



# FIRST (SCOTS) SERMONS

“After the Parade”

Scripture Lessons: *Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Mark 11:1-11*

*This sermon was preached by The Rev. Dr. L. Holton Siegling Jr. on  
Sunday, April 2, 2023, at First (Scots) Presbyterian Church  
in Charleston, South Carolina.*

## **Psalm 118:1-2**

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
His steadfast love endures forever!  
Let Israel say, “His steadfast love endures forever.”

## **Psalm 118:19-29**

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

This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it.

I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Save us, we beseech you, O Lord!

O Lord, we beseech you, O Lord!

O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

We bless you from the house of the Lord.

The Lord is God, and he has given us light.

Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.

You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, I will extol you.

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

## **Mark 11:1-11**

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethpage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it,

you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.' 'They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, 'What are you doing, untying the colt?' They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, 'Hosanna Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!'"

Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

### **After the Parade**

Before I invite us to pray, I want to share with you that this morning's sermon is a little bit different in that it is written in the first person. It is written as if by a person actually witnessing Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. I hope it unpacks some of what people may have been pondering and processing about the whole experience. Let us pray ...

Oh, something is just not right about this whole thing! Now, don't get me wrong. I am thrilled that Jesus has come to Jerusalem. For the better part of three years, he has prayed with and for us. He has smiled and cried with us. He has eaten with us and eaten with sinners, of all people.

He has cleansed us from our infirmities and saved us from our diseases. **He has even given sight to the blind and made the lame walk!**

For the better part of three years, Jesus has led and taught us – a new teaching, some have said, and with authority and not like our scribes and Pharisees. No! Jesus' words are different. They have a ring of truth!

... and for me, he is my Lord!! I love him because he is the Messiah! He is the promised Son of God! Indeed, "Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

What a day! There must be 500,000 people in the city ... they have come from all over for the celebration of the Passover, and most of these people were privy to Jesus' entry, and even if they weren't they've all heard about it.

But something is just not adding up! I saw Jesus just a short time ago ... and there was clearly an

excitement in the air. The people are in a frenzy. The whole city has come out ... ah, but Jesus, he is the same!

I suppose that should come as no surprise ... but I thought it would be different. I really did!

I thought Jesus would come into the city and denounce the powers-that-be ... that he would overthrow the Romans – sort of like what he did in the temple when he threw out the money changers. Now, that's how you make an impression!

Jesus' not doing any of that! In fact, Jesus remains the steadfast embodiment of the very one we have come to know and love – the one who is humble and gentle – the one who will not break a bruised reed or quench a burning wick.

Oh, the disconnect ... it couldn't be more obvious. Shouts of "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord," can be heard everywhere ... but Jesus looks nothing like a king!

And that just feeds into the narrative of those who want to write him off ... I overheard one of the Pharisees as Jesus told his disciples to stop celebrating, but Jesus responded, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out" (cf. Luke 19).

Those Pharisees – [it was as if they threw their hands up in the air ] they said, "You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him." (cf. John 12).

... But for how long? Maybe if Jesus had ridden into the city on a charger ... on a stallion ... that would have at least communicated a sense of urgency and power. But a donkey? There's nothing kingly about a donkey. ... And I heard it wasn't even his! He borrowed it. What's more, it was a colt, the foal of a donkey which, I guess, explains why it was jostling Jesus about.

I, like everyone else, understand that Jesus is essentially fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy that declared: "Tell the daughter of Zion, look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey ... " but surely there were ways to fulfill that ancient prophecy without it looking like this!

Maybe when Jesus was born ... I could see that! The humble beginnings of Joseph and Mary are well known, but this is Jesus' triumphant entry to Jerusalem!

And don't get me wrong. It's great. But it looks – I don't know – it doesn't look serious. It looks amateur. ... Jesus riding on that ugly, coarse, shaggy, bumpy beast!

