engage in scripture, the more our thinking begins to change, our priorities shift, our responses change. We begin to see things not just from our perspective, but from a godly perspective.
- The Word also equips us.
Scripture says it equips us for every good work. That means when life demands something from us – wisdom, patience, courage – we're not empty. The Word has already been preparing us. It gives us what we need in the moment.

- The Word searches us. Hebrews tells us that the Word of God discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart. It's like a mirror; it shows us who we really are. It reveals what we might otherwise ignore, not to condemn us in any way, but to bring us back in alignment with God.

So, the Word of God guides us, it guards us, it transforms us, equips us, and searches us. That's why Jesus used scripture so often in His life, and so trusted scripture every day. Which is why He walked with such clarity. He did not guess His way through life. He was not reacting to circumstances. He was anchored in the Word of God.

And because of that, He knew exactly what He had to do, and how to do it, as we see in this text. That becomes deeply important for us. Because, if we are anchored in the Word, we too will be shaped by the Word and not by everything else that is around us. But if we are not anchored in the Word, then the things of the world will begin to shape us.

I was thinking about the way Jesus used the Word and how the Word is used in scripture. But so clearly, when tempted in the wilderness, He said, "It is written. It is written. It is written." It made me think: How often do we say those words when faced with temptation? How often do we rebuff the evil one by just these words – It is written.

Psalm 1 says, "The man who meditates on the Word is like a tree planted by streams of water. It will grow, it will bear fruit, it will thrive." So the Word anchors us when culture shifts. It keeps us steady when values around us are changing. And instead of drifting with what is popular, we remain grounded in what is true.

So, that's the first thing that Jesus used in this particular scenario. He knew the Word. He knew how He needed to be in alignment with the Word. He gave instructions to His disciples in accordance with that Word, and then fulfilled that Word.

2. THE RESPONSE OF THE CROWD.

In many ways, what made this a triumphal entry was not merely Jesus riding into Jerusalem, but how the crowds responded to Him. They spread their garments before Him, laid branches on the road and shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Without that response, it might simply have been a man riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. The crowds and their response to Jesus made a visible difference to that entire event. And yet, when they were asked, "Who is this?" they replied, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee." There was recognition, but there was limitation as well.

And, if you look closely at the passage, the real focus is really the crowd. Because what made it this triumphal entry was their voices, their actions and their celebration. But here's what we must not miss. Within a week, the same crowd would shout, "Crucify Him, and give us Barabbas." The same crowd that shouted, "Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord," would shout, "Crucify Him." Nothing had changed about Jesus. What changed was the crowd.

That tells us something very important about the nature of crowds.

- Crowds are emotionally-driven. They're not deeply rooted. They respond to what they feel in the moment, not necessarily what is true. They are fickle. What they celebrate today, they can reject tomorrow. They are driven by herd instinct most of the time. People follow what others are saying rather than thinking deeply for themselves.

- Crowds are easily influenced. A few strong voices can shift the direction of thousands, as we have seen throughout history. And often, crowds operate with shallow understanding. When asked, “Who is this?” they said, “the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth.” Recognition, but not understanding.

And if we are honest, we see that same pattern today in our own lives and in our own situations and circumstances. We may not stand on the streets of Jerusalem, but we are part of crowds every day, especially in the world of social media. Today, crowds form in hours. Opinion spreads in minutes. Someone is celebrated one day, and rejected the next. And people react without full understanding. Following trends without asking if those trends are true. And often go with the loudest, most vocal voice rather than a voice that is right. We don’t even need a week anymore to change opinions. We can do it in a few hours.

And if we are not careful, we too can become part of that same kind of crowd. Responding, reacting, shifting without being anchored in truth.

But then, we look at Jesus in the midst of all this noise. He is completely different. He is not shaped by the crowd. He is not carried by public opinion. He is not reacting. He is rooted, completely rooted in the Word. He knows exactly what He must do because He knows the Word of God. He knows the will of the Father.

