

# “THE THUNDER OF SILENCE”

Message for *Palm Sunday*  
From Pastor Norman Staker  
March 29, 2026

MATTHEW 21: 1-11 \* ISAIAH 50: 4-9A  
PHILIPPIANS 2: 5-11 \* MATTHEW 27: 1-54

**GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR FATHER AND  
FROM OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST. AMEN**

**Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name  
of the Lord. Hosanna! HE IS RISEN;  
HE IS RISEN INDEED!!**



A little boy was sick on Palm Sunday and stayed home from church with his mother. His father returned from church holding a palm branch.

The little boy was curious and asked, "Why do you have that palm branch, dad?"

"You see, when Jesus came into town, everyone waved Palm Branches to honor him, so we got Palm Branches today."

The little boy replied, "Aw Shucks! The one Sunday I miss is the Sunday that Jesus shows up!"

The place was buzzing with activity; everyone was full of excitement. That's exactly how it felt on Palm Sunday when

Jesus got on a donkey and rode into the city. The people were looking for a leader who was going to lead them to victory over their oppressors.

Finally God was doing something new and different. This Jesus had been doing miracle after miracle. The healings, the feedings, the teachings, the casting out of demons, and the raising people from the dead were all incredible events. Jesus and his disciples were the best team to come riding into Jerusalem in a very long time.

The whole city had turned out to see Jesus riding into Jerusalem. They were laying palms on the ground to give him the red carpet treatment as he entered the city. Some were taking off their coats and robes, laying them on the road hoping Jesus' donkey would step on theirs as he came down the road. What a souvenir that would make!

People were shouting "Hosanna, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord". People would have been eager to get up on the donkey with Jesus. They would have gladly swapped places with him. Everybody knew this was a winning team. Who wouldn't want to be identified with a winner? Who wouldn't want to say they were with Jesus?

Imagine the bustling streets of Jerusalem alive with excitement as Jesus made His triumphant entry on that fateful Palm Sunday, riding humbly on a donkey while throngs of people waved palm branches and laid their cloaks before Him, their voices echoing with jubilant cries of "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" Yet, in a stunning turn of human fickleness, by Friday those same voices had twisted into a venomous chorus demanding, "Crucify Him!"—a stark reminder of betrayal's swift and painful sting.

He was the most popular person in the city. People would have gladly traded places with him on Palm Sunday. But everything seemed to have gone wrong for Jesus that week, just like it went wrong for the team on the field.

Jesus was betrayed by one of his closest disciples. Judas, the treasurer of the group, sold out Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. He added insult to injury by trying to betray Jesus with a kiss. You see it was dark, and the soldiers didn't know which one was Jesus so Judas said, "Just watch me, the one I give a kiss to is the one you are to arrest."

Before the arrest, Jesus took the other disciples into the Garden of Gethsemane where he asked them to pray with him. But instead of praying, they all fell asleep. Jesus knew the pain and agony of the cross was ahead with the rising of the morning sun, so his soul was overwhelmed and sorrowful to the point of death. Recognizing that he would be forced to be separated from the Father in order to pay for our sins, great drops of blood fell from Jesus' forehead as he prayed.

When he was arrested, he watched all the disciples flee into the darkness so that they wouldn't also be captured. He was led before the religious authorities in a sham of a trial. The witnesses they called to testify against him contradicted each other but their testimony was allowed to stand. Something about that swearing to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God; no I can't say that word "God." Then you can't handle the truth!

He stood there silently at the trial. But at the same moment his most trustworthy disciple, Peter, was trying to distance himself from Jesus. As Peter angrily declared for the 3rd time, he did not know Jesus, Jesus turned and looked at Peter in the face. All Peter could do was go away in tears, because he had

promised Jesus, “no matter what, you can depend on me.” Jesus was alone.

He had three trials in one night. People spit on him, slapped him in the face, insulted him and pulled at his beard but he said nothing. He was flogged with a whip, had a crown of thorns placed on his head, and mocked as being a king, with soldiers laughing at him.

He was forced to carry his cross until he could carry it no longer to the place where he was crucified. Virtually nobody was willing to swap places with Jesus at this point. All this has happened and it's just the end of the third quarter.

They put the spikes in his hands and the nails in his feet and they hoist him up on the cross. He's crucified with two other criminals. The physical pain is terrible. The insults continue. He's challenged to prove Himself to the world by doing another miracle. The mental anguish intensifies, but Jesus knows the worst is still to come.

You may ask, what could be worse than having the skin torn off your back by 39 lashes from a Roman whip that had hooks and bones in it. What could be worse than having that followed up with a crown of thorns shoved onto your head, and then having to carry a heavy cross up a hill.

