PALM SUNDAY - A PURPOSEFUL JOURNEY

INTRODUCTION

A. Palm Sunday defines what would take place on Good Friday and Easter Sunday.
B. What we believe about Jesus directly impacts what we think about this season.
C. What did Jesus believe about Himself? The following are from the Gospel of John.
   a. *I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life (*8:12).
   b. *for unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins* (8:24).
   c. *...for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me* (8:42).
   d. *...before Abraham was born, I am* (8:58).
   e. *I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies* (11:25).
   f. *I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me* (14:6).

5. Let's spend a few moments to better understand Palm Sunday, it is a matter of life and death.

Matthew 21:1 - 17

A. Introduction
   1. The last 8 chapters of the book of Matthew are devoted to one week in the life of Christ.
   2. Matthew 21 is the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.
   3. This whole week is the culmination of Jesus' teaching.
   4. Easter Sunday is the end of this one week with the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

B. Examination of Matthew 21:1-17 which declares that Jesus is the Messiah.
   1. Preparation for the ride (1-6), ***Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to he Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.' " The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them.***

      a. Jesus knew where the animals were and knew they would be given to the disciples for His use.
      b. Reference to Zechariah 9:9, *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*
      c. This is the fulfillment from a prophecy made more than 500 years earlier.
      d. Jesus is the sovereign King, the One Who has authority.

   2. Ride into Jerusalem with the cries of the people (7-11), ***They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."***

      a. People put down coats on the path and others put down palm leaves (the emblem of the nation), to acknowledge Jesus' kingship.
      b. Reference to Psalm 118:25-26, *Save us, we pray, O Lord! O Lord, we pray, give us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! We bless you from the house of the Lord.*
      c. "Hosanna," means save. The people are praising God for sending the Messiah, the Savior of Israel, prophesying to what they did not understand. The confusion of the people and the disciples is that they thought that Jesus had entered Jerusalem to ascend the throne, not to die on a cross.
      d. The same ones who were shouting *Hosanna* would in a few days shout, *Crucify Him*.
      e. Jesus is the One Who brings salvation but His kingship will be reserved for a second entrance in the future.

3. Cleansing of the Temple (12-13), ***And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers."***

   a. Jesus cleansed the Temple in preparation of the perfect sacrifice, Himself.
   b. His reference of Isaiah 56:7, *...for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples* and Jeremiah 7:11, *Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the Lord.*
   c. At the point of Jesus' death, the Temple veil was ripped from top to bottom.
   d. Jesus is the divine Lord, the messenger of the covenant, the perfect sacrifice.

4. Report of healings and the praise by children (14-17), ***And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant, and they 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 infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise'?" And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.***

   a. Jesus healed the blind and the lame. The religious leaders were indignant but children were rejoicing.
   b. Jesus reference of Psalm 8:2, *Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger.*
   c. Jesus is worthy of praise for Who He is and what He did. If the religious refuse to praise Him, children will rejoice and stones will cry out.

Conclusion

A. Easter is certainly a time for families, for flowers blooming and grass growing. It is a time for new birth, not only physically but spiritually.
B. Easter should be a time of rejoicing but it should be a time of reflection, as well.
   1. Do I believe that Jesus came to give eternal life, not just a good example?
   2. Do I want to acknowledge Him as King of Kings out of a heart of thanksgiving, not out of forced submission? Because, He will make a second entrance,

      Note Zech. 14:1-11, Rev. 19:11-16, *Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.*

   3. Palm Sunday is not just a prelude to Easter Sunday, it is an explanation of what Easter Sunday is all about.
   4. Do I choose to accept His payment for my sins at the cross, based on Who He is, and confirmed by His resurrection from the dead?
   5. Jesus chose to go to the cross? Do you?