

WELCOME 13th April 2025 – PALM SUNDAY '25 C

Luke 19:28-48 & 20:1-8

Welcome! What a blessing to be together again today! With your worship order you have in your hands **Bible Study Qs/Growing Praise handouts...** Those are provided to lead you deeper into God's word/work in your life, & help you share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups on Friday @ 1p.m.**

As we move into this week... Binoculars & telescopes; lenses that help us see what's far away. Magnifying glasses, microscopes & our own reading glasses to see what's close up. Some of us need lenses all the time. We see the world through other "lenses" as well...each of those lenses colours, shapes & sometimes distorts our view.

The lenses of our history...family, community, experience, or national origin effect how we see the world. Our social or work status & habits...race...faith...sex...married or single parent or not all shape/filter how we view life & those w/ whom we share it.

This week we're asking the Holy Spirit to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves: to see ourselves & this world through the unfiltered eyes of Jesus. To see beyond our biases & broken vision to what's real...true...life-giving.

Today as Jesus enters Jerusalem for the last time, some viewed him through the lens of King David...warrior/conqueror who would rout the oppressing Romans & rebuild what was lost through the ages. Others as a problem to be solved/eliminated But none saw him as he was...One w/ the authority to save...heal...rescue & restore all creation to the Father...once & for all. To defeat the last enemy: death...forever.

"Go into that village over there," Jesus told them. "As you enter it, you will see a young donkey tied there that no one has ever ridden. Untie it & bring it here.

If anyone asks, 'Why are you untying that colt?' just say, 'The Lord needs it.'"

Jesus invites us to live under his authority...to allow him authority over our lives, thoughts, words, decisions & deeds so that we too would experience his healing, rescue, restoration & salvation...ultimately his unsurpassed joy, abundant life, & eternal love...our lives solely for his purpose & receive from him authority to bear that promise...gift to the world around us...

Jesus' final authority was to conquer The Enemy,
not necessarily *our* enemies.

Let's pray...then explore & experience that together...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord Jesus Christ, to shouts & songs you entered a city that would reject you & where you would die for all people. Enter our hearts, we pray, and subdue them to your will. Crucify our sinful selves & raise us in your likeness. As your disciples praised your coming and spread garments in your way, make us ready to lay at your feet all that we have and are, that we too may praise your arrival by your spirit among us. In your name we pray Lord Jesus... Amen!

LET'S HEAR GOD'S WORD...

FAITH CHAT:

I know I say this every Palm Sunday... "Hosanna" means both "Praise God!" & "God Help!"

1. If you were to praise & thank God for one thing today...What would it be?
If you were to ask God's help today...?
2. How do you define "authority"? How can "authority" be used either well or badly?

(PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON)

Let's pray...Lord Jesus, Let your life reach its fullness in us. In your love create in us a hope in you and a trust in your promises so large and so deep that everything and everyone around us joins us in praising you for your grace which is without measure and your life that never ends. Take authority over all we are...every desire, dream, decision...every word every relationship every moment everything we hold precious until all that's left of us is you. In your Name we pray...Amen.

PALM SUNDAY '25 C – UNFILTERED AUTHORITY

I enjoyed hearing us wrestle to define 'authority.' It was like we couldn't use the word w/o including 'power' as well. For most of us, the words 'power' & 'authority' are synonyms...we use them to mean the same thing. We often think of 'power' - the ability or capacity to do something or make something happen (effect an outcome). Most dictionary definitions of 'authority' include the word 'power' & say things like, 'give orders, make decisions, & enforce obedience...to direct or control someone or something.' But I was talking to a friend this week...very insightful: "A **bully** has power...fear, coercion, obedience...take your lunch \$\$, but the **Principal** has authority...to make that stop...to create a safer learning & growing environment for everyone...to make self-discipline a part of the school's culture & to hold accountable those who reject that authority." *Absolutely!* I wonder then... Could we say...

'Authority' – being responsible for the beneficial outcomes of one's role, wisdom, giftedness, or experience. Authority is *NOT* just a different kind of power...but the responsibility to effect good according to your abilities & capacities...oversight w/ the expectation of good results for others not self-enrichment...much like Fmr US Pres Harry Truman's desk **sign**: "*the buck stops here.*" Truman knew that whatever occurred during his term in office eventually washed back on him...His authority as Pres was a responsibility to effect good that he took w/ grave seriousness.

