

2CH Sunday at 7.30

Talks from the NSW Council of Churches

Palm Sunday message

Presented by Richard Quadrio

Introduction

Easter for most of us creates mixed emotions. We are all looking forward to a holiday and a few days off, but we are living in a world of great anxiety. Peace has once again evaded us. Economic crisis surrounds us. Illness is an ever present threat. For many, anxiety is very real.

But today is the day Christians celebrate as Palm Sunday, the day that Jesus rode into Jerusalem in triumph to the cheers and hope of the crowd who shouted hosanna. You know, in a strange way, the event of Palm Sunday still has relevance for today. Enjoy the hymn but stay with us as we explore the relevance of Palm Sunday in our troubled world today

Part 1

Recently our cricket team has had an amazing series win in South Africa. We watched the heroics for Philip Hughes and Mitchell Johnson. Sadly the team when they arrived home to Australia we really had little time for celebration- in fact some of the players did not even return home but have gone to other parts of the world to play different forms of cricket. Years ago when our cricketers won the world cup they were showered in ticket- tape parades. This time there was no time and as they prepared for what comes next .

When Jesus, towards the end of his ministry rode into Jerusalem – he experienced a celebration like a ticker tape parade. Instead of tickertape there were palm branches. Instead of an open top car there was a donkey. Instead of cheers of “good on you mate” – there was the cry Hosanna. Instead of adoration of sporting glory there was adoration for spiritual glory.

But that is where the comparison ends. For what is essential to realise about the Palm Sunday celebration is that the crowds got it wrong and the crowds still get it wrong. You see in some ways the crowds who hailed Jesus hailed a political liberator- they hailed one who would deliver them from the foreign rule of Rome.

But Jesus kingdom was not of this world. He came not to rule on a human throne but to rule in men’ s hearts. And sadly at times today Jesus is still misunderstood. To some he is the one who will deliver to us financial security and prosperity. To others he is the guarantee to healing and good health. Some still believe he will provide the political revolution that will oust the tyrants. But no, Jesus still comes to rule in men’ s and women hearts. He still comes to call us to follow. In humility he still comes to restore us to God. Though misunderstood Jesus still comes as our saviour and Lord.

I have been reading some time back a book on leadership by Rudolph Juliani. Juliani was the mayor of New York on the day of September 11 2001. It is fascinating to see how he responded to the news that unfolded that day.

When he first heard of the first plane flying into the first tower – he immediately went to the scene to see what was going on and to offer his leadership. Due to a range of circumstances he did not quite make it to the tower, but his view firmly was that as a leader he was called to be there and to see with his own eyes.

In the person of Jesus – God has visited our troubled world. God has not just observed from a distance. As Jesus rode to Jerusalem he was misunderstood. Sadly many today likewise still misunderstand the Jesus who came to rescue us and restore us to God

Part 2

Recently my wife and I attended a rather special concert in Milan in Italy. The musicians and his band though Americans seem to have a soft spot for the Italians – who knew every word or every song. It was for us a huge delight to attend this concert, to hear again the music and passion of the E street band and the singer – Bruce Springsteen. In outdoor soccer stadium 75,000 crazy Italians and a couple of Aussie tourists enjoyed a very special show.

I guess what I have always liked about Springsteen’s music is that he has always had something to say. Never content to just write nice little popular songs Bruce has always wanted in his music to reflect upon life and its meaning. The story goes that after September 11 Springsteen who lives in New Jersey - not far from New York was seen in the streets - in the days following the tragedy.

Again the story goes that a fan approached Bruce and said these special words: “ Bruce we need you.” The artist responded and recorded over the next few months an album called *The Rising*. It is a sad yet beautiful response to the suffering of the people.

The story of Palm Sunday will remind us that Jesus is still needed in our world. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey he again reminded the world that its values are often wrong. For God is not impressed by a display of power. The kid with the biggest and best toys does not impress God. Men who believe they alone hold the destiny of humanity in their hands do not impress God.

Jesus is needed today in so many ways:

- To remind us that God’s way is love not force
- That humility should be prized above arrogance
- That evil must be overcome (not with more evil) but with good.
- And that hope is rarely delivered in the by an army on a battlefield.

Jesus message was:

- To demonstrate the love of God in his teaching and service
- To deliver a message on a donkey as a symbol of weakness and humility.
- To turn the other cheek and love our enemies
- That hope was ultimately out of this world, which after all is passing away.

There are many today who see so many of the problems in the world as caused by religion. Rightly I guess they want to argue that religion only makes the place worse. When they hear me say that Jesus is needed today they may fear another religious argument.

But, strangely, Jesus rarely had a recorded religious argument. The only ones he had were with the phoney religious leaders of his day. IN fact we need Jesus to sort out our religious arguments. His call was simple – “Come and follow me.”

We are still in need of one who will lead us through. We are still in need of a shepherd. We are still very much in need of Jesus.

Part 3

For those who may have just joined us this morning let me recap. So for us today Palm Sunday is a reminder: A reminder first that Jesus is **still misunderstood** and we need to go back to the word and meet the real Jesus. Secondly the palm Sunday story reminds us that Jesus is **still needed** – desperately in our world today. Thirdly, Jesus is still **worthy of our praise!**

You know it’s not wrong to praise a cricket team – for there is much to enjoy! But you know they are only a bunch of guys playing a game. I recently read a biography of Mark Waugh. It makes for interesting reading, as he has been one of Australia’s greatest cricketers. But he is also just a guy from Bankstown who likes going to the trots. We idolise our sporting stars and put them on a pedestal – but they are just men who happen, for a while, to be very good at a sport we enjoy.

Likewise 75,000 adoring fans can cheer Bruce Springsteen but you know – he too is just a almost 60 year old man. On stage it is easy to treat an entertainer like he was a god! But I guess if we talked to his wife or kids, or neighbour or doctor, we would discover that he too is just a guy with great talents and probably very real weaknesses. But the man who walked into Jerusalem that palm Sunday was not just a guy! No. The extraordinary claim of the Easter message was that God was in Christ reconciling the world to him. Jesus was worthy of the praise and adoration of the Palm Sunday celebration.

And **Jesus is still worthy of our praise and worship.** Christians all over the world today will continue to sing the praise using the word “Hosanna!” We will continue to worship Jesus not only as a King but also as the King of Kings – the Lord of Lords. The one who alone is truly worthy! The one who alone are truly God and worthy of our praise and obedience and life.

So this Palm Sunday, and Easter lets lift our minds from the anxieties of this world – from our pain – our illness – our economic concerns. And let’s hail the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords – lets join in the throngs to shout Hosanna – and worship the one who will never disappoint.

Thanks so much for being part of our 2 CH service this morning. It has been great to recall the day when Jesus rode in triumph into Jerusalem. It is remarkable that for many then and now Jesus is misunderstood. But let’s not forget that like then Jesus message and person are still very much needed in our troubled world. Finally remember this Jesus continues to be the visible image of the invisible father – and as such is worthy of our praise.

Lord thank you for the gift of your son- our prayer is that we may know who is – why he is needed and that he indeed is worthy of our praise. Amen.