

**Prayer of the Day:**

We praise you, O God, for the great acts of love by which you have redeemed us through your Son, Jesus Christ. As he was acclaimed by those who scattered their garments and branches of palm in his path, so may we always hail him as our King and follow him with perfect confidence; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen!

**Verse of the Day:**

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. (John 12:23 cf. NIV)

**Sermon Text:**

He enters to the shouts of acclamation and praise. Cheers and jubilation break forth upon his arrival. He is exhausted but he knows that there is only a short distance left and then finally, the reason he has come, the completion of the task, the joy of victory. This Palm Sunday it is easy for us to think of Jesus. However, the scene just painted is not of the triumphant entry into Jerusalem so often celebrated on this day. No, it is of us. The writer of the Book of Hebrews has just let us linger for a bit in the halls of faith, to behold the heroes who have gone before. Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Rahab, and the multitude of saints who lived out their lives in the Old Testament's manifold pages we were reminded of them all and then, the author puts them all in the stands. Yes, it is from them and so many others that the cries and shouts come forth as we run our races, face our journeys through life. Today, as we find ourselves in various states of that journey, Palm Sunday provides strength. Yes, strength to run, strength to live, **REAL STRENGTH FOR THE JOURNEY.**

Obviously, I am not a big runner. It's never really held a massive appeal for me. But I am told that running, at least long-distance running requires that one get their mind right. There will be many obstacles to overcome: pain, fatigue, and the dreaded "wall" so often discussed. A kind of mental exhaustion that overcomes the runner and will either force them to come to a grinding halt or through which they must break if they want to finish the race.

Sound a bit like life? Oh, I know, we want people to think we have it all together. We want people to believe that somehow we are winning at life and everything is coming up fabulous for us. But let's be real for just a moment, especially as we stand in the arena with those heroes watching. They know. They know about the pain that can rack a body even as it rocks the soul and medicine and therapy fail us. They know even more about the sin that can linger because it hurt someone else leaving us to face the guilt of our action gnawing away in the back of our minds. They know about fatigue too. Days when we would rather stay in bed than get up and go because the constant busyness of life has left us depleted past the point where one night's sleep was enough to fill the tank again. They know even more about the battle-weary state Satan loves to keep us in. That he loves to bombard Christian and Christianity with one attack after another until in sheer state of weariness, worn out from the battle, we finally just capitulate and given into

**Text: HEBREWS 12:1-3**

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. <sup>2</sup> Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup> Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

him, the world around us, or our own sinful desire because it's easier than continuing on with the fight. Oh, and they know that wall. Death is so easy to dismiss and talk about when one is perfectly healthy and doesn't really have to face it but when the conversation gets real, when the diagnosis comes back and the doctor doesn't know what to say except, "Enjoy the time you have left", what then?

It almost makes those opening words of our lesson sound flippant, and shallow does it not? *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.* But this is the difficulty right?! This is the thing that we struggle to do! This is exactly why I have to put on the bright shiny face and do my best to look Facebook fabulous because in truth I'm exhausted and can barely put one foot in front of the other. I wish it were so easy, so simple as to just shed it all and keep moving but it really isn't Lord.

Ah, but dear friends, it is then that we are ready. Having despaired of the biggest idol of them all, myself and my ability to do anything against these biggest and badest of foes and obstacles, it is then, after the last hindrance has been stripped away. That I am ready to see Him.

He did it! He won at life, though it may not look like it at first glance. The writer has been telling us about him all along. He is the one who is superior to all. He endured pain though it was always unjust and never deserved. He knew the fatigue of being worn down and exhausted physically and mentally as He stood his ground against Satan in the desert. The author of the book of Hebrews announced *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.* (Hebrews 4:15)

Today, we see Him, running His race perhaps better, running our race for us. He enters into Jerusalem fulfilling the Scriptures as He goes. Palms and cloaks strewn along His way. But this is not His victory day, not yet. No, He enters to face that "wall". He enters to look death square in the eye but not only physical death, oh no, He stares down hell itself enduring torment greater than you and I could ever fathom all so that he can shatter them both and tear down the wall that divided us and our God. Yes, He comes to fulfill the cries of that crowd though many may not have known what they were asking. He comes to fulfill our cries even when we are all too aware of our need. "Hosanna!" "Lord save us!" Save me from sin, satan, and death. Save me from myself.

So the author announces our only solution, our only hope, yes, the only way we sinful human beings can ever be saved, the only way through which our races end in victory instead of defeat. <sup>2</sup> *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.* <sup>3</sup> *Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

Another Lenten season is over. Another Holy Week begins. Into the stadium, we go as the journey through life continues. Wearied, worn, exhausted, can you hear the cries? The shouts of acclamation and praise are unmistakable! The heroes are all gathered round, ah, but they do not cheer for us, nor would we want them to. They cheer for the One who got us here. They cheer for the One who brought them safely into glory. The One who provides **REAL STRENGTH FOR THE JOURNEY**. May we fix our eyes on Him and forever join the cry, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest!" (Mark 11:1-10) Amen!