

Colossians 9 – Palm Sunday Praise
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We are in a study on the book of Colossians called Christ Above All. Today's going to be a little bit different because it's Palm Sunday where we celebrate Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem the week before His crucifixion and resurrection. His presence resulted in an outpouring of praise and worship. So, I'm calling this sermon Palm Sunday Praise.

Matthew 21:1-17 tells what happened when Jesus entered Jerusalem that day.

A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

After this Jesus went to the temple and drove out the money changers. Then He healed the sick.

But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things He did and the children shouting in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant. "Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked Him. "Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, 'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise?'"

Notice that when Jesus shows up things happen!
 Some things get turned over and some things get put right.
 Some people get upset and some people get healed.
 Some people praise and some people put it down.
 As a result - some people experienced breakdown and some experienced breakthrough!

All those people saw the same Jesus – but they all had a different experience of His presence! It all depended on their perspective.

We all need breakthroughs - our church and our nation need breakthroughs - and breakthroughs happen in an atmosphere of praise. We are believing for another triumphal entry of Christ on earth in the form of revival and an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on our nation. That too will be accompanied by an outpouring of praise and worship.

I want you to understand that praise releases supernatural power that alters every realm – physical, spiritual and even societal.
 Deb and I went to Napa Valley California a few weeks ago. This absolutely-beautiful area is famous for its vineyards. We took a tour of the Artesa Winery

and when we got to the barrel room in the cellar we were surprised to hear a recording of monks singing.

I asked our tour guide about it and she said that the family who owns the vineyard is from Spain and they've been making wine since the 1500's. Their original vineyard in Spain was next to a monastery where monks chanted and sang 24/7.

The family believes that was one reason their wine was so good. They believe the sound of praise blessed the wine and actually changed the molecular structure of the wine. It causes the wine to age gracefully. Our guide said that this praise causes the wine to be calm and happy.

I was mesmerized by that. This secular company took praise so seriously that they played it 24/7. Surely, we need to take praise as seriously! Praise changes the atmosphere and praise changes us when we need to be calmed and joyful! There is supernatural power in praise! When our praises go up, Jesus shows up! And when Jesus shows up – supernatural things happen! Breakthrough happens!

But you will never become a worshipper until you become a praiser and you will never become a praiser until you are grateful. Psalm 100:4 says we:

Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise.

So, getting God into our situation starts with thanksgiving. You will never get into God's presence and you will not get God's power into your situation until you become thankful.

I'm not preaching through a section of verses from Colossians today. Instead - I read through the book again looking for verses on thanksgiving and praise. Colossians 1:3-4 says:

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints.

When should we thank God? Always! The Greek word translated "thank" is eucharisteo (yoo-khar-is-teh'-o); which means "to be grateful, that is, to actively express gratitude to God as an act of worship; specially, to say grace at a meal. It's great to give thanks at a meal. But that shouldn't be the only time you express gratitude to God. That time should be all the time!

The Amplified Version of Colossians 3:15 says:

Be thankful (appreciative), [giving praise to God always].

Notice that thanks is to be given and actively expressed. Some people think being thankful in their heart is enough. No! God wants thanks to be expressed.

Remember when Jesus healed 10 lepers and only 1 came back to express thanks to Him? The others might have been thankful in their hearts – but Jesus wondered why the others didn't express their thanks to Him. It's not either/or – it's both/and. Colossians 3:16 tells us to:

...sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

True worship is an attitude in the heart that is expressed outwardly! Colossians 1:12 tells us to:

...joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

Paul says that we would joyfully give thanks. Now – it's one thing to joyfully give thanks when everything is going great in your life. But Paul said in Colossians 1:24-25

Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of His body, which is the church.

God wants us to joyfully give thanks in times of blessing and times of suffering. The Greek word translated “rejoice” is *chairō* – which means to be glad, to celebrate, to express great joy. It means to exult – which means to revel, to gloat, to triumph. This isn't just a little joy or thankfulness. In fact, Colossians 2:6-7 says:

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

God does not want us to be slightly thankful. He wants us to overflow with thankfulness. The Greek word translated “overflow” means to superabound (in quantity or quality), be in excess, be superfluous; to be extremely rich; to be more than enough so that there are leftovers.

In fact – this is the same word used when Jesus fed the 5000 and there were 12 baskets of food left over. God wants us to praise so much that it seems excessive! The only way to do that is by obeying Colossians 4:2:

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

You'll know when you are devoted to praise when you can do what Colossians 3:17 says to do:

And whatever you do (no matter what it is) in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus and in (dependence upon) His Person, giving praise to God the Father through Him.

When you are devoted to God you'll be devoted to praise. I know you may be in a situation where it's hard to find something to be thankful for. I urge you – FIND SOMETHING! – because that's the starting point to God's involvement in your situation. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 tells us:

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

The Message says *Thank God no matter what happens.*

Can you really do that? Thank God in every circumstance, no matter what happens? I know it can be hard! That's why it's called a sacrifice of praise. There's nothing about this that is easy.

This verse means that in every circumstance, no matter what happens, we choose to trust God, we don't blame God. We choose to believe and declare that He is good and He is love, NO MATTER WHAT! You can find something to be grateful for in every situation – no matter how bad it is.

I want to tell you a fascinating story that illustrates this truth.

There are many monuments in America that honor great heroes or great events. For instance – in Washington DC alone – there are over 160 monuments honoring people like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

But the strangest monument in the entire world stands in the small town of Enterprise, Alabama. This monument consists of a 13-foot tall woman in Grecian-style robes holding up a giant bug. That's right! It's called the Boll Weevil Monument and it's the world's only monument honoring a horrible, destructive pest.

Why would anyone want to honor one of the most feared insects in the world that destroyed thousands of farms throughout America?

