

Pastor Ben Libby
 Sermon
 12/1/2018

In Christ Jesus, who has come into the world to secure our Salvation, Fellow Redeemed:

The Word of the Lord which forms a portion for our sermon text this Advent Sunday comes to us from book of John, chapter 12, starting at verse 12:

John 12:12-19 ¹² The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ¹³ took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' The King of Israel!" ¹⁴ Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: ¹⁵ "Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, Sitting on a donkey's colt." ¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and *that* they had done these things to Him. ¹⁷ Therefore the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness. ¹⁸ For this reason the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign. ¹⁹ The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, "You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!"

This is the Word of God. Congregation may be seated.

Grace and peace be to you from God our Father and from your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear fellow Redeemed...

Well, have you heard them yet? Last Sunday, as it was November 25th and we were exactly a month away from Christmas, I talked about how now you can expect to experience many more Christmas preparations. But, fast-forward to today, now we are actually in the Month of December, the month of Christmas. I'm sure you have seen Christmas decorations. In fact, after we are done with worship here this morning, we too will be setting up Christmas decorations in the church. You might have even seen some Christmas lights when you came to church this morning.

But have you heard them yet? Yes, I am talking about Christmas Songs! In the past I have spoken about the baggage I have with Christmas music. Much of the Christmas music out there is, to

put it mildly, less than ideal. A lot of the music that gets circulated in stores presently has to do with how Santa Clause is coming to town, or how Rudolph the red nosed reindeer can navigate a flying sled, or how Frosty the Snowman was jolly happy soul. While these tunes can be trying to listen to repeatedly, there is a silver lining to them. The fortunate side-effect to this noise is that actual Christmas songs sometimes also gets played. Our country, for a large part, has secularized Christmas to a large degree and has tried to take Christ out of it entirely. But sometimes you hear music that actually refers to Christ and His blessed birth.

What is your favorite real Christmas song? There are many to choose from. One song that really sets the Christmas table, if you will, is Silent Night.

It reflects the imagery that the shepherds must have experienced. "All is claim, all is bright". The shepherds that night witnessed some extremes. They went from the glorious choir of the heavenly hosts to the quiet manger where the good shepherd would be found.

Christmas is a time of anticipation. And with good reason. There is much to look forward to, much to get excited about. It all culminates with Christmas morning. We are not ashamed about being excited about Christmas. If you believe the other song, it is "The most wonderful time of the year". It is this way, but not for the reasons that song would have you believe. It's not the most wonderful time of the year because of the external traditions that go hand-in-hand with December 25th. It is the most wonderful time of the year because it is the time when we study and value the fact that Jesus Christ was truly born, and He was born for you and for me. We pray that the Holy Spirit would bless our worship here this morning.

¹² The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ¹³ took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' 'The King of Israel!'"

This section of John's Gospel is describing the scene at Palm Sunday. That was the day when Jesus entered into Jerusalem riding on a donkey's colt, just like the prophet Zechariah foretold. Jesus did fulfill that prophecy and He would fulfill many more prophecies that week.

But why are we talking about this now, at Advent time? Palm Sunday is a good 5 months away still. Why talk about this now? What does it have to do at Advent?

Well, this text is appropriate because it too describes an arrival of Christ. This entrance into Jerusalem is when He arrived at Holy Week. True, He had arrived in the world some 33 years prior, but

that arrival at Bethlehem was a real foreshadowing of this arrival. This arrival was what that arrival was all about.

Notice how Jesus enters that town that day. It was to shouts! A great multitude came out to see Him come in. The people came equipped with palm branches, something that was usually reserved for King's entrances. They, in fact, called Him a "The King of Israel", a title that Pilate would later that week question Him about. Their shouts also consisted of the cry, "Hosanna!", which is translated to "Save us now!" No doubt, there were some in the crowd that day that did not fully understand what this was all about. This fact is similar to people who know real Christmas songs by heart, and yet they don't know the Christ by the heart of faith.

This section of Scripture really reflects the sense of anticipation that we feel in Advent leading up to Christmas. There was always much noise and sound before the Savior came. Since mankind fell in garden, God had directed these sounds like a master conductor. Mankind had doomed itself by succumbing to sin, but God never left us out to dry. Immediately, He promised His Son to be our Savior. Ever since that fall, He had directed men to sound off, to shout out the coming of the Messiah. The answer was coming. All throughout the ages, from Adam all the way up till that silent night in Bethlehem, man was looking forward to Jesus being born. It was constantly foretold and pointed to. That first Christmas, it was now here!

