

# Anticipating the Cross



Zech 9:9-12 Psalm 118:19-26 Matt 21:1-12

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PALM SUNDAY

You know how it is when you **anticipate**<sup>1</sup> something? There is an *eagerness* for something to happen; it's almost like you *can't wait* for it to happen. Perhaps a vacation, a wedding, a birth of a child, or a special occasion. In the Gospels, you could say that Jesus is **anticipating** His cross; He knows that it's coming, and He knows that this is why He came into the world. Jesus refers to the cross as:

- His “Glory”
- His “Hour”
- His “Food”
- His “Cup”
- His “Baptism”

When you read through the Gospels, Jesus is **anticipating** His suffering and death on the cross.

Jesus knows that He will suffer and die terribly, but He also knows that this is how our salvation is earned. All the **metaphors of salvation** come together at the cross. For instance:

- ✓ This is how the **Lamb of God** will take away the sins of the world
- ✓ This is where the **Passover Lamb of God** will be sacrificed
- ✓ This is where the **Good Shepherd** will lay down His life for the sheep

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<sup>1</sup> Anticipate is from the Latin ‘acted in advance’ → from *anticipare*, based on *ante*-‘before’ + *capere* ‘take’. It’s the idea ‘to take something into consideration’ and ‘mention something before the proper time’.

- ✓ This is where Jesus will pay the **redemption price** to *buy us back*
- ✓ This is where Jesus will be **judged “guilty!”** for us and in our place
- ✓ This is where **Satan’s head will be crushed** and His power over us broken
- ✓ This is where the **Wrath of God** will be poured so that you receive the grace of God

All the **metaphors of salvation** come together at the cross. No wonder Jesus anticipated His Cross --- He came into the world to fulfill all these things.

The Palm Sunday celebration captures that **anticipation**. Jesus is orchestrating the entire event on Palm Sunday: He is arranging the parade into Jerusalem to specifically say that He is the Old Testament Messiah that has been promised; He is the humble King who is entering Jerusalem in **triumph**. Jesus’ **triumph** will not come by destroying the Roman Empire; Jesus’s **triumph** will come when He suffers and dies on a cross for us and for our salvation<sup>2</sup>. **Palm Sunday is part of the excitement and anticipation.**

Even for us today, there is an excitement in the air on Palm Sunday, as we wave our palms, and we sing the great Palm Sunday hymns, and we join with the faithful in the Holy Christian Church and shout “**Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord!**”

One of the things that Jesus is **anticipating**, and can't wait for, is to cry out **IT IS FINISHED** in the darkness while He dies on the cross.

These words **IT IS FINISHED** are the cry of victory<sup>3</sup> that 4,000 years of Old Testament history have been waiting for! At the cross, salvation has been won; the work is accomplished; forgiveness has been earned for all people!

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<sup>2</sup> In the Gospels, one of the interesting things that happens is that the final journey to the cross is punctuated by high points, so that you are to think like this: The Transfigured Son of God, who healed the blind and raised the dead, who entered into Jerusalem as the triumphant, Messianic Son of David, is the **SAME ONE** who is brutally crucified for us and our salvation. The Gospels never want us to forget that the Jesus on the cross is the same Jesus who is the Transfigured Son of God, who healed the blind and raised the dead, and who entered into Jerusalem as the triumphant, Messianic Son of David. God died for you; God is your Savior!

<sup>3</sup> “It is clear from Matthew and Mark that just before Jesus breathed His last, He “cried out again in a **loud** voice” (Matthew 27:50, cf. Mark 15:37). John gives us the content of this loud cry: “It is finished!” Those who

These words **IT IS FINISHED** mean that the work was finished on the cross, and it remains finished forever<sup>4</sup>!

These words **IT IS FINISHED** exclude any work that we might do for our own salvation. Salvation is God's work in your life, 100%. As conservative Lutheran Christians we say that we are saved by **grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.**

That means that we have no role whatsoever in our own salvation. We do not assist Jesus, we do not accept him into our hearts, we do not make a decision and choose Jesus, and we do not do a series of good things to merit salvation. Forgiveness -- *and everything that comes with it* -- is a gift that God freely gives to you; and with that gift even comes the ability to believe it! Faith comes by hearing and hearing of the Word of God. God the Holy Spirit gives you the ability and the power to believe the promise of the Gospel<sup>5</sup>.

