

**March 24, 2024 – Palm Sunday**

**“God’s Faith in Us” by Pastor Julio Romero**

**Gospel: Mark 11:1-11**

Are you getting ready for the solar eclipse that will happen on April 8<sup>th</sup>? It will be in its full visual effect in Niagara Falls and will last for almost four and a half minutes. Well, the city seems to be getting ready for it. I have seen some outdoor signs promoting this phenomenon and the hotel industry expects a flood of tourists to witness this eclipse that won’t be seen again until the year 2044.

This type of celestial phenomenon always awakes the curiosity of all of us. I once read the story about the passing of Haley’s Comet that says:

A school superintendent told his assistant superintendent the following: "Next Thursday at 10:30am, Haley’s Comet will appear over this area. This is an event which occurs only once every 75 years. Call the school principals and have them assemble their teachers and classes on their athletic fields and explain this phenomenon to them. If it rains, then cancel the day’s observation and have the classes meet in the auditorium to see a film about the comet."

Assistant superintendent to school principals: "By order of the superintendent of schools, next Thursday at 10:30 Haley’s Comet will appear over your athletic field. If it rains, then cancel the day’s classes and report to the auditorium with your teachers and students where you will be shown films, a phenomenal event which occurs only once every 75 years."

Principals to teachers: "By order of the phenomenal superintendent of schools, at 10:30 next Thursday Haley’s Comet will appear in the auditorium. In case of rain over the athletic field, the superintendent will give another order-something which occurs only once every 75 years."

Teachers to students: "Next Thursday at 10:30 the superintendent of schools will appear in our school auditorium with Haley’s Comet; something which occurs once every 75 years. If it rains, the superintendent will cancel the comet and will order us out to our phenomenal athletic field."

Students to parents: "When it rains next Thursday at 10:30 over the school athletic field, the phenomenal 75-year-old superintendent of schools will cancel all classes and appear before the school in the auditorium accompanied by Bill Haley and the Comets."

Maybe this story is an exaggeration of how the event of Palm Sunday was written in the four Gospels, but the point is that there are some differences in how the story is told in all of them.

For example, in the Gospel of Matthew we have the Lord Jesus riding on a donkey and on a colt. The Gospel of Mark doesn't mention palm branches. It says leafy branches.

The crowd's shout in Matthew is: "*Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*"

The Gospel of Luke says, "*Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.*"

In the Gospel of John, there is a short shout from the crowd: "*Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel!*"

There are other parts in the story that are told differently or there are some details that are missed or not written in all of them. Like the example above, we cannot expect an exact account of the story of Palm Sunday that was written at different times and by different people.

As you already heard from the Gospel of Mark, the story begins when the Lord Jesus and his disciples were on their way to Jerusalem and came to the Mount of Olives. He said to his disciples: "*Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey, untie it and bring it to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs it.' And he will send it immediately.*"

What I find remarkable is the faith the Lord Jesus had in the owner of the donkey; he was certain that the disciples were not going to have any problem getting the animal. Jesus had faith that there was not going to be any excuse not to serve God.

And when he came into Jerusalem, Jesus had faith that he was going to be welcomed and people were going to see him for who he was: "The Messiah, the Saviour of the

World”. Jesus had faith that at least for a moment they were going to come to him and he was going to gather them under his wings like a hen gathers her chicks.

*“Oh Jerusalem, ... how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.”* (Matthew 23:37)

When it comes to the topic of “Faith”, we always talk about our personal faith, we normally don’t think of the faith that God has in us.

And the amazing thing about God is that He doesn’t lose faith in us. Even when we fail him, God doesn’t cancel his faith and love for us. When our Lord Jesus chose his disciples, he already knew that they were going to fail him, to abandon him in moments when he needed them the most. Despite all that, he was still trusting in them and loving them.

Jesus didn’t cancel his love for the people of Jerusalem, not even at the point when some of them were shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Neither did God cancel his love for humanity when His own Son was being nailed onto a cross and buried in a dark tomb.

It is hard to believe that it was in those moments, in the moments when God’s own heart was being broken by the shouting of “Crucify him, Crucify him”, when God’s own body was being torn apart by a whip hitting his back over and over, by a crown of thorns on his head, by the weight of a heavy cross on his shoulders, by the sharp points of nails and a spear in his hands and side that God’s words could not be heard much louder saying, “I love you and not even now is my love for you cancelled; this is the moment when I love you the most.”

It sounds too much to ask, but this is the kind of love we need to grow in our hearts, the love that forgives, the love that sacrifices everything, the love that creates peace. On Thursday this week, we are going to be reading Jesus’ last message to his disciples at his last supper with them. There he said, *“Love one another as I have loved you.”* He didn’t ask them, please do this. He commanded them to do it.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, this is the time for us to take a little bit of that love from God and follow this commandment. This is the time to stop all selfishness, this is the time to love others and not just ourselves.

We all have witnessed how the world has abandoned this great principle, this great commandment.

The Good News is that in the middle of any crisis, love is not cancelled, kindness is not cancelled, generosity is not cancelled. The love and faith God has planted in our hearts is still there.

Every day we hear good stories that make us believe and have faith in humanity, just as God has faith in us.

Think about this: if God himself suffered, died a painful death on the cross and still loves us and has faith in us, there is no excuse for us not to love Him and love others. This is the story of God and us, a story that like the story of Palm Sunday that was written and passed down to us with some minor discrepancies or differences by their writers which shouldn't be our concern at all. What truly matters is that we have faith in God and God in us. **Amen.**