

Laying Down Our Palms

Today we celebrate Palm Sunday. Palm Sunday commemorates the time Jesus entered into Jerusalem for the last week of his life. The people lined the road shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" As they did that they cut palm branches and laid them in the path of the donkey Jesus was riding on.

For a lot of us the mention of palm trees evokes visions of the beach and warmer weather. For the Israelites palm branches meant something entirely different. In ancient times, palm branches symbolized goodness, well-being, joy and victory. In an arid and dry region, the palm tree stood out sometimes as the only green plant around. It thus symbolizes life as they are forever green.

Jesus signified joyous victory and freedom through which He would bring deliverance and life. These were people oppressed by Roman rule looking for hope. According to one of God's O.T. ceremonial laws, Israelites were to shake palms during the Feast of Tabernacles (commemorating the 40 years of wandering in the Wilderness) to express joy (Lev.23:40). **This shaking was to convey the feeling: everything is going to be better from now on.**

Worship was at the core of that Palm Sunday moment even if those at that time did not truly understand what Jesus arrival meant. We know his arrival in Jerusalem wasn't to be crowned King but to die for our sins thus setting us free to live victoriously and eternally! Today we celebrate the victory we have through Jesus and the joy it brings us in life. That is why we worship!

Our time of offering is a way that we show our love and faith in Jesus by giving back that which He has entrusted to us. So, we don't stop worship to take up the offering. The offering is worship!

So here is what I am going to ask us to do for this offering. Make your gift today your symbolic palm branch. Let's lay our branches at the foot of Jesus in celebration that no matter what else happens in our lives He will always be with us! Let's let our offering be our own, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"