

From HIGHS to LOWS

Scripture: Matthew 21:1 – 17

Palm Sunday 4/10/22

Have you ever gone from a high to a low in a short period of time? Have you had a day that started out glorious and ended badly? Have you had a day that started out great and then ended poorly?

A story – a granddaughter tells her grandfather to watch her fairy princess dance. The grandfather gladly says ‘YES! Let’s see it!’ The granddaughter then races around the backyard. After completing one lap around the yard with a big grin on her face, she says ‘Ta DA!’ and asked her grandfather if he liked her fairy princess dance? Her big brother saw all that happened and he looked shocked. He had a sad look on his face and he said to his grandfather – ‘Grandpa, she is not dancing, she is just running!’ Grandpa told his grandson – ‘Do not ruin her joy!’ The grandson then turned and told his younger sister – ‘Great dance!’

On the first Palm Sunday, we have a day of highs and lows. This day went from a high to a low for many in the story. Let us focus in on Jesus, his disciples, the people of Jerusalem, and the Chief Priest in the Temple.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, we have a high for Jesus, his Disciples, and the people of Jerusalem. The Chief Priest is not enjoying what he is watching!

When the crowd enthusiastically waved palm branches overhead and welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem with - 'Hosanna, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!' We have a great day for Jesus, his Disciples, and the people of Jerusalem. Not a great day for the Chief Priest!

Many in the crowd were expecting a Messiah to free them from Roman rule. Many of the crowd were looking for a mighty warrior riding on a white stallion with a sword in one hand and a shield in the other to lead a revolution against Roman Empire. But look at what they got – a Savior who would suffer for their sins that same week! They got a man of peace who would sacrifice himself for them. They got a man riding on a donkey!

The first Palm Sunday was a great day for the Zealots in Jesus' group of Disciples. The Zealots' wish was to overthrow Roman rule and when Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, they probably were thinking – 'Here we go, all Jesus need to do was to encourage the people on and a revolution with start!' What a high the Zealots had that day!

The Chief Priest was angry at what he was seeing. He had questioned Jesus' authority. He questioned why the people of Jerusalem were expressing such joy with the waving of palm branches and their shouts of - 'Hosanna, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!' Maybe everyone just got caught up in the excitement of the day and couldn't help but worship Jesus.

But let us look at what happens next on this glorious day. Jesus goes to the Holy Temple and what does he find? Jesus finds people who are approved by the priests of the temple selling and buying goods in the Holy Temple. This angers Jesus and he does his one and only act of violence when Jesus then turns over the tables and the seats of the money changers who were selling doves and lambs to be sacrifice in the Holy Temple for profit. Jesus then says – *It is written – My house shall be called a house of prayer; but you are making it a den of robbers!*

The blind and the lame then came to Jesus in the temple, and Jesus healed them. But when the Chief Priest and scribes saw these amazing things, they are angry! They will not having a good day! The children cried out in the temple – ‘Hosanna to the Son of David’. The Chief Priest and Scribes became angrier and say to Jesus – ‘Do you hear what these children are saying?’ Jesus then told the Chief Priest that from the lips of children and infants God has called forth His praise.

The only people I can think of who thought this day was not a good day were the Chief Priest and Scribes in the Temple. This was not a high for them! They did not think they were in the presence of the Savior!

This exciting day ends with Jesus leaving Jerusalem to journey to rest in Bethany so he can spend the night there. Judas was probably not happy that Jesus left Jerusalem. Judas was a Zealot and I believe that when Jesus was in the Holy Temple turning over the tables and seats of the money changers he was smiling from ear to ear. Judas was (rub my hands together) thinking ‘Now is the time! Go Jesus Go!’ He probably saw what he was looking for – a Messiah who will lead the Jewish people in a revolution to overthrow Roman rule in the Holy Land. This may have been the first step for Judas to think about betraying Jesus.

What a good day, but the people will go from a high to a low in a very short time. The people that cheered Jesus into the Holy City of Jerusalem with cheers of - 'Hosanna, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!' will soon be shouting 'Crucify Him, Crucify Him'!

Jesus invites us to also see him for who he is. And when we do, like a child overflowing with joy, we cannot help ourselves from shouting - 'Hosanna, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!' But we will be like the people of Jerusalem and often we will turn our back on Jesus and in our own way say - 'Crucify Him, Crucify Him'.

Let us revel in this good day. Let us get excited. Let us recognize a 'high' because it will not be long when we will reach a low. In our lives we will have highs and lows. We will have days like the first Palm Sunday and we will have days like when we lose a loved one or health problems come our way. But through it all, we need to see Jesus for who is - Our Lord and Savior!

What are you looking for? Are you looking for a man or woman to lead us who uses words of hatred and lies? You can find them in our world! Or are you looking for a man of peace and love and compassion? You can find him here in church! That man is Jesus Christ! 'Hosanna, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!'

Can you hold your palms skyward and say with me - - 'Hosanna, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!'

Let us pray:

Loving God, thank you for all you have done for us. We are amazed at the great lengths you went through so that we could find joy in you. Help us to keep our focus firmly on you.

In our lives we will have highs and lows. We will have days like the first Palm Sunday and we will have days like Good Friday. O God, we will go from highs to lows. Let us remember who Jesus is – our Lord and Savior. AMEN.