

ESF, Lord's day message

3/20/2016

The Triumphant March

Text: Matthew 21:1-11

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples,² saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me.³ If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”

⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

⁵ “Say to Daughter Zion,

*‘See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”*

⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them.⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on.⁸ A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

⁹ The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

¹⁰ When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?”

¹¹ The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

When people celebrate someone's victory or achievement, they have a parade. A great ticker-tape parade was on March 1, 1962, for astronaut John Glenn after he became the first American to orbit the earth in a spacecraft. The sanitation department cleaned up 3,474 tons of ticker tape, confetti and other paper along a 7-mile route of jubilation.

There was another parade in Israel 2000 years ago. The parade was different from all other parades. It was a parade to celebrate victory for all men. It was the parade of Jesus, the Savior of the world. It was the parade for Jesus' victorious fight against the devil. Jesus used three weapons in the parade to fight against the devil. They are secrecy, humility and praise. When we follow Jesus, Jesus will give us these weapons to defeat the devil.

Secrecy

Every nation keeps its national secrets from other nations. All nations do their best to keep their secrets for national interest and safety. If national security is breached, there may be serious consequences. Some years ago, several American officers who were stationed in the city of Benghazi, Lybia were killed by terrorists. Later, it was found that some secrets of those officers were hacked by the terrorist. Hillary Clinton was the secretary of state at that time. She used her private email to communicate some classified information of those people. So there was a possibility that the information might have been hacked by the terrorists. The FBI has been investigating this matter. If Mrs. Clinton is convicted of this matter, her political career may be seriously damaged.

In private life, there are also secrets that must be kept hidden. When you have an enemy to fight and defeat, you do not expose your secret weapons to your enemy. You will do everything you can to keep your secret. If you expose your secret to your enemy, your enemy will easily find out a way to attack you and defeat you.

When Jesus was fighting against the devil, He always prepared in secret. He never told anybody about His plan to starting His public ministry until He became thirty years of age. He had prepared for His public ministry for thirty years in secret. Nobody knew that He was Christ. In fact, the people in His home town had known Him just as a son of a carpenter. He had lived an ordinary life as a carpenter. He had prepared

everything for His public ministry as Christ in secret. By doing so He was able to follow God's best plan and time table for His life without getting distracted and attacked by people and the arch enemy devil.

Here when Jesus entered Jerusalem to wage the final battle against the devil He also prepared for the battle in secret.

He sent two of his disciples to bring a donkey and a colt to ride on from an unknown owner. Jesus did not explain to His disciples how He had arranged the matter with the owner or why He needed the donkey and the colt. He did it secretly.

Jesus did not want to reveal the details of His march to Jerusalem at that time. If He had revealed the details of His march to Jerusalem His disciples or the owner of the donkey, the detailed news would have been leaked to the public before He entered Jerusalem. And the news would have been delivered to the religious leaders who were seeking an opportunity to arrest Jesus at any moment in those days. They might have tried to arrest Jesus before He entered Jerusalem. Then His final march into Jerusalem might have been interrupted by the religious leaders. That is why Jesus did not explain the details of the planned march to Jerusalem.

When we follow God's time table for our lives, we can live a victorious life. To do so we need to follow Jesus' wisdom. We must pray more in secret than in public. We must build up our spiritual strength by spending time with God personally while nobody watches us. When God gives us certain spiritual gifts or blessings we must not boast about them or talk about them too much. We must seek God's guidance for the right time to use them, and the right way to use them.

Humility

Jesus was entering Jerusalem as a victorious King. Since the time of His birth until that moment, Jesus had overcome all the attacks and temptations from the world, people and most of all, the devil. He had overcome the power of sickness, the power of demons, and the power of death. He was the victor over every enemy man could face. Now He was marching to Jerusalem to finish the victory over sin, the devil and death through His death on the cross and resurrection. He was marching as the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Usually in ancient time, a king or a general who marched to a battle or returned from a victory in a battle, rode on a stallion. But here Jesus rode not on a stallion but on a donkey. Why?

Matthew explains the reason why Jesus did not ride on a stallion but on a donkey at that time. It was to achieve the promise in the word of the prophet Zechariah. The prophet Zechariah lived 550 years before that time. The prophet prophesied how the Savior would come to the city of God in Zechariah 9:9 *Your king comes to you righteous and having salvation gentle and riding a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.* When the people saw Jesus riding on a donkey, they were able to remember the prophecy. The key to the prophecy is that the Savior would come as a humble and gentle King. Jesus achieved the promise the people had been waiting to be fulfilled for 550 years.

