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**Monthly Newsletter**

**Founder and Executive Director  
Bridget Osborne**

## **Observing Holy Week!**

*Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! John 1:29*

When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to him, as he was baptizing at the River Jordan, he introduced Jesus, the one whom he testified was the Son of God. When John said, “Behold the Lamb of God,” for most of the Jews this would have been a direct comparison between Jesus and the Passover Lamb of their people’s first Passover when they were in bondage in Egypt.

The Pharaoh’s refusal to follow God’s command to set the Israelites free had resulted in nine devastating plagues against the Egyptians culminating with the 10th plague. In this final one, the death angel struck every house whose door was not covered by the blood of the sacrificed lamb. The Lord’s words to Israel: “. . . the blood shall be a sign for you and your houses as I execute judgment; when I see the blood, I will pass over you. (Exodus 12: 13,14). For us today - Jesus is our Passover Lamb.

*“For indeed Christ, our Passover (Lamb) was sacrificed for us” I Corinthians 5:7.*

Through Jesus’ shed blood we have been delivered from the bondage of sin, having moved from the condemnation of death and hell to eternal life in heaven with our Savior and God. For Christ followers all over the world this is the time of year when we set aside the time to focus on the highest observance of our faith. It is now designated Holy Week which begins on Palm Sunday. After Palm Sunday we have Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, the crucifixion, and death followed by the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus on Easter Sunday or more appropriately, Resurrection Sunday!

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday. Like the Jewish observance of the first Passover which began in Egyptian bondage, it has become a tradition. Palm Sunday also had a beginning during a time when the Jews were suffering under the Roman yoke of bondage where, again, they were waiting for deliverance, and for their Messiah. Their deliverer did indeed come; however, the scriptures tell us that Jesus came to His own but that they received him not. Praise God that the scriptures also state that to those who DID receive him, they were called the sons (and daughters) of God. That is us today. We have received and accepted Jesus as our Messiah and, as a result, the celebration of Palm Sunday is a blessed and treasured Christian observance.

*“Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.” Zechariah 9:9.*

On that first Palm Sunday it was Passover time in Jerusalem. The Jewish diaspora had convened in Jerusalem from several nations to take part in the traditional Passover rites. As a result, there were multitudes around when Jesus made what has been called His Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem, riding on a colt, a never ridden donkey as foretold hundreds of years before by the Prophet Zechariah. Many in this crowd of people had heard of Jesus and his ministry of healing and demonic deliverances as well as His teachings. Especially noteworthy was the raising of Lazarus from the dead. It was a bonafide, verified miracle that was seen by many eyewitnesses and therefore could not be disputed. Thus, many knew who Jesus was when He triumphantly paraded through the streets of Jerusalem.

# Observing Holy Week!

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Luke 19:29-44 tells the story of this first Palm Sunday. Jesus sent his disciples into the village to find a colt tied, on which no one had ever sat and instructed them “Loose it and bring it to me.” If anyone asks, say, “Because the Lord needs it.” The disciples brought the colt to Jesus, spread their coats upon the donkey and Jesus mounted it and the procession began as Jesus entered into Jerusalem as Savior and King!

Historical processional accounts of other powerful figures abound, including one of Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator of Judea who would later conduct Jesus’ trial that led to his crucifixion. He had paraded on a regal horse through the streets on a prior occasion with typical pomp and circumstance, showing off the strength and power of the Roman empire. What a contrast to Jesus as He entered Jerusalem on his lowly donkey, yet so appropriate for Jesus, our Jesus, lowly and mild.

The lowly donkey, however, was transformed from the moment Jesus sat upon his back. No longer was he a Beast of Burden for he carried the “burden bearer;” unlike the horse who is seen as a symbol of power, the donkey represented peace for he carried the “Prince of Peace;” although lacking the majestic stride and statue of a war horse, the lowly donkey CARRIED “Majesty”! When the passenger is Jesus, circumstances change.

When you substitute the donkey for you and me, we can see some similarities. Like the donkey we too were tied up by something, but Jesus commanded that we too be “loosed.” Why? He loved us and that love led Him to Calvary to atone for our sins. He also wanted us to be out of the devil’s hand and into His.

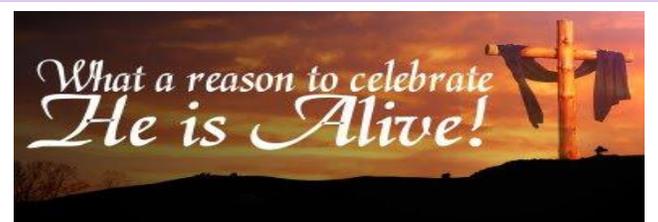
This year as we commemorate Palm Sunday and begin Holy week let us remember again what Jesus’ death and resurrection means. Remember that the first Holy Week began with applause, but it ended with the pain of Calvary. The Bible tells us that the people cut palm branches and spread them, along with their coats on the ground for the donkey to walk on. They greeted Jesus as their king as they shouted

Hosanna hailing Christ as king and the “Son of David. Hosanna means “Save now” and implied giving them the victory and saving or rescuing them from their Roman oppressors. Jesus’ eventual death on the cross did bring both victory and salvation, victory over death - “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” (1 Corinthians 15:55) and salvation from judgment for sin. By the end of the week, those same people would be shouting “Crucify him”!

Let us not be like them. Let us stay true. Let us stay loose and loose somebody else. Tell them about Jesus, how He would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of His truth. The world is a difficult place to live now. People are overwhelmed at its current state. That means that the harvest is ripe. Pray the Lord of the harvest sends believers to those who are in need of a Savior. Jesus said “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through me. I have come that you might have life and that life more abundantly.”

Jesus fulfilled His mission. Easter, Resurrection Sunday gives evidence of that. Jesus completed His assignment. After His resurrection, as He was ascending to heaven, He gave His disciples the Great Commission. Their assignment was to go into the world and spread the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is our mission today as well for we are Christ followers and there is work to do.

In John 15:16 Jesus says, “You did not choose me, but I chose and appointed you to go forth and bear fruit.” Go into the hedges and the highways. Go to the nursing homes, the prison cells and the hospitals and spread the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Just as Jesus was “in need” of the donkey’s service He now needs us too. Go! Tell the good news! Tell them that He died but He rose from the grave. JESUS LIVES! So, come. He is calling you. Jesus still Saves!



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