

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Palm/Passion Sunday — March 24, 2024

*“Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress;
my eye is wasted from grief; my soul and my body also.”*

– Psalm 31:9 –

Jesus knew long before He arrived in Jerusalem that it would be His last visit to the beloved city. He warned the disciples and the crowds that the Son of Man had to be lifted up, persecuted, and killed. Jesus knew the time was coming when the world would turn away from Him. I wonder how it felt, then, to arrive in Jerusalem to a cheering crowd. We describe the Palm Sunday parade as a triumphal entry into Jerusalem, but was it a triumph to Jesus? Did He embrace their praise? He knew that in just days that same crowd would be shouting for His crucifixion.

Jesus loved His people. He wanted the best for them, but it must have been difficult even for Him to accept the cross. There was so much left to do. There were still sick people to be healed and poor who needed encouragement. There were many who had not heard the promise of God’s Kingdom. His disciples still did not understand. The donkey ride into Jerusalem was part of the plan, but must have seemed premature. How could He leave them now? They weren’t ready to continue on their own.

The psalmist knew the tug of war that goes on in the hearts of people struggling to be obedient to God’s will. Even Jesus prayed that His Father might find another way. After all, how could death be the answer? Nevertheless, Jesus did not listen to the demands of the crowd. He did not save Himself; He obeyed the will of His Father. God’s promises could only be complete through death, the final enemy. The amazing grace of God was realized through the most incredible act of sacrifice: the beloved Son, the Priest-King, offered Himself as the Lamb to be slain for the sake of God’s people.

Jesus accepted the praise of the crowds on Palm Sunday, but just days later He also accepted the anguish and loneliness of the garden and the cross. Through it all, He trusted in God. He willingly died on the cross to fulfill the promise of God’s unfailing love for His people. We are delivered by His blood from the greatest enemy: death. By His grace we are forgiven and through Him we have life in His Kingdom forever.

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