The promise of the Gospel is that your sins are forgiven because of the Lord Jesus Christ. You hear that promise, that Gospel, and the Holy Spirit opens your heart and eyes so that you know the promise is true, and that you are

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are defeated go out with a whimper, but the victor announces his victory loudly and broadly: "It is finished!" The victory shout of Jesus echoed across the small flat hilltop and to the world beyond. It is finished!" [http://www.jesuswalk.com/7-last-words/6\\_finished.htm](http://www.jesuswalk.com/7-last-words/6_finished.htm)

<sup>4</sup> The Greek word for "It is Finished" is *Tetelestai*, and in John 19:30, Jesus uses it in the perfect tense. The perfect tense indicates that the action has been done and it's effect remains ongoing. Jesus's sacrifice is complete, and its power and benefit remains in effect forever. [Theologically, the effect, power, and benefit of Jesus's death is not only for those who follow Jesus, but also for those who came before Him!] He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world -- regardless of *when* someone lives. For both Old Testament and New Testament times, He is the only sacrifice for sins that God will accept. The Son of God is the Savior of ALL PEOPLE!

<sup>5</sup> This is where the "Means of Grace" come into your life. The Means (Word and Sacrament) bring you both the message and meaning of the Gospel and the power to believe the Gospel. They are "Holy" because they belong to God and it's how He has chosen to work: **Holy** Scripture, **Holy** Baptism, and **Holy** Communion. All three teach you about Christ, and have the power to create/nurture faith. This is how you came to faith, and how you remain in faith throughout your life --- there are no other ways. God has not revealed a 4<sup>th</sup> way. Our duty is to continually use the Means of Grace He has provided: this is how you "Abide in Christ" throughout your life! (Note also, unbelief is not God's work, but man's → when he stops using God's Means to nurture faith.)

included. That's faith. That's trusting God's Word. That's believing the promise of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The words **IT IS FINISHED** exclude any work that we might do for our own salvation. We are saved by

**grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.**

**Palm Sunday** amplifies the anticipation of the cross. This week is Holy Week, and everything now leads to the cross. In five days we will gather again in darkness to remember the death of the Son of God. This week Jesus will

- wrap up His public teaching
- He will pronounce His final curse on unbelieving Israel
- He will teach His disciples a flurry of final things
- He will institute the Sacrament of Holy Communion for the Holy Christian Church in the New Testament era
- He will pray in the garden of Gethsemane
- He will be betrayed by Judas
- He will be denied by Peter
- He will be arrested, falsely accused, and tried by the Jews
- He will be cruelly beaten, unjustly convicted, and sentenced to death on the cross by the Gentiles.

*But along the way*

- † He will heal a man's ear
- † He will forgive a repentant thief
- † He will be tender and kind to His mother
- † He will plead for forgiveness for His oppressors, and
- † He will cry out in a loud voice **IT IS FINISHED!**

We Thank God that He has recorded the events of Holy Week for us in the Gospels, so that we can journey with Jesus to the cross, and remember His great love and tremendous sacrifice for us and for our salvation.

Find a way to make that journey this week, let the **anticipation** of the cross fill your heart; knowing that the Son of God died on a cross for you and for your salvation.

Amen!

Lord Jesus Christ,  
we thank you for Palm Sunday  
where You clearly showed us that You are  
the Old Testament Messiah. We thank You  
for Your love which drove You to the cross  
for us and for our salvation. Deepen our  
faith this Holy Week, as we remember Your  
suffering and sacrifice for us. We praise and  
thank You for being our Savior; and we  
rejoice in the faith that You have freely  
given to us. We pray this by the power of  
the Holy Spirit and for the glory of God the  
Father, Amen!

# Zechariah 9:9-12

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.

<sup>10</sup> I will take away the chariots from Ephraim

and the warhorses from Jerusalem,

and the battle bow will be broken.

He will proclaim peace to the nations.

His rule will extend from sea to sea

and from the River to the ends of the earth.

<sup>11</sup> As for you, because of the blood of my

covenant with you,

I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit.

<sup>12</sup> Return to your fortress, you prisoners of hope;

even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you.

# Psalm 118:19-26

Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord.

<sup>20</sup> This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it.

<sup>21</sup> I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.

<sup>22</sup> The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

<sup>23</sup> This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

<sup>24</sup> This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

<sup>25</sup> Hosanna!, we pray, O Lord! O Lord, we pray, give us success!

<sup>26</sup> Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! We bless you from the house of the Lord.

# Matthew 21:1-12

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, 2 saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. 3 If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.” 4 This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

5 “Say to Daughter Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’

6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. 7 They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. 8 A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

10 When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?” 11 The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”