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Heavenly Father, we praise You and we thank You because even though we don't always understand what's going to happen, even though we don't always see and know Your plan ahead of time, we are confident that You always do have a plan. And it is almost always something so much better than anything that we could have imagined or come up with on our own. And we thank You for that. I ask now that You will please put Your words into my mouth and into the hearts of my brothers and sisters here, that we will all be taught by You and by Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen. Before I get started, I forgot to say this during announcements, but two weeks from today is our Home Church Sunday. We are going to be meeting and having churches in each other's homes. And we have five homes opened up and available. And there are sign-up sheets on that blue sign-up table right outside this door here. And please go ahead and sign up and let the hosts know what house you're going to be at so that they can prepare and get an idea for how many people are coming. Most of those places say can hold ten people, but most of them have also said, "Now we can hold more than ten." So if you need to go up to 12 or whatever to get your whole family in, that's fine. But please begin those sign-ups so that we can prepare for who's coming. Also right next to the sign-up sheets are some little informational flyers about what's going to happen on Home Church Sunday and how to organize and run that meeting. Because I know a lot of people are like, "Well, it sounds good, but I don't know what we're going to do." So there's a nice, long, detailed information flyer. And for those of you who are from the Facebook generation, there's a little bullet list flyer so that you can have that information however you prefer. So in preparation for today, I read the story of Palm Sunday, so I'm going to read that to you right now. Matthew 21, verses 1-17. "Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tide and a colt with her. Use them and bring them to Me. And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has needed them, and immediately He will send them.' All this was done that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet, saying, 'Tell the daughter of Zion, behold, your king is coming to you, lowly and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the full of a donkey.' So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their cloaks on them, and set him on them. And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road. Others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!' And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, 'Who is this?' So the multitude said, 'This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.' Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, 'It is written, my house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.' Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple and He healed them. So when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He did and the children crying out in the temple, saying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' they were indignant and said to Him, 'Do you hear what these are saying?' And Jesus said to them, 'Yes. Have you never read, out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants you have perfected praise?' And He left them and went out of the city to Bethany and He lodged there." So that is the story of Palm Sunday. It's the Sunday before what we call Easter Sunday. And as I began to pray over this, I said, 'God, what do You want us to learn this year from the story of Palm Sunday?' And I felt like there were four important lessons that could be gleaned from this. So we're going to talk about those. Number one, God's priorities are not necessarily our priorities. These people, the Jews at this time, were under Roman rule. And their prophets had said that a Messiah was coming and that this Messiah would establish a government and that He would be the King of kings and be the ultimate ruler and authority. And so, when people saw Jesus coming and recognized Him as the Messiah, they said to themselves, 'He's going to come. He's going to set up His Kingdom. He's going to establish a government.' They thought He was just going to march right up to Pilate and toss Him out on His ear. But what was Jesus' first priority when He came to town? Well, first thing He did was He cleared the temple. You see, while the people were obsessed with government, Jesus was concerned with God's glory and honor. No doubt the Roman government was bad and needed to go. But for Jesus, something else was more important. God's glory and honor. Is that our highest priority? As it was 2,000 years ago, so it is today, people are still obsessed with the government. Newspapers, television, internet, radio, all of it is used to talk about politics. It's easy to get swept up in that. But don't forget the most important thing. And it's not just politics. There can be all kinds of things that distract you from making sure God gets the glory and honor that He's due. Then church business can distract you from that. We have lots of Sunday schools and Bible studies and committees and building projects and on and on. And if you're doing those things to God's glory, then that's beautiful and wonderful. But if those have become your job or your hobby, then they can also be stealing the glory and honor from God. Hebrews 12.1 says, "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us and run with endurance the race that is set before us." These things that rob God of His glory and honor from our lives are the weights that we need to let go of. The money changers and the dove sellers in the temple, they were in church and they were doing a churchy job. But they were not giving glory and honor to God and Jesus drove them out. So the first lesson to learn from Paul Sunday is, let's drive out anything in our lives that robs God of His glory and honor. And make those things, make His glory and honor our priority. Anything you're not doing for God, either start doing it for Him or just get rid of it out of your life. Prune back your life until all that's left gives Him glory. The second thing that we can learn from the story of Paul Sunday. When you are following God's plan, others will have expectations for you that are not of God. Other people will always say, "Do it this way," or "Come do this." The people gathered around Jesus shouting "Hosanna" did not want Jesus to die on a cross. If they had been in charge of scheduling Jesus' itinerary, things