

"ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM"

Palm Sunday: 1957  
Park Avenue  
Text; Mark 11:11.

## "ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM"

TEXT: "And Jesus entered into Jerusalem"

Mark 11:11.

General Edmund Allenby entered Jerusalem during World War I. It was on November 11, 1917, after his troops had taken the Holy City away from the Turks. Some of you may remember this event. The commanding officer made his entry into Jerusalem through the Joppa Gate. He came on foot. It was his hope and desire that the people would accept him as a friend, and look upon him as an instrument of peace. He took control of the city in the name of King George the 5th. And after that, as long as the British were in charge, they tried to make Jerusalem a city worthy of its historic traditions.

More than one conqueror has made his way into Jerusalem through the centuries. The SHIFTING FORTUNES of war have not been kind to the City of David. The CHANGING TIDES of politics have made it a place of controversy rather than a city of peace. The SHARP CONFLICTS of race and religion have created tensions within the city that exist even down to our own time. Three years ago, on the Sunday before Palm Sunday, I had the experience of worshipping with some other Americans on the Mount of Olives looking over toward Jerusalem. Some thirty feet to our left, there was the Hosanna Road, the road that Jesus travelled on that first Palm Sunday. Over to our right, less than one hundred feet away, there was a yellow brick look-out tower with an Arab soldier, rifle in one hand, and binoculars in the other hand, keeping watch over the city. I was so well reminded that the great dreams of brotherhood that Jesus had for this place he loved so well have never been realized.

It is good for us to call to mind the first of these entrances into the city. It was without the trappings of military might. It was begun in tears. For as Luke reminds us, Jesus wept as he came near to the city and looked out over it. I suppose that Jesus sensed that the end was near at hand. However, his followers did not feel this way. They thought the time had now come for Jesus to declare himself the Messiah and establish himself as the ruler of their land. But the priests and the Roman soldiers sensed this expectation, and they were alert to cover the proceedings and make sure that nothing got out of hand. There was no doubt a tenseness in city, much as there is today.

It was a small, plain procession that made its way over the Mount of Olives, down into the Kidron Valley and eventually up to the city gate. Jesus was seated on a donkey which had been borrowed for this occasion. His friends walked along side of him. As they approached the city, it's reported that the people began to shout, and wave palm branches. I suppose the curious onlooker wondered what it was all about.

It will be interesting to ask ourselves, onlookers now for two thousand years, the meaning behind this strange scene that has been cherished by so many Christians through the centuries.

### A VOLUNTARY ENTRANCE

In the first place, the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem was a voluntary entrance. No authority, save his own conscience, made him go to Jerusalem. He was not compelled to enter the city. He made the decision of his own free-will well knowing what would probably happen if he ventured into the City.

AND IN SO DOING, he exercised a responsibility all Christians today must face up to, namely, the VOLUNTARY ACCEPTANCE OF SACRIFICE in order to preserve the Christian values. This principle is vital to our faith. We can't avoid it. UNLESS, Christian men and women are willing to accept responsibility voluntarily in order that the values of love, truth, freedom, and justice may be preserved and promoted, then the Christian hope of a better world is simply an idle dream that will never be realized. The entry of Jesus into Jerusalem was a voluntary entrance.

Louis Evans, one of the outstanding Presbyterian preachers in our country today, tells of the time that he was stopped on the street by a youth who asked him for two dollars. The boy was poorly dressed and looked hungry. Evans offered to buy him a meal, but he refused to give him the two dollars. The boy said no to the free meal; he preferred to have the two dollars if he could. Evans refused to give him the money. The boy did change his mind and accept the offer for a free meal. As they came out of the restaurant together, Evans asked him why he had wanted the two dollars. And the boy surprised him by saying that he was a Communist, and needed the two dollars in order to send out an important message. And for this, the boy was willing to go hungry.

The question before us might well be put in these terms: WHICH IS IT TO BE - MEALS, or the MESSAGE. In other words, do we have the capacity for sacrificial service and self-renunciation in order that the Christian way of life may be preserved. It's not an easy question to answer, but it's one that needs to be lifted up in our thinking.

During a fierce engagement in North Africa during the last war, a Chaplain was seen driving a jeep filled with three wounded soldiers. He was trying to get back of the lines in order that the men might receive the proper medical attention. He drove between the foxholes that were filled with men who had run for cover in the midst of this heavy shell fire. His commanding officer called for him to get out of the jeep and into a foxhole. But he refused to, and he stayed with the wounded men. Later this man received the Congressional Medal of Honor with the citation:

FOR HEROISM FAR BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY.

The voluntary acceptance of sacrificial service is just as important in waging the battles of peace as it is in waging the battles of war.

It lifts life above the ordinary, and makes it great.

It is not what we have to do, but what we can't keep from doing even at the point of personal sacrifice, that moves forward the program of God on earth.