What could be worse than knowing that when you reach your destination, you will be rewarded with nails driven into your hands and feet! Knowing that the weight of your body would cause you more pain as you were hoisted up with ropes. Then knowing you would be hanging from 9 in the morning until way after 3 in the afternoon while at the same time enduring a loss of blood and trying to keep from suffocating.

Suppose for a moment that you were a judge over a trial of a person charged of horribly brutalizing and killing a father, a mother, and their 3 kids. The jury comes back with a verdict of guilty. You sentence the person to the death penalty. You go to watch the person to be executed.

At the time of the execution, you notice the person you sentenced is not the person that is about to be executed for the crime. Somehow there has been a change in people, what if anything should you do?

One of the most difficult things for us to accept is God's pronouncement against the human race. God says, not a single one of you is good in my sight. All of you have rebelled against me. All of you have done wrong. All of you have evil and wicked hearts that think of ways to do evil. The punishment for your wrongdoing, your sin is death and eternal separation from me.

That leads us with one of four options. 1) We can say, I don't believe God is right. I believe I am a good person. 2) We can say, "God is right, but the good I do out weighs the bad I do so I am okay. 3) We can say, God is right but God is love so I don't have to worry about my sin. 4) We can say, God is right and there is nothing I can do to save myself from my sin. Which of the 4 do you honestly believe about yourself?

The Scriptures teach us, the penalty for our sin is death. Not just physical death, but a spiritual separation from God in eternity. The Scriptures also teach, that the only way sin is removed is by the shedding of blood that is pure and not tainted by sin. The only blood that was not tainted by sin was the blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus was not just a good person, Jesus was the Son of God. He's the only one with sinless blood.

Each one of us deserves to die upon the cross. I know we don't think we're really that bad. God says we are. We deserve the

whippings, the beatings, the guilty verdict, and the nailing. We could all have the title, "King Of My World," hanging above us on the cross.

Here's the good news of the gospel: after we were found guilty, Jesus snuck in and took our place. He took the beatings and the nailings so that we would not have to. He hung on the cross in our place so that our lives could be different.

When the Father looked at Jesus on the cross where we should have been, the Father recognized that it was Jesus and not us. The Father as a righteous Judge, could have said, "stop this, the wrong person is being crucified. Let him go."

But Jesus in his infinite love and wisdom for us yelled out to the Father, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." Jesus is saying go ahead and let the process continue. Let me pay the penalty for their sin. I voluntarily change places with them to pay the debt they owe.

Folks, our sins were so dark and so dirty, that when Jesus began the process of taking his sins upon us, the world began to turn dark. From noon until 3pm darkness came all over the land as Jesus hung on the cross in our place.

It was at the end of the period of darkness, that Jesus suffered the greatest pain and suffering of all hanging on the cross. Sin demands that we be separated from God's presence or we will be consumed by God's fire and judgment.

When our sin was fully upon Jesus, God the Father could no longer be in fellowship with his Son. Jesus felt the separation immediately and he cried out, "My God, My God, Why have you Forsaken Me."

This folks is why we cannot save ourselves. Our sin eliminates us from being able to call God back to the judgment hall once we have been found guilty. But with Jesus it was very different.

Taking our sin upon Himself did not change the fact that Jesus was still the Son of God. As the Son of God He was able to remove our sins as far as the east is from the west.

There on the cross, Jesus did what was necessary to fulfill God's promise found Psalms 103:10-13 which says he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;

This is why Jesus was able to boldly declare upon the cross on behalf of all who put their trust in him, all who fear the Lord. "It is finished, Into Your Hands I commit my spirit." Jesus didn't die with his head in shame. Jesus died with a triumphant declaration that he had done what God had sent him to do.

His death paid the price for our sins. We are declared righteous because when God looks at us, he sees us covered in his Son Jesus. I don't know what your sins are and how great they might be, but I do know it doesn't make sense for you to try and pay for a debt that has already been paid.

Jesus did more than die for you on the cross; he died instead of you on the cross. If you don't understand that truth, you will not see the need for Jesus in your life.

Jesus died to start preparing us all to begin to live in the kingdom that he began setting up marching into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. The people were right when they proclaimed

**“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” To live in Jesus’ kingdom, means doing things the way Jesus wants them done so that the Holy Spirit can live inside of you.**

**Jesus is not interested in us simply cheering him on as we would a team coming onto the field. Jesus requires us to be involved as his players, running out the plays that He’s calling for our lives. The call to be a follower of Christ, is a call to leave the fans in the stadium behind and to do the work involved in being on the team.**

**AMEN!!**