would have played out a lot differently and a lot worse for you and me. But Jesus knew why He was there, and He knew what awaited Him at the end of that week. As weak humans, we often find ourselves deficient, deficient of certain emotional nourishment. We lack love and respect and self-worth. And oftentimes, we find that in the course of our duties, of our coming and going, we see that people will give us those things, and we start to feed on the love and the respect and the worth that other people place on us. We can become addicted to those things. And what begins to happen is we start working for those things from other people, rather than working for God and His pleasure. The most wicked people will even recognize that you are working for their honor and love, and they will use it to manipulate you. Well, what's the solution to that? If someone gives you love or respect or whatever, graciously thank them, fit in your heart, set it aside, and then go to God and say, "Now, what do you say?" Let God be your source for all you need emotionally. Let His truth and His Word be the foundation of your identity and self-worth. Ephesians 1.4 says, "Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Psalm 139.16, "Your eyes saw My substance being yet unformed, and in your book they were all written the days fashioned for Me, when as yet there were none of them." God's eyes were on you before you were even made. All your days were written out in His book before you even taking your first breath. You are something very special, and you are something very loved by your Heavenly Father. You do not need to become addicted to the love and gratitude of other people. You can be satisfied with God's love. Let His Holy Spirit be your comforter, corrector, and guide. Psalm 162.6 said, "He only is My rock and My salvation. He is My defense, I shall not be moved. He only is My rock." If you find yourself relying on Him sometimes, but on other people some other times, remember that He only should be your rock and your salvation. So lesson two is, "Let God be your provision, so that others cannot lead you away from His will." Lesson three, "Beware of old wineskins." I've talked about this a few times. Jesus rode into town on a donkey as prophesied. He cleared the temple of those who desecrated it. He did not stop anyone from shouting, "Hosanna to the son of David!" at Him. He performed many miracles right there on the temple steps, and it is easy for us to look back and say, "Clearly this is the Son of God." But the chief priests and the scribes didn't get it. They had been so used to living without a Messiah, that they just assumed that this guy wasn't Him either. There come seasons in our lives where relationships become routine. Maybe it's with a spouse, or with friends, or co-workers. The things that you used to do out of love turn into habit without heart. Those habits no longer feed our spirits the way that real relationships did. Once those relationships don't feed us anymore, people generally have one of two responses. Either they walk away from that relationship, or they double down their efforts, and doing the habits and the routine of the relationship, yet without the heart and the love. Revelation 2, verses 2-5 says, this is Jesus speaking to the churches, "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars. And you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for my name's sake, and have not become weary. Nevertheless, I have this against you. You have left your first love. Remember therefore, from where you have fallen, repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent." That's what the chief priests and the scribes were doing in this Palm Sunday story. They were so used to chasing down false messiahs, that they missed the real one right in front of them. They missed out on what God was doing around them, and what he might have done in and through them. Let's not miss out on what God is doing. Let's trust Him in faith and love to lead us, even if the place He leads us to is unfamiliar or uncomfortable. So lesson three is don't get so caught up with how you did it yesterday, that you miss how He's doing it today. Some things will stay the same, but some things will change. Be ready for both. And finally, the fourth lesson we can learn from the story of Palm Sunday, is that God's price for following Him is your whole life. Jesus was coming to Jerusalem for the grand finale, His death. All of the disciples but one are believed to have followed Christ in like manner, to an untimely death. Matthew 10.39 says, "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it." Matthew 16.24, "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.'" You may not be murdered for Christ, but as it says in Luke, no one having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God. This life is not the end. We are not yet in our day of rest. We are still in the work week. I'm not saying you don't get to rest or kick your feet up at the end of the day. But the harvest is great, but the laborers are few. That's what it says in Luke 10.2. I know we all need our rest and comfort and celebration, and in our spirits we crave that because that's what we were created for. We were created to be in the Garden of Eden and to just have a life where we enjoyed love and enjoyed relationship. That's what we were created for, and yet now we've been cast into this world. And there's a job to be done. We need to work. [Silence] We will have that rest and that comfort someday, and it will last for all eternity, and it will be beautiful and sweet, and every day will be better than the one before. But for now, we must put aside our lives and live for Him. Work at your job, take care of your family, but do it for Him and not for your comfort or your retirement. Matthew 6, 19, and 20. "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in and steal." Be constantly looking for ways to save lost souls, preach the Word, and edify the Church. Lesson 4 is, "Jesus paid it all, all to Him, my O." Let's pray. Wonderful, beautiful Jesus. We are so humbled at what You have done for us. It's Your faithfulness. It's Your sacrifice. God, we ask that we will please humbly learn to walk in Your footsteps in like manner as we live out our lives. Teach us how to live like You did and to live for You, and to not miss out what You are doing in us and around us, but to be a part of that, so that when we enter our rest in comfort, we do so, hearing You say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Show us this week as we go about our ways, where You're going to have us to go. In Jesus' name, amen.