

Sermon GIFT Palm Sunday Ready or Not! Jesus is coming. CtK HGJ 3.28.15

Hosanna! Hosanna! Jesus is coming! Hosanna in the highest! **Ready or not, Jesus is coming!** Today our donkey is back, and boy, did it miss all of you. It seems like yesterday, or at least not very long ago, that this donkey first appeared. If you haven't met our donkey before, here's the story. When I was growing up, there was always a real donkey that came into church on Palm Sunday. In the country, they know what to do so the donkey doesn't embarrass itself. The city slickers here told me, "No donkeys, no way," so here's what you get—me—showing up in an unexpected way, just like Jesus did on Palm Sunday, say that with me... "Palm Sunday," and it's why we have these palm branches.

Today is the beginning of what we call Holy Week, when we remember the last week of Jesus' life here on earth, a long time ago, and we get ready for what next Sunday? Easter! But a lot of things happened between the first Palm Sunday and the first Easter, and every year we take time to think about what happened to Jesus that week. We start today as we hear the story of Jesus coming into a city called Jerusalem. But Jesus didn't have a car, he couldn't take a bus, and he didn't have a bike, but he didn't just walk...he rode an ordinary, smelly donkey, and the crowd cheered, "Hosanna!" It's a special word that means "Save us." Let's hear a couple of those hosannas: Hosanna! Hosanna!

Today changes everything. Have you ever played a game of hide and seek? It's a great game. When someone goes and hides, after they count down, they say, "Ready or not...what? Here I come!" Today, that's what Jesus says to all of us. Ready or not, here I come. Whether your Easter plans have been made, or your house is clean, or your to-do list finished, we remember today: **Ready or not, Jesus is coming!** (Ready or not...what?...Jesus is coming!)

Let's hear our story. People are reading this in churches all around the world today. Some of us might have listened to this story more than 5, 10, or 50 times, but every time we read the Bible, we can hear and feel new things, even from stories we already know. Think of it like this: Do you have a favorite children's story? Maybe Goodnight Moon or Where the Wild Things Are? No matter how many times we read them, we don't get bored. Even though we might be able to tell each other what's on every page, there is always something more to discover. It should be like that with our Bibles—but even MORE—because the Bible is God's living word! So, let's read.

(SPARK STORY BIBLE SLIDES)

WOW! The whole earth was celebrating. The people didn't really understand what they were shouting though. They didn't know that in a few days Jesus would die to save the whole world. The people that day were hoping he would save them in a different way, by getting rid of the bad rulers who were mean. But that's not what Jesus had in mind. He was going to save all of us, forever. **Ready or not, Jesus is coming!**

Now some days are good and some days are bad, right? Jesus felt the same way. This Holy Week—this week between now and next Sunday--is full of ups and downs—some happy things and some really sad things happen to Jesus--and we're going to hear all about it. It's kind of bittersweet—like a Sweet Tart candy or a piece of dark chocolate that you might find inside an Easter egg. It tastes so good but it's also a bit sour, or tart, or dark.

How many of you have ever been a part of an Easter Egg Hunt? Even though it's not Easter yet, we're going to put on our thinking caps and go on a hunt to find eggs here in this room that will help us hear more of Jesus' story because, you know what...**ready or not, Jesus is coming!** We'll listen to each clue and try to figure it out together—ALL of us—and we'll ask some friends to go find the egg. Inside the egg we will find some stories and symbols that help teach us about Holy Week. Are you ready?

Here's the first clue:

This is where we meet and greet,
Before we take our Sunday seat.
Not in the pew for the first of our eggs,
You'll need to stand and use your legs.

Where could it be?

SUNDAY (Keyword: Hosanna, Symbols: Palm & Donkey)

The countdown is underway
Starting on this Palm Sunday!
Jesus rides on a smelly donkey
a magnificent sight for all to see!
All the people gather with their coats to fling,
Waving palms, "Hosanna," they sing.

MONDAY (Keyword: Temple, Symbol: Coins)

Jesus walked to the temple church and caught,
People selling and buyers who had bought.
Jesus drove them out up-ending,

tables meant for money lending
Knocking benches flat,
where cows and doves and pigs sat.

TUESDAY (Keyword: Love, Symbol: Heart)

Jesus went back to the temple telling parable stories,
debating the law and teaching God's glories.

Love the Lord with all your heart,
and there is another important part:
Love your neighbor just like you,
Love them, their family, and even enemies, too.

WEDNESDAY (Keyword: Friends, Symbol: Perfume)

Judas makes plans to turn on Jesus, his friend,
But this is not where our stories end.
A woman pours perfume on Jesus' head,
The others cry, "Give money to the poor instead."
But Jesus is happy with what she had done,
because she had blessed God's only Son.

THURSDAY (Keywords: Remember me, Symbol: bread & grapes)

Jesus and his friends take time for the Last Supper,
The table is set in a room that is upper.
Disciples rest and Jesus breaks bread,
"Do this yourself after I am dead."
"This is my body," says he,
Eat it in memory of me."

Jesus then pours the wine,
And tells this is another sign,
"This is my blood," says he,
Drink it remembering me."

The disciples sleep when Jesus prays,
asking God his father for easier ways.
Thirty silver coins given to Judas to betray,
then Jesus was arrested and taken away.

FRIDAY (Key Words: It is finished, Symbols: Crown of thorns)

Jesus is brought to the priest and Pilate to see,
if he will die or if he's set free.
They both wanted Jesus to say,
He was the king that day.
The crowd was yelling and said Jesus must die,

“Crucify Him!” was their angry cry.

Nailed to the cross, thorns on his head a crown,
Jesus was beaten and paraded through town.
The cross lifted high into the sky,
And Jesus prepared to say his goodbye.
“Forgive them, Father,” He said,
“It is finished.” And then he was dead.

Buried in a cave that was stone,
Jesus’ body was laid all alone.
His friends were weeping, thinking they had lost the best.
The story had ended for they knew not the rest.

SATURDAY Keyword: Sabbath, Symbol: Nothing)
Without their friend, the Sabbath was bad,
No work could be done, the women were sad.
God’s plan seemed completed,
Jesus and His disciples defeated.

What happens next you might want to know.
Come back this week (Thursday, Friday, and Sunday) and we’ll tell and show.
The story’s not over, nor is it done,
Because God has a plan and Jesus has won!

We’re not ready to celebrate Easter quite yet. Today our only job is to get behind the donkey and its rider. Even if you are tired or frustrated or ready to be done with everything, there are plenty of people like you in the crowd. But the crowd doesn’t have what you need. Even though Jesus wasn’t the king the crowd wanted on the first Palm Sunday, he was the king the world **needed**.

You’ll find what you need behind the donkey. So step out and follow. Shout Hosanna, wave your palms, and share your cries because Jesus is ready to take them away. The view is not always nice, but it is real. The road is not always smooth, but it leads to eternal life. The promises may not always seem like enough, but they hold more promise than all the emptiness in the world.

(SLIDE) This Holy Week, ready or not, **Jesus is coming!** Let us walk to the cross together and see the miracle of the empty tomb. They might call it the Passion history, but don’t let it be history for you. This is our now and forever. **Ready or not, Jesus is coming! AMEN!**

