

Palm Sunday Sermon
The Rev. Megan Dembi

Easter Sunday will soon be here, and it's hard to miss the signs. Easter candy has been in stores for over a month. Easter bunnies have been roaming malls so that kids can take their picture with them. And people are stuffing eggs in preparation for egg hunts. With the excitement of everything that comes with Easter constantly reminding us of its coming, it's sometimes easy to forget that we are still in the season of Lent—and not only Lent, but Holy Week. Today is Palm Sunday, the first day of Holy Week, the last week that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ walked on this earth in his mortal body. And as tempting as it may be to mentally skip over this week and spring right into Easter, doing that would be doing a great disservice to our faith. Because more than being about candy and bunnies and eggs, Easter is about faith, and hope, and everlasting life. On Easter Sunday we will celebrate our Lord's resurrection from the dead. And if we were to skip ahead to this joyful moment, we would not hear the full story of *why* God incarnate came to this earth.

As we spoke about last week, Holy Week can seem kind of depressing. Because of this, it can be even more tempting to jump from today straight into Easter. But Holy Week gives us the opportunity to put the events of the resurrection into a larger context of our faith.

And this begins with the events that occurred on what we now call Palm Sunday, the Sunday nearly 2000 years ago when Christ entered into Jerusalem met by crowds throwing palms along his path and shouting "Hosanna! Save us!" And Christ, did in fact enter into Jerusalem in order to save these people—and not just these people shouting in the crowds, but all people, and the entire world. Though Jesus had warned his disciples of his impending death, the crowds would not have known that Christ entered into Jerusalem knowing he would soon be killed, and that it would be by his death that salvation would be offered to all. Christ willingly entered into the city in which he knew he would be put to death in order to put into motion God's plan of salvation. This fate was not inflicted on him from by God, because Christ himself was God the Son incarnate, and God the Son, God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit were all at work in this plan. Christ did not enter into Jerusalem thinking he would die because of religious persecution or political injustice, but to fulfill the mysterious and miraculous plan for salvation that the One Triune God had created.

And yes, Palm Sunday has evolved so that the entire story of Holy Week is briefly told, so that those who do not or cannot attend Holy Week services do not celebrate the glorious resurrection at Easter after only having heard of Christ's triumphant entrance into Jerusalem.

But the main point that we should take away from Palm Sunday, this first day in Holy Week, is this—the very same people who joyfully greeted Christ as he entered into Jerusalem would, in just a few days on Good Friday, fervently shout for Christ to be condemned to death. Palm Sunday reminds us that Christ came into Jerusalem willingly to meet his fate in order for God's plan for salvation to be fulfilled, but it also reminds us that Christ was betrayed by his own followers—condemned to death by the very people he came to save. And though we ourselves were not physically present during these events, Palm Sunday reminds us that we, too, are complicit in the events that led to Christ's death. If we were able to overcome our sinful desires and follow God's commands we would not need a savior. Yet there is not one of us who is righteous, not a one. And so we greet Christ as he enters into Jerusalem, pleading with Christ to save us, but as the events of Holy Week unfold, we learn exactly what the salvation Christ offers to us will cost. Amen.