



The Westminster Pulpit

Sermons Preached at Westminster Presbyterian Church
3900 West End Avenue Nashville, Tennessee 37205-1899

“One day...”

Sermon on Matthew 21:8-17

Donovan A. Drake

March 29, 2026

Palm Sunday

Matthew 21:8-17

A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a den of robbers."

The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he cured them.

But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the amazing things that he did and heard the children crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they became angry and said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise for yourself?'"

He left them, went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.

One day. Twenty-four hours. Sunrise to sunset. What does a day mean to you?

The value of a day seems to go up in price when you know your days are numbered. I know a woman who tells her husband what to do. He falls and then crawls under the table. Gets on his back, turns on his cell phone light, and finds the clips to unlock the table. She pulls the table apart and then puts in two, no, three leaves...the family is getting bigger. Push the table together, he crawls back under and snaps it firmly in place.

When the family arrives and everyone is seated, and the grandbaby has already started eating! The woman stands and says, "I want you all to look at each other, and thank God for one another. I want you all to eat slowly. I want you all..."

"Mom, we know! We know! We know! We're a gift from God." "I know you know, just look around and see the gift and thank God for the gift."

Mom knows what a day is worth! How do you do it? How do you value the gift?

One day. Twenty-four hours. Sunrise to sunset. What does a day mean to you?

Some of you think this is the day that Tennessee plays Michigan. And my job is for you to set your sights higher. More importantly, Duke plays UConn. There was a day, however, when we knew it to be Palm Sunday! I've lived through 63 Palm Sundays. There are memories. In fact, I spoke with a woman this morning who had palms from her childhood, and her mom said, "Can I throw those away?" Do you remember receiving the palm branch in the Narthex? I recall boys being boys, using the branch to tickle each other's ears, and swatting each other. I remember it got so out of hand that they had to separate Guy and me. But that was last year.

You may have a memory of receiving the palm branch as a child, coming down this very aisle. And some of you have the memory of seeing your children come down this aisle, and some of you have your grandchildren come down this aisle. What does this day mean to you?

The Psalm for Palm Sunday seems always to be Psalm 118. A psalm that contains these words. "This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!" Those words never landed with me until Katherine Wilson, who only knew 28 Palm Sundays in life because of cancer. She would say the words of Psalm 118 on her good days and on her bad days. On her days of hell, just skin and bones, she would say these words, "This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it." She would fight for every day. Because as Mom says, "I want you to look at each other and thank God for each other, because it's all a gift." "Mom, we know."

One day. Twenty-four hours. Sunrise to Sunset. What does a day mean to you?

Friday, I was on my way to Bible study, and my watch went off with a reminder that it was the anniversary of the Covenant School shooting. It's amazing how a day can shift. The crowd shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna" means "save us." People who shout, "Save us!" no doubt know the value of a day. They know there needs to be something that can come and save the day. That something can be very small or very big.

I remember being with Beth on an airplane, on the tarmac, waiting to take off for home. Waiting, because there had been a huge summer thunderstorm, but it was over, and from my angle looking out my window, I could see in front of us a line of aircraft all waiting to take off. We were going to be on the ground for a long, long, long time. Not exactly how I wanted to spend my day. I just want to be home! Salvation is as simple and small as wanting to be home!

A voice came from above, "This is your pilot, and it turns out this is your lucky day. Our flight is carrying a heart that needs to get to Vanderbilt Hospital for a transplant, and we have been moved to the front of the line." And everyone shouted! "Woo hoo! Thank the Lord." Salvation comes as cheaply as being moved to the front of the line. Salvation comes as costly as a heart given from one stranger to another. I don't know what day that was, but I bet the one who has the heart knows the day. "This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

One day, I read a story of a widow who placed a stethoscope on the heart of a stranger to hear the familiar beat of the one she loved.

"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" Look, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

The image Matthew borrows is from the prophet Zechariah. "Zechariah" means, "God remembers." God remembers what? Promises! People! Salvation. Zecharia was running around during the days when the Second Temple was being built.

One day, when the king was coming humbly and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey, the King, instead of going to the palace, went to the temple. Now is a king the same as a Messiah? The son of David...now there's a country that would blend the church and state. When the state and the church are one, you wrap the Messiah in the flag.

One story I heard when I first came to Westminster was about a Sunday, when KC took the flag out of the church. I often feel the pressure from people to put it back in. I have always thought our faith should inform our politics, not the other way around.

There once was a people who had a cross and let their politics shape it. They took that cross, twisted it, and distorted it until it became a swastika. You can do that.

One day, the king was coming and humbly mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey. Salvation can be that you're tired of Rome is in charge! You're tired of suffering the injustice of paying taxes to an occupying force. You're tired of the superpower. Psalm 118: The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone... Lord, save us! Lord, grant us success.

I wonder if it was disappointing that day to see the King take the turn and head not to the palace, but to the temple. "Who is this? Where is he going? "Hosanna! Hosanna! Save us! We beg you! Save us!" Where is the king of righteousness and victory going?"

The image that Matthew borrows is from the prophet Zechariah. Zechariah means, "the Lord remembers." And Zechariah spoke for some time about the purification of the temple. Cleansing the temple. One day... that's what Jesus did.

But in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is more subdued; there's no cracking of the whip. No violence, not from this one who gave the Sermon on the Mount. He is the teacher of turning the other cheek! He is the teacher of if you know your brother or sister has something against you, lay down your gift, and first go and be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then offer your gift to God. You can't worship God if you hate your neighbor.

But he was angry. The anger stemmed from the temple having become a den for robbers. That God's house was a safe house for thieves. It became a place where you'd steal from the poor and the widow who only had two cents to her name; and they'd walk around in white robes and with their nice hair, gold necklaces, and assigned parking spaces near the temple door. Like flowers that fester, the temple stunk to high heavens. "I don't want your smelly offerings... I have told you what I require: "Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your Lord." And Jesus was angry...

When the dust was still settling in the temple, a blind woman and a lame man came in staggering. He healed them. And some children came running in and started shouting, "Hosanna in the highest!"

And to that sound, a blind man heard it and found his way up the steps and into the temple. And a lame woman this time came, and he healed them. Jesus touched an arm and put his hand on a shoulder... He saw! Hosanna in the highest!

One Day!!! One by one, blind man. Healed. Lame woman. Healed. Blind man. Healed. Lame woman... Blind woman. Lame, healed. Blind, healed. Lame. Blind. They were all lined up waiting to take off.. healed! Saved.

One day, the children came running into the temple, and they sang, "Hosanna to the Son of David. Hosanna. Sing Hosannah. Sing Hosanna." The blind healed. The lame healed. Sing hosanna. Sing Hosannah. The blind man healed. The lame woman healed. Sing Hosanna.

And one day, the old guard pointed to the little children, and with anger in their voice, they said to Jesus, "Do you hear what these are saying?"

And Jesus, looking up from laying his hands upon a man who had been blind from birth, said, "Yes... Out of the mouths of babes."

It was just one day. One day that the Lord had made. How long do you think the line was to get into the temple? And there, a voice came from above...

"It's your lucky day. Someone gave their heart, and you've been moved up to the front of the line. They gave their heart; they gave their life. Will you remember this day? And then will you do the same? Will the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus? Give your life, give your heart humbly.... Say to the stranger, "You've been moved up to the front of the line..."

One day.