Throughout Jesus' ministry...what struck people was his AUTHORITY...not his raw power but that he had an uncanny capacity to effect good in people's lives that emerged strictly from w/in. From his earliest days...**Jesus** & his companions went to the town of Capernaum. When the Sabbath day came, he went into the synagogue & began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, for he taught with real authority – quite unlike the teachers of religious law. – Mk 1:21-22...which means when Jesus spoke, the people heard the truth as it emerged from the heart of God & they knew it. Not like the rabbis quoting other rabbis...but from the origin/source of truth he spoke & it transformed how they saw themselves & their relationship w/ God/others... The very act of hearing him made their hearts & lives swell in joy...

But even more...when Jesus spoke **GOOD** happened...**Suddenly**, a man in the synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, "Why are you interfering with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" But Jesus rebuked him. "Be quiet! Come out of the man," he ordered. At that, the evil spirit screamed, shook the man violently, & then came out of him. Amazement gripped all the people, & they asked each other, "What sort of new teaching is this?" "It has such authority! Even evil spirits obey his orders!" – Mk 1:23-27/Lk 4:31-37 Jesus' authority to transform lives for good was recognized by others as well...others w/ authority.

In Lk 7...a respected Roman officer sends Jewish elders to get Jesus to heal the officer's valued servant. Jesus willingly goes...**But** just before they arrived at the house, the officer sent some friends to say, "Lord, don't trouble yourself by coming to my home, for I am not worthy of such an honour. I am not even worthy to come & meet you. Just say the word from where you are, & my servant will be healed. I know this because I am under the authority of my superior officers, & I have authority over my soldiers. I only need to say, 'Go,' & they go, or 'Come,' & they come. And to my slaves, 'Do this,' they do it." When Jesus heard this, he was amazed. Turning to the crowd that was following him, he said, "I tell you, I haven't seen faith like this in all Israel!" And when the officer's friends returned to his house, they found the slave completely healed. – Lk 7:6-10

Over & over...Jesus reveals his authority in effecting good that transforms lives & then restores/gives life...casting out demons & healings by the score but Luke then records: **Soon** afterward Jesus went with his disciples to the village of Nain, & a large crowd followed him. A funeral procession was coming out as he approached the village gate. The young man who had died was a widow's only son, & a large crowd from the village was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart overflowed with compassion. "Don't cry!" he said. Then he walked over to the coffin & touched it. The bearers stopped. "Young man," he said, "I tell you, get up." Then the dead boy sat up & began to talk! Jesus gave him back to his mother. Great fear swept the crowd, & they praised God, saying, "A mighty prophet has risen among us! God has visited his people today!" – Lk 7:11-16 The crowds recognized God's authority over life/death in Jesus... They called him a prophet, but they knew the authority of God at work when they saw it. (Jairus' daughter & Lazarus)

Jesus' authority also scared the disciples...**One** day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat & started out. As they sailed across, Jesus settled down for a nap. But soon a fierce storm came down on the lake. The boat was filling with water, & they were in real danger. The disciples went & woke him up, shouting, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind & the raging waves. Suddenly the storm stopped & all was calm. Then he asked them, "Where is your faith?" The disciples were terrified & amazed. "Who is this man?" they asked each other. "When he gives a command, even the wind & waves obey him!" – Lk 8:22-25 What struck people was his AUTHORITY...not his raw power but that he had an uncanny capacity to effect good in people's lives that emerged strictly from w/in...to protect, restore, deliver...illness, death, evil, forces of nature...to speak the truth...