There is always a lot of sound and noise before Christmas... This time of the year is often seen as one of the busiest. There is the hustle and bustle of shopping for Christmas gifts, preparations for a home hosting the holiday, and all other sorts of arrangements that need to be made before Christmas. But there is a sort of emptiness and silence after the holidays are over. Have you ever been to a store on December 26th? Stores may be busy, but if they are it is on account of people RETURNING gifts. Shelves are relatively bare and disorganized. Where once

these places were bustling with crowds and noise, they are now moderately empty and quiet places.

This too is reflected by Christ and His arrival. Think about the first Christmas experience from the Shepherds point of view. They were out in the Judean countryside, quietly keeping watch over their herds of sheep. All of a sudden, an angel appeared, telling them not to be afraid and rather to incline their ear to his message of good news. Then, the sky was lit up, full of the heavenly host, loudly proclaiming glory to God in the highest, and peace to all the earth. These shepherds then left that resounding and roaring scene of praise and rushed into Bethlehem to see this babe which was made known to them. They came to the quiet manger scene, silent all except for the rustling of the animals that shared the manger with this family. It went from loud to quiet really quickly.

The same would be true about our scene found in our text. Yes, Jesus entered Jerusalem to cheers and cries. But that week would end with silence. Jesus would be silent during His upcoming trial. The city would once again erupt with commotion and cries, but instead of "Hosanna", it would be cries of "Crucify Him!" That sound would die down with His ultimate death, and the week would conclude with the sound of the tomb being sealed, and then, nothing...

"I am speechless" Have you ever been left silent and speechless? What are the reasons that one may be left speechless? There are a few occasions that we may find ourselves with no words with which we may respond. If something occurs that is so amazing and awesome, you may find yourself with no words to express yourselves with. On the other hand, something might have happened that was so dire and devastating that you could not even begin to describe it.

If you need help becoming speechless, one quick way to do this is to look at the Ten Commandments. Sure, just glancing at the Law may not inspire speechlessness. They are simply 10

different commands that can be read in about a minute or two. But once you really study them and apply them to your life, a speechless realization is quickly come to. Not only do we see that we have failed to keep them, but we have failed to keep all of them. It isn't like we just fail to measure up to them once in a while, but every single day of our lives. They don't apply just from here on out, but they have been the standard in which we were supposed to live our entire lives. Think back to your past. How many ways can you think of, in the past that you didn't do what they require? How many times can you even fail to remember your past mistakes? The mistakes we have made in the past, present, and we will surely make in the future should strike speechlessness in our sinful hearts and minds. The excuses we might make don't help. We have no excuse. God says, "do this or else", and we find ourselves on the receiving end of the "or else". Our sins make us utterly speechless!

Well, one thing that helpless with speechlessness is time. They say that time heals all wounds. Sometimes humans need a little bit of time to fully express an enormous experience. Sometimes, humans need time to forget. Sometimes, humans also need time to remember! This was the case for the disciples who saw Jesus riding on the colt that day. **John 12:16** ¹⁶ **His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him.** It would take some time before the disciples would understand what had taken place at Jerusalem that day. Once Jesus had gloriously ascended into heaven, they could see that this experience had not only happened, but it was foretold centuries before it happened. Yet, in the moment it was hard to explain and express.

One group of people who were not speechless but rather despondent in the moment were the Pharisees. They immediately express their displeasure over this scene. When they saw Jesus

entering the city to cries of Hosannas, they knew they had failed. They were quick to blame each other over this failure. **John 12:19** ¹⁹ **The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, "You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!"**

Our sinful flesh often replicates this Pharisaic attitude. Granted, their shortcomings as they viewed it was letting Jesus get popular. But our real shortcomings aren't much different. Our sins derive from the mistakes made against God also. Whereas the Pharisees came to the false conclusion, our conclusion comes from the law. We too, have failed. Failed to treat God like we ought to have. We too accomplish nothing. That is, we accomplish nothing that God's Law requires.

But then, we disciples like Jesus' disciples there that day, also remember. It takes time to respond to speechlessness. It can take time to remember. And what exactly do we remember? We remember that cries, we remember the shout outs!

A "shout out" is a slang term used today that means to express gratitude or thanks. If you were on a TV show, you would shout out your friends or someone special that you want to recognize.

The shout outs for the Savior have been going on since we fell into sin. When you look at the Law, you are left silent knowing just how completely and utterly you have failed and what that ultimately means. But that silence is soon replaced with shouts! We shout out, "I need a Savior! I need someone to do all these things in which I have failed!" Our shouts are just like that of the crowd on Palm Sunday. "Hosanna! Savior, Save us!!!"

