

Why Observe Palm Sunday During a Pandemic?

1. We need saving.

“...the great crowd that had come for the (Passover) Feast 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)

Note: “Hosanna!” = “Please save us!”

Note: Palm branches = celebration of victory, paying honor, respect

“For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” Romans 3:23-24 (NLT)

2. Our savior wants us to come to Him.

“Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written: ‘Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.’” John 12:14-15 (NIV)

Note: It’s significant that Jesus rode a donkey colt instead of a war-horse. He came as the prince of peace - not to punish but to save. “Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey— riding on a donkey’s colt.” Zechariah 9:9 (NLT)

“Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”
Matthew 11:28-29 (NLT)

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”
2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)

3. God is always working in ways we don’t see or understand.

“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 they had done these things to him.” John 12:16 (NIV)

Note: Only later did Jesus’ disciples realize he had fulfilled Zechariah’s prophecy recorded in 480 BC and that the people were shouting Psalm 118:26. “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.”

“I am God, and there is none like me. Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish.” Isaiah 46:9-10 (NLT)

Note: God is carrying out his plans for me.

“The LORD will work out his plans for my life— for your faithful love, O LORD, endures forever.”
Psalm 138:8 (NLT)

“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.” Romans 8:28 (NLT)

“Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.” Ephesians 1:4-5 (NLT)

4. Following Jesus means more than being a fan.

“Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him. So the Pharisees said to one another, ‘See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!’” John 12:17-19 (NIV)

Note: Love is a choice.

"But as they came closer to Jerusalem and Jesus saw the city ahead, he began to weep. 'How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes.'" Luke 19:41-42 (NLT)

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 (NIV)

5. People in heaven are celebrating Jesus' victory at Easter.

"After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands. And they were shouting with a mighty shout, 'Salvation comes from our God who sits on the throne and from the Lamb!'" Revelation 7:9-10 (NLT)

John Schmidt • 04-05-2020 • john@centeringlives.com

Connect Group Questions

1. Share a memory of Palm Sunday from when you were a kid.
2. Read John 12:12-19. What is your understanding of the significance of Palm Sunday?
3. Discuss the following quotation: "God deals with our sin through what Jesus did instead of you dealing with your sin through what you do." Max Lucado
4. The Bible tells us that we have been given a new identity through Christ. Discuss the following characteristics of our new identity:
 - I am a new creation. (2 Corinthians 5:17)
 - I am forgiven for all of my sins. (1 John 1:9)
 - I am an heir of God and a co-heir of Christ. (Romans 8:17)
 - I am more than a conqueror. (Romans 8:37)
 - I am an adopted child of God's family. (Ephesians 1:4-5)
 - I am covered in robes of righteousness. (Isaiah 61:10, 1 Peter 3:18)
 - I am filled with the same power that conquered the grave. (Ephesians 1:19-20)
 - I am a citizen of heaven. (John 14:1-3, Ephesians 2:19, 1 Peter 2:11)

Which of these characteristics is easiest for you to embrace? Which is most difficult? Why?

5. Read John 12:16. How does it make you feel to know that the disciples often didn't understand what Jesus was doing while they were with him?
6. Read Revelation 7:9-10. Why do you think John was allowed to see people in heaven holding palm branches?
7. Spend some time as a group praying for each other's needs and for the needs of people around the world. Please use the following prayer list from Christianity Today as a guide.
<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/march-web-only/covid-19-coronavirus-20-prayers-to-pray-during-pandemic.html>