

Mark 11:1-10

What do you think **heaven** is going to be like? I'm pretty sure that **whatever** you're thinking, there are many people in our world today who would **disagree** with you. That's because many people in our world today think that **heaven** is going to be **boring** - **so** boring that they're not even interested in **going** there. They hear from their pastors, and read in their Bibles, that heaven is a place where we **praise God** - a place where we **worship** God and **sing** His praises - a place where we stand before our Creator and **thank Him** for all the wonderful things He has done, and for the great **love** He has shown to us. Worship? - Praise? - Singing? - day after day after day? - for all **eternity**? **BOR-ING!** No thank you. Unfortunately these are the same attitudes that keep people from praising God here on the **earth** too. It doesn't take much of an **excuse** for a spiritually **weak** person to stay **away** from God's house. All a person with **faltering** faith needs to hear is that church is **boring**, and he'll have all the reason he needs to **stay away**. All a **fearful** sinner needs to hear is that there are some bland **religious** people at church, and he'll be **condemning** them all as **hypocrites** - even if he has never even **met** any of them before. All a **lazy, sick** soul needs to hear is that it's harder to read and understand the **Bible** than it is to push the **power button** on his TV remote, and he'll never **bother** taking his Bible off the bookshelf.

But **worship** and **praise** are **important**. And today is Palm Sunday - one of the **greatest** days of **worship** and **praise** in the whole church year. Not only is it a day on which we hear about the crowd of men, women, and children **praising Jesus** as He triumphantly entered into Jerusalem; but it's **also** a day on which we learn **how** to praise our God, and **why** we praise our God. The triumphant entry into Jerusalem which we celebrate today, serves as the **backdrop** for **all** praise. Each individual **detail** helps us to understand what **praise** is really all about. Jesus' humble but **royal** entry into the capitol city on a **colt** draws our attention to Him as our **King**. The **clothing** and the **palm** branches which were thrown in His path encourage us to bring Him **our gifts** too. And the **singing** of the **children** and the **crowds** of people, encourage **us** to sing **our hymns** of praise. Though **many** people in our world would rather go to **hell** than to find joy in **worship** and **praise**, today **we** will join together with that Palm Sunday crowd, and we will lift up our **Hands of Praise**.

Many people **mistakenly** think that praising God is something that can only be done in **church**. But, the reality is that **most** of the praising of God that happens on earth takes place **outside** of church buildings. All the **Palm Sunday** praise of Jesus Christ took place **outside** of God's house. In fact, some of the **greatest** praise

of Jesus took place even **before** His triumphal entry, **before** the singing, and **before** the spreading of the palm branches. The praise **started** with the obedient hands of two of Jesus' **disciples**. Jesus told them to go into the city, and there they would find a **colt** tied up which they should just **take**, and bring back to **Him**. If anybody **said** anything, they should simply tell them that **Jesus** needed it, and everything would be **fine**. Not only did those **disciples** do what they were told **without question**, but the man to whom the colt **belonged** would raise **his** hands in praise, by also **giving** the colt to them **without question**.

Unquestioning **obedience** to **God** is the kind of praise the Lord needs more of **today**. Praising Jesus means more than just praying, "*Your will be done on earth.*" It means voluntarily **doing** Jesus' will on this earth without **questioning** the Lord's **wisdom** or His **love**. Obviously Jesus' instructions were **unusual**. Obviously the disciples who were told to get the colt **had** questions like. "Jesus, how do you know the colt will **be** there? How do you know we can **take** it without asking anybody? And if somebody **questions** us about what we're doing, how do you know the owner will **let** us take it?" But they didn't **ask** those questions. They simply praised Jesus with their **obedience**.

Our world **doesn't** give Jesus that kind of **praise**. They **question** God and His Word all the time. They **question** why God even has a **right** to tell us what to do at **all**. They **question** how God can send **troubles** into our lives, and still claim to **love** us. They accuse the Bible of **injustice** when it names **man** as the **head** of the woman, and **woman** as his **helper**. They **question** why they can't live together without **marriage** - why they can't **curse** and **swear** if everybody else does - why they have to go to **church** if they feel fine **without** it. And the **questions** go on and on **endlessly**. But **believers** praise God with **obedience** in their daily lives. Christians obey **without** questioning Jesus' **authority** or His **wisdom**. They strive to live good, clean, decent, and honest lives every day. They don't just **pray**, "*Your will be done,*" but they strive to **live** godly lives, so that Jesus' will **is** done on the earth. That's **praise**. That's **worship** which pleases **God**.

The crowds on Palm Sunday didn't **hold back** with their praise of Jesus. One person happily gave the use of his **colt** - others took off their **coats**, and threw them in His **path** to roll out the red carpet for Jesus. Still others cut down **palm branches** and threw **them** in His path, as a symbol of Jesus' **victory**. It makes us wonder what **we** can do for Jesus **today** - on Palm Sunday, 2021? Every day there are people in our world who **die** without having heard the **Good News** that Jesus is their **Savior**. We can use our **Hands Of Praise** to continue to share the resources

we have, to send that message out into the world, and make sure that **others receive** that saving message.

Another kind of praise on that first Palm Sunday is evident in the things the people **said**. We're told, "*Those who went in front and those who followed were crying out, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!'*" Their praise is **enthusiastic** - it's **loud** - it's **joyous** and **happy**. They didn't need a printed **liturgy** or a **hymnal** to carry out their praise. They didn't have to gather to **rehearse** their **songs**. They didn't **object** because they thought that welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem would be **dull** and **boring**. In fact, they didn't need to be at the Temple at all in order to **praise God**. And the same thing is true for **us** as well. Jesus **loves** it when **sincere** and **spontaneous praise** comes from our lips. Nobody is ever going to be drawn to Christianity by **cursing** and **swearing** - or by **arguing** and **fighting** about religion - or by **bad-mouthing** the **church** and its **members** - or by being **grumpy** and **pessimistic** all the time. But they **will** be drawn to the Savior when our **Hands Of Praise** also become **Mouths Of Praise** - when we confess our **faith** to the weak and sinful - when we openly **pray** for those who are in need - and when we aren't afraid to **gather together** to worship the Lord, and to sing **hymns** to Him - hymns which proclaim His **goodness** and **mercy**.

We will have **lots** of wonderful opportunities to **praise Jesus** in the days to come. Think about all the different ways we can **praise God** in worship just this coming **week**. We can praise Him for the gift of His **body** and **blood** on Maundy Thursday. We can praise Him for His sacrificial **death** on the **cross** on Good Friday. And then we can praise Him for His **resurrection** from the dead, and the **guarantee** of everlasting **life** on Easter Sunday. **Don't** miss the **point**. These are **more** than just **average** days on the church calendar. These are wonderful **opportunities** to **focus** on what is truly **important** in life.

Jesus **loves** it when we **praise** Him - not just here in **church**, but out in the **world** too - and **especially** in the hearing of His **enemies**. Many people may think that heaven will be **boring** - just a lot of **singing** and **praising** God - but if they feel that way, it's probably because they aren't praising God **now** either. Let's remember that there were **two** groups of people **watching** Jesus as He entered into Jerusalem - those who **praised** Him, and those who **hated** Him. May we always be found in the crowd of people who **praise** Jesus. May our hands **always** be **Hands Of Praise**, as we bring Him our faithful and unquestioning **obedience** - as we continue to use our resources to **share** His Good News with others - and as we

strive to live **godly** lives, so that God's will is **done** on the earth, as it already **is** done in heaven. Amen.