Christ was not a typical king who rules with the pride of man, but a King who rules with humility and gentleness. He comes to us not as an overpowering force, but as a gentle Spirit who can be grieved by our actions and attitudes. His influence is so gentle that the Bible tells us: “*He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory*” (Matthew 12:19-20).

There is a story of a CEO who came to a new company. He immediately called a staff meeting for the senior staff. They expected him to get down to business so they came ready to answer hard questions and take the business by the tail. But, the meeting started with him opening up his heart and telling them about his life and family. Then in turn he asked them to share what was happening in their lives. The first woman shared that the following week her mother had died. When she began to tell about it, the new CEO began to weep quietly.

When she was finished sharing, he went over to her and hugged her. The other senior staff were aghast. Not only had they never seen a senior executive take an interest in their personal lives, but they had never seen compassion shown in this way by a superior in their entire careers. He showed them his heart, his inner spirit.

This is what Jesus did when He rode in on a donkey. Through Jesus, God doesn't shout His commands and directives from on high, but instead, speaks in "a still voice." Jesus is the King who rules the heart of man with the peace of God. Jesus is a gentle, humble King who serves sinners like a servant. He taught His disciples the truth of how to be really great when they were arguing about who was the greater. He taught that only by humbly serving others could they become greater (Mark 10:35-45).

Proverbs 16:18 says, "*Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.*" The devil is the spirit of pride. The devil destroys our lives by provoking us to be proud of ourselves. But by riding on a donkey, Jesus shows us that humility and gentleness is the best way to live a victorious life. To share the final victory of the Lord, we must live with His humility and gentleness.

Praise

In ancient time, soldiers marched to battles with loud marching bands. The marching music boosted the morale of the soldiers. While marching

into the biggest battle in His life, Jesus received praise from the people. The praise encouraged Jesus to be strong while He was marching into battle. But there was more than encouragement.

First, Jesus celebrated His victory by receiving the praise. It was a very serious matter for Jesus to march and fight the devil by being crucified on the cross. Jesus was marching to get arrested, and humiliated, to suffer and to die the most painful of deaths. It was a very solemn moment. But Jesus let the people, who came to the scene of the march, praise God and Him joyfully. The march was not a march toward hopeless death, but a march toward victorious death which would bring salvation for all people. If we follow Jesus, Jesus gives us songs even in the most difficult moment. Jesus gives us spirit of celebration by His victory in all circumstances.

Second, Jesus used the praise as a powerful weapon against the devil's dark power. The devil is the spirit of darkness. The devil is the spirit of depression and anger. The devil does not like praise. The devil does not know joyful songs. But the Spirit of God is the Spirit of joy. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of encouragement. God wants to receive joyful songs and praises. That was the reason Jesus marched into Jerusalem with praise.

Here, Jesus teaches us to always give praise to God regardless of our conditions. The best way to celebrate the victory in Jesus is to praise Him. By praising the Lord, we can march toward victory with Him. By praising the Lord, we can crush the head of the devil who always tries to depress us and discourage us with all kinds of dark, negative things.

Richard Stearns, the president of World Vision, visited a church in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, nearly a year after the devastating earthquake. The church's building consisted of a tent made from white tarps and duct tape, pitched in the midst of a sprawling camp for thousands of people still

homeless from the earthquake.

In the front row of that church sat six amputees ranging in age from 6 to 60. They were clapping and smiling as they sang song after song and lifted their prayers to God. The worship was full of hope with thanksgiving to the Lord. No one was singing louder or praying more fervently than Demosi Louphine, a 32-year-old unemployed single mother of two. During the earthquake, a collapsed building crushed her right arm and left leg. After four days both limbs had to be amputated, but she was leading the choir, standing on her prosthesis and lifting her one hand high in praise to God.

Following the service, Stearns met Demosi and her two daughters, ages eight and ten, who were living in a tent just five feet tall and perhaps eight feet wide. She had lost her job, her home, and two limbs, but she was deeply grateful because God spared her life on the day of the earthquake (January 12, 2010). “He brought me back like Lazarus, giving me the gift of life,” said Demosi. She believed that God saved her life from the devastating quake for two reasons: to raise her girls and to serve the Lord for a few more years.

If you want to live a victorious life in all circumstances, praise the Lord always. Although there are trials and pains in your life, you can live with songs of praise when you have faith in the final victory of Jesus. By praising the Lord, you can march with Him in faith and win over all dark powers in your life. *“...be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord”* (Ephesians 5:18-19).