Praise be to our God, because that is exactly what He does! Whereas the human tongue often falls dumb in it's own despair, God is never speechless! He saw our need before we even comprehended it! That was why Jesus was born in Bethlehem. All through our History, God called people to shout out the birth of the Savior. The prophets constantly shouted out the prophecies that God intended to

keep this promise in the form of the Messiah. Jesus was born and accomplished our salvation in Jerusalem. Before He left to take His rightful place at God's throne, He commanded that these shout outs continue. His final charge to His disciples was to shout out to the ends of the earth what He accomplished. It is a task that we strive to continue to this day, to tell others what we have heard. That there is a Savior who did accomplish the Salvation of the world. He has "Hosannaed", He has now saved us!

The disciples would remember this day after Christ Ascended and they received the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. That was a collection of different cries. Tongues of all nations and people would call out that Jesus was the Christ who had accomplished the salvation of the world. They were no longer speechless, quite the opposite. They had to speak up and tell all corners of the earth the glorious news. **Psalm 19:2-4** ² **Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge.** ³ **There is no speech nor language Where their voice is not heard.** ⁴ **Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world.** The quiet of Jesus' tomb was disrupted with Easter Sunday and His subsequent Ascension. Now, the world had to hear.

But has the sound died out? People still shout out the news of Christ today, but the world tries to quiet and stifle our proclamations. They go as far as impressing upon us that it is more correct to say "Happy Holidays" than "Merry Christmas". You can talk about Santa and Rudolph all you want, but if you bring up Christ around Christmas, you are being intolerant. Our own society tries to turn down our silent night to inaudible levels.

But the silence will one day be interrupted with shouts of praise once again. The cries are the same as they have always been. Man is still very much in need of a Savior. The world will downplay this fact. But it is a fact. We strive to continue to shout Him out everywhere we go. We do so by telling

others about Jesus. We do so by living lives that shout out that Jesus is my Savior. This is not to say that we need to verbally shout Jesus' name everywhere we go. We can let His light shine through everyday lives. We let the light of faith shine forth in our fruits of faith. No matter what the attitude is in the world, we can constantly shout out that Jesus is the One who saves, in what we do and what we say!

Just like Jesus came to Jerusalem that day, so too will He one day return. His second coming will be just as anticipated. There are some who are not looking for that day, they don't want to even think about it. Some people live like the world will never stop turning. They live for the now, they live for the world they can experience. That is why the Lord tells us to watch and pray. He will one day return, and He will come like a thief in the night. We know that this will be the case. The question that we need to ask ourselves is "How will we prepare for it"?

How inappropriate would it be if you weren't prepared for Christmas? Many people put off Christmas shopping and preparations until the last possible moments. There is a reason many of those stores are left with empty and disheveled shelves come December 26th. It is because many people rummage through them at the last possible moment before the store closes before Christmas! But it's not like Christmas is a secret, it happens the same day every single year. And yet, there are always people who put it off until the last possible second.

Let us never act this way. We know that Jesus is returning. We know not the day or hour, but we know He is coming back. Let us not live our lives like last minute shoppers. "We'll do that later." Let us always prepare for Jesus to return NOW! Let us prepare ourselves for Him today! Let us get our voices warmed and have our palm branches close at hand. Let us wait for Him once again to come. This time, His entrance will have no trace of lowliness. He will return Holy Triumphant, and He will return to an innumerable choir, shouting a deafening chorus. When that day comes, we will not be speechless or at

a loss of words. We are expecting it, and we will cry and shout out with the rest of His disciples, "HOSANNA! Blessed Is HE who came and comes once again in the name of the LORD!!! The King of Israel, JESUS CHRIST OUR SAVIOR!!!"

Yes, Christmas is fast approaching. You will see it almost everywhere you go. You will see it in the way people decorate their houses, in what clothes they wear, even in what greeting they use. No matter what you do, Christmas is coming.

So, now is the time to prepare for it. The world will try to make you think that you have plenty of time, that there is nothing to prepare for in the first place. They will try to take Christ entirely out of Christmas. As a Christian, this can be frustrating. The utter lack of Christ, or perhaps even the disdain for Him at Christmas can leave you feeling sad, even speechless.

But then we remember. We remember that Christ truly did come, and He came to conquer your sins on the cross. We remember that just like He left, so too will He return. When you see other people remembering Christmas traditions, let us remember the real meaning of Christmas! Remember that Jesus has come and will come again. Remember that nothing can stop Him from coming, just like nothing can separate us from Him!

Christmas is coming. Just as surely as that day will be here before you know it, so will Christ's return. Let us therefore gather our palm branches. As the real Christmas message is once again heard, let it warm your hearts, but get that voice warmed up also! For soon is the hour when we will shout praises to our God and King! It may be quiet now, but the crescendo that is His second coming is right around the corner. That will not be a silent night. No, we will be there shouting with the rest of His saints "HOSANNA! 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!' THE KING OF ISRAEL!" AMEN