

SMALL GROUPS

LIFE IS BETTER TOGETHER

Palm Sunday Part 1: “Get Rid of Guilt and Shame Once and For All”

ICEBREAKER |

Do you have a guilty pleasure? Maybe it's a junk food, a reality TV show, or even a side hobby. Share your guiltiest of guilty pleasures with your group.

INTRODUCTION |

All of us experience feelings of guilt and shame. When we are embarrassed to admit we like a certain TV show or junk food, we call it a “guilty pleasure.” We don't want anyone knowing about it! But when it comes to a past sin or regret, we bear the burden of guilt and shame. It's like an uncomfortable garment that's always there, bunching up under our clothes. Did you know that Jesus came to get rid of our guilt and shame once and for all?

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Pastor Dave taught us about the “vest of shame” that many of us wear. In fact, we all wear it at some time in our lives. Maybe it’s the shame of an unhealthy habit, a struggling relationship, or unruly anxiety. It could be a hidden sin or a public sentence. It might be that we’re addicted, we neglect our family, or we work too much.

Whatever that “vest of shame” is, we all feel it when we put it on. And we might be tempted to think we have to do something to take it off. Whether that means being punished for what we did wrong or working extra hard to earn our way. But there’s another truth:

God deals with your sin by what Jesus did on the cross rather than you dealing with your sins through what you do.

Take a look at this promise from the Bible:

Christ carried the burden of our sins. He was nailed to the cross, so we would stop sinning and start living right. By His cuts and bruises you are healed.

1 Peter 2:24 (CEV)

What are some examples of the “burden of sin” that you’ve carried? Maybe it’s a relationship that was hurt, a feeling of guilt you couldn’t shake, or even an embarrassment that you still suffer.

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The story of the cross begins on Palm Sunday. Nearly 2000 years ago, Jesus came to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, a Jewish holiday. The Gospel of John describes it this way:

The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet Him, shouting, “Hosanna!” “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Blessed is the king of Israel!”

John 12:12-13 (NIV)

Here are just a few facts about Palm Sunday:

- It's always the Sunday before Easter.
- We celebrate the "Triumphal Entry" of Jesus.
- He rode a young donkey, which was very strange especially for a religious leader or king.
- He came from the area of Jericho and Bethany into Jerusalem with crowds following Him.
- He was also met with large crowds when He entered the city.
- They shouted praise, sang songs, and lay down their cloaks and palm leaves at the feet of His donkey.

The way the people celebrated Jesus was just like how their ancestors celebrated the kings of Israel. This was Jesus' royal coronation, but it was also the beginning of His crucifixion. Why do you think the same people who wanted to crown Him as king on Sunday would cry out for His death on Friday? It's because Jesus didn't become their King the way they expected.

Do you ever struggle when Jesus is the King of your life in a way that you didn't expect Him to be? Do you ever get upset with the ways He is the Lord, the Leader of your life?

Please share with the group a productive way you process things when God doesn't meet your expectations.

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The word "hosanna" is a Hebrew word that means "Save now!" It's a shout of praise. It may sound strange to us, but it makes perfect sense when you see it in its full context and impact.

The song that the people sang in John 12 was actually from the Psalms, an ancient song book that we still use today. Psalm 118 is the exact one they were quoting. Take a look at one of the verses just after the phrase "Hosanna!"

Listen to the glad shouts of victory in the tents of God's people: "The LORD's mighty power has done it!"

Psalm 118:15 (GNT)

Notice that it's the Lord's mighty power that does it. It's not up to us. It's not our ability to do good. It's not our great intellect or amazing talent. It's all up to God and what He can do in our lives.

Often, we think that it's all on our shoulders. The guilt and shame we feel is magnified by our inability to get ourselves out of the mess we got ourselves into. But when we shout "Hosanna!" we are asking for God's help now and telling the whole world that He has delivered us.

Do you ever feel like it's all up to you? Why do you think we go back to this idea over and over again? (Examples, culture tells us that it's up to us to solve our problems, we think if we work hard enough we can "backspace" over our guilt)

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Not only does "hosanna" mean that He saves us from our past, but He also saves us with prosperity. He gives us everything we need to keep going.

Save now, I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity.

Psalm 118:25 (NKJV)

We often think of salvation as a way to erase our past. Then, it's all up to us to write a new future. Just don't mess up and get out of line! Instead, we should think of the prosperity God has for us in the future. Our salvation is not just a way to cover our past, but it's a way to prepare our future.

There are people all over the island who need to hear that Jesus not only saves them from their past mistakes but wants to give them future prosperity. Who do you know personally who needs to hear this message? Who are two people you can invite to attend the Easter services online or in person? (If you're attending in person, please reserve your tickets ASAP on our New Hope Windward website)

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John tells us that the whole scene that happened on Palm Sunday was in response to a prophecy. And that prophecy began with the words “Do not fear.” Isn’t that amazing? Hundreds of years before it happened, and God was saying, “Don’t be afraid.” Thousands of years later, and the words are the same: “Don’t be afraid.”

There are a lot of things to be afraid of, to be worried about, and to have anxiety over. There are bills due, jobs that may be lost, family members who get sick. Turn on the news for five minutes and you may want to turn it off for five months.

But the message of God is, over and over again, we don’t have anything to be afraid of. Palm Sunday teaches us that God saved, that He provides, and that He wipes away all our fears.

What is on your heart right now, weighing it down? What fear, worry, or anxiety are you carrying? How does it feel to hear God say to you, “Do not fear”?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

There is a certain anticipation for Easter this year, maybe more than ever before. Last year, we were restricted from meeting in person. In some ways, that makes this year even more special. This week, as you think about the first Palm Sunday:

- How will you prepare your heart for this Palm Sunday?
- Who will you invite to Easter?
- What will you do knowing that God has removed your guilt and shame once and for all.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Jesus, we thank You for taking away every ounce of guilt and shame from our lives. Sometimes, it feels heavy on our shoulders and heart. But we know that You've done all that needs to be done on the cross. Help us live out that truth of salvation today and every day.

SCRIPTURES FOR S.O.A.P.

Day 1: *You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!"*

Isaiah 40:9 (NIV)

Day 2: *Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

Zechariah 9:9 (NIV)

Day 3: *Salvation belongs to the LORD. Your blessing is upon Your people.*

Psalms 3:8 (NKJV)

Day 4: *Carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*

Galatians 6:2 (BSB)

Day 5: *At first His disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about Him and that these things had been done to Him.*

John 12:16 (NIV)