A French lieutenant in the day of Napoleon got separated from his regiment in the heat of battle. An officer from another regiment noticed what had happened, and he called to him to STEP IN ANYWHERE. THERE'S FIGHTING ALL ALONG THE LINE. And so it is in the church. There's work and responsibility in any church for those who are willing. The citation of the cross is reserved for those who work far beyond the call of duty. Jesus entered voluntarily. And we need to ask ourselves whether we have what it takes to follow him through the gates, accepting responsibility in order to carry on his work.

A PUBLIC ENTRY

The entry of Jesus into Jerusalem was a public entrance. He came in through the regular gate of the city, and not through some side door. He entered in broad day-light, unafraid and unashamed. He had nothing to hide. As he came to the danger zone he adopted no disguise. He made no effort to compromise. He didn't turn back at the last minute. His ministry and his life had always been in the open. That was the way he chose to face his God. That was the way he chose to die.

Charles Crowe, the author of the Lenten devotional booklet THE SANCTUARY which some of you may be reading, adds this word of encouragement and challenge:

"The evidence of our discipleship must be visible and unmistakable. We are to be Christians in the open if we are to be real Christians. Far too many of us are secret, undercover Christians. We cower in our timid faith before a hostile and unfriendly world. This must not be so. Indeed, if the hidden, unexpressed, undercover faith of men could be released and brought into the open, there would be a sweep and power to the Christian idea that would challenge a weary world to its very depths....."

And so it is! We can begin right where we are. Never a day goes by but a Christian may make some witness in word or deed that he has travelled with the Master through the city gates.

An airforce chaplain stationed at Stout Field, Indianapolis, tells a story book tale that actually came to life at the air force base. A young recruit, the first night he was in the barracks, knelt down by his bunk and prayed as was his custom. You can almost picture the reaction. Some of the boys just looked. Some of them snickered, and some didn't know what to do. But the next night two others were also praying. And do you know that before long they were having regular prayer meetings every night. And soon the chapel services, which had been poorly attended, were crowded. The entire unit was strengthened in its faith and inspired in its work by the simple actions of one Christian who refused to hide his light under a bushel.

It's not necessary to make excuses for our religion. Sometimes we're so afraid, and so polite that we will make a show of our religion that we don't let it show at all. Perhaps we're like the man who played golf every Sunday afternoon with a close friend. On one occasion the friend saw him coming out of church on a Sunday morning. That afternoon he said to him, "I didn't know you were a church goer. Why all these years we've been playing golf, you've always been keen to talk about golf, but never said a word about God".

The entry of Jesus was a voluntary entrance. The entry of Jesus into Jerusalem was also a public entrance.

A TRIUMPHANT ENTRANCE

And it can also be pointed out that the entry into Jerusalem was a triumphant entrance. It has long been referred to as the triumphal entry. For centuries, it has symbolized for the Christian church, the kingly rule of Jesus in the hearts and the minds of men.

Comparing his entry with the processions of earthly rulers, we would say that the event lacked much in the way of pomp and ceremony. There was no committee of welcome. There was no band playing. The mayor of Jerusalem didn't come out to welcome him. The only fanfare was the hosannas of the people. The only vehicle in the parade was a donkey. The only tribute offered was the palm branches waved by the people. There were those who expected an earthly ruler, and there were those who recognized that he was more than just an earthly ruler.

Lloyd Douglas, in his book THE ROBE describes a scene where Demetrius catches a glimpse of Jesus riding the donkey into the city. A crowd has gathered. But just for a moment the eyes of Jesus catch the eyes of Demetrius. And Demetrius is deeply moved with the depth of quiet authority in the eyes of the Master. Travelling with Demetrius is a rather uncouth Athenian who asks excitedly, "Did you see him? Is he crazy?" And Demetrius replies, "No"....."He's not crazy". "Is he a King?" asks the Athenian. "No...not a king". "Well what is he?" persists the Athenian. And Demetrius quietly replies, "I don't exactly know.....but I think he's something more important than a king"

More important than a king! Jesus rode into the city. A few days later he carried the cross to Calvary, and entered into history as the greatest revelation of God that mankind has ever seen. For some he was just a King, but for others he was the King of Kings.

Several years ago there was robbery on Park Avenue. A thief broke into an apartment and stole some valuable jewelry. The people were away at the time. The police had difficulty finding any clues. They did find one finger print. It was on a small statue of Jesus. The statue had been turned around to face the wall. It was from this one finger print that the robber was identified and later caught. The detectives asked the man why he had turned the statue around to face the wall. And he said that he could not steal with the eyes of Jesus looking at him.

The story serves to remind us that even thieves recognize some peculiar power in the personality of Jesus. There is something special about him that reaches down into the center of our hearts and lives. He confronts us with something that is fine, and good, and altogether wonderful. And when we welcome Him into our lives as the King of all Kings, and the Lord of all Lords, only then will life become triumphant for us, and the Kingdom of God be established in all corners of the earth.

SHALL WEEBOW OUR HEADS IN PRAYER:

Our Father, we know that our minds have questioned, and that our wills have lagged in loyalty to Thy Son. We know that we cannot and should not ignore him. Help us, this day and in this hour, to welcome him - willingly, publicly, and triumphantly - as the Master of our lives. This we ask in Thy name. Amen.