**Jesus is the most important thing in the world, yet you'd never know it by looking at him.**

... And I know what he'd say. At least I think I know what he'd say ... he'd probably say that his scepter is this palm frond, and his uniform is the seamless garment that he wears ... and that his army is comprised of servant disciples ... and yet his kingdom – oh, if I've heard it once, I've heard it a thousand times – His kingdom is not of this world!

But if there was ever a time when his kingdom needed to be of this world, this is it! Of all the days that existed when he could have shown his majesty and power and purpose, this was the one!

That's what we have come to expect ... someone exerting dominance and dogma. Of course, that kind of messianic display has led any number of wannabees – along with their followers – straight to the grave.

But that's the world we know! That's the world in which we live ... and I'm afraid that if Jesus doesn't begin to do something different, that what he's doing right now ... if he doesn't begin to measure up to the peoples' expectations ... then people are going to lose interest ... they're going to jump off Jesus' bandwagon as quickly as they got on ... and if that happens, this parade will be over before it starts!

This is not what people came to see! I know these people ... and they want to hear how Jesus is going to help Israel rise up and govern herself ... how she will, once again, **throw off the yoke of oppression.**

People expect Jesus to be one of those revolutionary types. One who would fulfill ... albeit only in a particular way ... the justice and righteousness for which the people have longed.

And I guess that's not a surprise either! After all, Jesus said it himself: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness; for they shall be filled."

There is no doubt in my mind, these people want to be filled. They are hungry. But I also know this: Jesus is not going to accomplish his mission or fulfill the ancient prophecies by way of coercion or violence.

That is not the way of Jesus. Jesus doesn't make empty promises or vain threats. He's not about stagemanship or employing gimmicks ... he is who he is ... and from the look of things, that's not about to change!

Come to think of it, if Jesus isn't going to change ... will we? Well, maybe that's the point! Maybe we can't change. Maybe that's precisely what Jesus is counting on. Maybe he's counting on us being the same as we have always been. And, if that is true, then we will most assuredly let him down!

I remember well what Jesus said when he was talking about the Holy City ... He said: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!"

What's more, a friend told me earlier today that Jesus had recently gone so far as to speak about his death ... saying that it would actually happen in Jerusalem ... like now! (PAUSE)

Oh how he knows that we are weak and fickle and fallen. How he knows we cannot keep our Hosanna chants going for very long. He knows that they will soon give way to some other chant.

Oh, but they would have to change so much in order for what Jesus prophesied about his death to come true ... there would have to emerge on the part of this same crowd ... a willingness for Jesus to die!

How our tune really is going to change ... I see that now! It has to change! Because that's who we are! We can't help ourselves!

We are so prone to sin that we will take the life of the one person who could save us from its power. Yet that's why he's here. He knows that.

If we are ever going to be set free from the power of sin and death, then our sin will have to be overcome (death's grip will have to be pried away).

That's why Jesus is here! That's why John the Baptizer referred to him as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

Oh, it's not only what Jesus has done (it's not just about this particular moment in time) – it is about what happens after the parade ... it is about what Jesus is going to do; and, as God is my witness, Jesus is going to take our sins to the grave!

And so it must be for us, because, for Jesus to ride into this city, it is for him to also ride into our hearts. It is to call us out of our sycamore trees, or from the task of mending our nets, or from our sins at the well, or from our loyalties to an assortment of idols and lies – it is to call us out from wherever we are ... and for us to follow him.

... And not just to follow him to Jerusalem, mind you, but to follow him the whole way!

I can still hear the shout of "Hosanna!" Praise be to God, they soon will ... Praise be to God ... soon they

will know exactly what it means for the Lord to truly save us!

Let us pray ... Gracious and Loving God, on this most joyful day we celebrate the work that you were about to accomplish in Jerusalem. Indeed, we praise you, for saving grace which was made real in the life you gave and the victory you won! May we forever share in that victory, recognizing the lengths to which you have gone to love us ... and to save us. In the name of the father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

\*The above sermon has not been edited by the author; therefore, there may be discrepancies. When in doubt please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website.