The boll weevil is a very small beetle that totally destroys a cotton plant. It originated in Mexico and then moved across the Rio Grande to Texas when cotton became big in 1892. It migrated quickly and by 1915, boll weevils destroyed almost 60% of the cotton crop in Coffee County, Alabama, where Enterprise is located.

The boll weevil is extremely difficult to exterminate. Farmers tried huge amounts of pesticides, but the boll weevil would just develop an immunity to the poison. Nothing was working and since cotton was king in the south – the south was almost destroyed by the boll weevil.

But not Enterprise Alabama! While other areas tried fighting the boll weevil with little success until the 1980's, Enterprise and the rest of Coffee County made a

huge decision. They decided to stop growing cotton and start growing peanuts, which was a risk since they were just becoming popular in America.

This experiment was hugely successful and by 1917, Coffee County became the Peanut Capital of the World by being the leading producer of peanuts. The switch from cotton to peanuts did not just save Enterprise from destruction, but it brought great prosperity to the region.

So – on December 11, 1919, the town unveiled a statue in honor of the boll weevil for forcing the town to abandon one crop and adopt a far better one. The idea behind the Boll Weevil Monument was to be a tribute to how something disastrous can be a catalyst for change.

At the base of the monument appears the following inscription: "In profound appreciation of the Boll Weevil and what it has done as the herald of prosperity this monument was erected by the citizens of Enterprise, Coffee County, Alabama."

Profound and public appreciation was expressed to the boll weevil!

The Boll Weevil brought misery to millions of Southerners.
But it brought transformation to Enterprise Alabama.

Other communities saw the boll weevil as a curse – but the people of Enterprise Alabama saw it as a blessing.

Other farmers saw boll weevils as causing poverty – but the farmers of Enterprise saw the boll weevil as a herald of prosperity.

Peanuts were so profitable that farmers were grateful that the boll weevil gave them the opportunity to change what they were doing in order to have greater success.

The Lord often allows boll weevils into our lives for a purpose. Perhaps we are trying to grow cotton when we should be raising peanuts! If so, the delays and disappointments we experience are just the gracious "boll weevils" sent to redirect us so that we will plant the crop of God's choosing!

For that – we should have profound appreciation.
For that – we should give praise to our God!

So - do not let your degree of praise be determined by your changing circumstances but by the consistent, unchanging character of God.

If you are in a tough situation where the boll weevils are attacking – how do you attract God to your tough situation? What is God looking for?

God is not looking for strong people.
God is not looking for wise people.

God is not looking for influential people.
 God is looking for praisers who will boast in Him.
 God is looking for people who know they are weak and He is strong.
 God is looking for people who know they are foolish and He is wise.
 God is looking for people who will put no trust in themselves and who will put all their trust in Him.
 God is looking for worshippers!

Jesus said it in John 4:23:

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

We talk about seeking God – but this verse says God is a seeker. God is seeking worshippers who will worship Him in spirit in truth.

Whenever you need God in a situation, you need to begin to praise Him. He's looking for praise. It gets His attention.

Remember - we enter His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise. Thanksgiving is the gateway to God's presence and your breakthrough!

I know some of you are in horrendously difficult situations. You need a job. Or your marriage is in trouble. Or you're out of money. Or you're being falsely accused. Or you've lost a loved one. In spite of your bad circumstances, God is still good and His will for you is that you thank and praise Him right in the middle of your situation.

I looked up praise in a thesaurus – it gives synonyms and antonyms. Do you know what words are antonyms - the opposite - of praise?

Praise is giving God glory for who He is. The opposite of praise is: criticism – disapproval – disrespect – to belittle – put down – blame

Praise magnifies God. Lack of praise belittles God.
 Praise honors God. Lack of praise dishonors God.
 Praise gives God credit. Lack of praise gives God blame.
 Praise says God is good. Lack of praise says God is not good.
 Praise says God is love and He cares for me. Lack of praise says God doesn't care about me.
 Praise says God is powerful. Lack of praise says God can't help me.
 Praise says I trust God. Lack of praise says I don't think I can trust Him.

Many people cannot enter into praise and worship because of this very thing. They cannot be thankful because they really don't trust God. They really don't believe He is good or that He cares about them. That keeps them out of His presence. That does not release His power.

God's will is that we come to know Him and love Him so well that we can praise Him in all things. This is not a one-time thing. It's a lifestyle of praise. He *ALWAYS* leads us in triumphal procession. But it all begins with a decision to praise.

On Palm Sunday some religious leaders tried to stop people's praise. In Luke 19:40 *Jesus answered and said to them, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out."*

Jesus taught us that He will be praised one way or another. We were created to praise God and if we don't, He'll create something else to praise Him! We are commanded to praise God and if we don't He'll command something else to praise Him!

I don't know about you – but I refuse to allow a rock to do my praising!
I refuse to offer my Lord and Savior wimpy worship or patty-cake praise!

We all need God to show up in our lives and our families today. We all need breakthroughs so we all need to offer God breakthrough praise! We must choose to praise no matter what!
No person is going to take my place of praise!
No circumstance is going to take away my praise!
No devil in hell is going to steal my praise!

In all things I will give thanks. I choose to rejoice in the Lord no matter what because He is always worthy of praise!
Praise silences the enemy and invites God into our situation.
Praise releases the power of God to work on our behalf.
Praise releases the burdens and bondages that hinder our breakthrough!

Can you offer God some breakthrough praise this morning?
I've told you how a secular company believes praise changes things!
I've told you how a town has profound appreciation for a destructive pest.

Do you have profound appreciation for what God has done for you?
Can you give Him glory for who He is? King of Kings! Lord of Lords!
Alpha and Omega! Beginning and End! Savior! Healer! Provider! Deliverer!