But even more...**One** day while Jesus was teaching, some Pharisees & teachers of religious law were sitting nearby...Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a sleeping mat. They tried to take him inside to Jesus, but they couldn't reach him because of the crowd. So they went up to the roof & took off some tiles. Then they lowered the sick man on his mat down into the crowd, right in front of Jesus. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the man, "Young man, your sins are forgiven." But the Pharisees & teachers of religious law

said to themselves, "Who does he think he is? That's blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!" Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he asked them, "Why do you question this in your hearts? Is it easier to say 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Stand up & walk'? So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins." Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man & said, "Stand up, pick up your mat, & go home!" Immediately, as everyone watched, the man jumped up, picked up his mat, & went home praising God." – Lk 5:17-25 They didn't want to admit it, but if only **GOD** has "authority" to forgive & Jesus just proved he **CAN...?**

Here especially...the authority to forgive sin does not sit in isolation...forgiveness is central to Jesus' authority to give life...**Jesus** said, "I assure you that the time is coming, indeed it's here now, when the dead will hear my voice—the voice of the Son of God. Those who listen will live. The Father has life in himself, & he has granted that same life-giving power to his Son. And he has given him authority to judge everyone because he is the Son of Man..." – Jn 5:25-27 How we relate to Jesus determines how we experience eternity. Jesus' authority to forgive sin leads him to make this promise: **Jesus** looked up to heaven & said, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you. For you have given him authority over everyone. He gives eternal life to each one you have given him. And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, & Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth." – Jn 17:1-3 Authority to forgive sin is authority to restore our relationship to the Father...relocates us from darkness/light, death/life, destruction/perishing to abundant eternal life...now & forever...**AND...**

As Jesus rode into Jerusalem...not even his closest followers understood Jesus was the One w/ the authority to save...heal...rescue & restore all creation to the Father once & for all. To defeat the last enemy: death...forever. The cheering mobs are singing Ps 118...shot through w/ violent military language & triumphant brutal military imagery. It reverberates w/ God's vengeance against the enemies of Israel... thunders God's justice against tyrants who oppress God's people. This is a freedom song – a revolutionary tune. In their minds this payback time against the Romans... when the Jews get to rise up & reclaim David's dynasty. When **they** get to be the powerful. When **they** get to be the mighty. When **they** get to exercise violence & vengeance...to step on instead of being stepped on.

For those worshippers flooding into Jerusalem for Passover...they only know authority as power...& if Jesus has it he better use it to help them sing the old song of Moses & Miriam again: Ps 118:14 **The Lord is my strength & my song; he has given me victory.** Those words were first sung by God's people on the freedom side of the Red Sea as Pharaoh's dead soldiers bob on the waves that God flooded over them. **I will sing unto the Lord for he has triumphed gloriously – horse & rider hurled into the sea.** To do that to the Romans! Now **THAT'S** the authority they want from Jesus.

Jesus rides into Jerusalem to the shouts/acclaim of the thronging mob...the whole city is in an uproar...but what does Jesus do? Riot? Revolt? Rebellion? Storm Pilate's palace? Deliver a petition filled w/ demands & signatures to Herod? Plot an overthrow strategy in secret w/ his followers? Only this...**Jesus** entered the Temple & began to drive out all the people buying & selling animals for sacrifice. He knocked over the tables of the money changers & the chairs of those selling doves." – Lk 19:45

Jesus did what he always did...No power grab. No power play. Instead, he challenged the powerful & the privileged & the proud so all could have access to the presence of God. Remember this takes place in the court of the gentiles...the only place outsiders could worship or pray or be near God & the traditional insiders had captured that place for their own ends. So he drove them out. He called them thieves...robbers...whose only interest is themselves...So he drove them out.

Jesus rides into town & rejects every form of earthly power & its use...force/might & coercion/manipulation. Jesus reveals the authority of a king who will triumph by sacrificial love. Instead of grasping power/glorious like the mob wanted, instead of seizing the accolades as a tidal wave into the place of honour, instead of clinging to his divine privileges...Jesus laid his life fully into the mission of God to redeem the world. His full authority was on display fulfilling the Father's will...**he** made himself nothing...he humbled himself in obedience to God & died a criminal's death on a cross..." – Php 2:7-8

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not necessarily **our** enemies.

Jesus invites us to live under his authority...to allow him authority over our lives, thoughts, words, decisions & deeds so that we too would experience his healing, rescue, restoration & salvation...ultimately his unsurpassed joy, abundant life, & eternal love... our lives solely for his purpose & receive from him authority to bear that promise...gift to the world around us...

As you leave today, be specific & share w/ your neighbour...

TAKE IT HOME

If you were to ask Jesus to take authority over 1 part of your life today...
what would you ask?

(Be specific...Jesus exercise your authority for ____ in me...or in the life of someone else?)

Let's pray together... (On the front page)