And so He walks with clarity. He walks with certainty. He walks with authority.

- While the crowd is unstable, Jesus is steady.
- While the crowd is reactive, Jesus is very intentional.
- While the crowd is loud, Jesus is anchored in truth.

That is the contrast before us. the crowd did not know enough to stand firm. And so they fell. Jesus knew the truth. he stood firm even when the crowd turned against Him.

Which brings us to the question that we ought to ask ourselves. How much of what we do is influenced by voices around us, by loud voices, voices that seem to be truthful and yet are not? today, where truth is so difficult to discern, how do we find truth? everything seems to be relevant. Everything seems to be: My truth is true for me; your truth is true for you. There is no absolute truth. And in a world like that, how do we walk in truth?

I was talking after the first service, saying that Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” in other words, He carries absolute truth with Him.

Beloved, ask yourself this question: In a world where it is so difficult to find truth, and we know that Jesus is truth and has truth, it seems that the only way to discern truth in the world is to allow Him to be made visible. The only way! Because He is truth personified. And that makes what we need to do so important in sharing that truth about Him, so that He can bring truth.

3. THE AUTHORITY WITH WHICH JESUS CLEANSSED THE TEMPLE.

He drove out those who were buying and selling, overturned tables, confronted what was taking place there. I don’t know if you ever thought about it, but He was just one man against many people there. one person, two people could have turned against Him and thrown Him out. And yet they didn’t. Because of the authority with which He acted, and the authority with which He spoke, brought conviction rather than retaliation from the people.

He declared from scripture again: My house shall be called the house of prayer. It was not merely a statement. It carried divine weight. Because He was drawing from Isaiah 56, when God declared His desire that His house would be a place of prayer for all nations. Then He added on Jeremiah 7:11, but you have made it a den of thieves. This was not just correction; it was a prophetic confrontation. He was standing on the authority of God's Word, aligning Himself fully with what the Father had already declared.

So His authority was not self-assertion, not personality, not physical strength. It was a clear alignment with the will of God. He wasn't acting independently. He was acting as one who knew the Father's will.

Beloved, that's the truth for us. When we stand aligned with the will of the Father, there's a spiritual authority that accompanies us that is beyond human strength or human numbers. It's an authority and strength that comes from the living God. That's what we see here. One man, but backed with the authority of heaven. One man, one voice, but carrying the weight of scripture. That's why the crowd does not overpower Him. Because what they encounter is not just a man confronting them, but being confronted by truth itself.

So, true spiritual authority doesn't come from position or volume or force. It comes from knowing God's Word, being aligned with it, and having the courage to act on it. Beloved, when we learn to live that way, even in difficult or opposing situations, then we don't stand alone. we stand in the authority of what God has already said and spoken.

So for us today, maybe you came in here this morning struggling with something that God is inviting you to be a part of, something that you feel is too costly, something you feel is too lonely, something that you feel is too risky, or it's too personal. You're hesitating, pushing it away. And maybe God is inviting you this morning saying: In My strength, through My presence and My authority, it will be well.

So, as we bring it all together this morning, let's just look at these three areas and see what we can draw from it to take with us.

- Jesus knew the Word.
- The crowd did not understand the truth.
- Jesus obeyed the Word regardless of the cost.

I believe that this is our clear takeaway. When we know the Word and stand on it, we will not be swayed by the crowd, and we will have strength to obey God no matter the cost. When we know the Word of God and stand on it, we will not be swayed by the voices that are around us. we will have the strength to obey God no matter what the cost.

Shall we pray?

Heavenly Father, this is Your Word for us this morning. and I pray, Lord, that we would seize the day, seize the moment, and that we will do what You are inviting us to do. Inspire us, encourage us, and help us to see that when we stand in, and on, Your word, we are strengthened by it, and the crowds with different other voices will not overpower us. In Your name, Lord Jesus, we pray.
Amen.
