

*John 12:1-11. Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. <sup>3</sup> Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. <sup>4</sup> But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, <sup>5</sup> "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." <sup>6</sup> He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. <sup>7</sup> "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. <sup>8</sup> You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. <sup>10</sup> So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, <sup>11</sup> for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.*

Do you like parades? I think most people do. What do you like most about parades? Maybe it is the candy, the crowds, the firetrucks blowing their horns or the other floats and displays making their way past. There is a spectacle an excitement with parades that is fun to be a part of. On this Palm Sunday we are glad, we are excited to be a part of the Palm Sunday parade because On Palm Sunday we get ready for a meal with Jesus. We get ready for the death of Jesus. We get ready to see a risen dead man.

What do you remember most about the family of Mary, Martha and Lazarus? Maybe that Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and listened to Him. Maybe that Martha was busy serving Jesus and upset with Mary. Maybe that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. In the verses before us this morning we see that this family held a dinner. It was a special dinner. It was held (2) ***"in Jesus' honor."*** We are also reminded that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. We are also told that Lazarus was present at the dinner. So, I think we could safely guess what the purpose of the dinner was: To honor Jesus for raising Lazarus from the dead.

2 Jesus had eaten at least one meal there before. I think we can assume that He ate there regularly. What does that say about His relationship with this family? They were comfortable having Jesus there. He was comfortable being there. Jesus was like a member of the family.

On Palm Sunday when Jesus rode into Jerusalem, His focus was completely on what

He was going to be doing during the next week. Every year on Palm Sunday our focus is on what we are going to be doing this next week. On Thursday we are going to have a special dinner. Now I know that we are having the same dinner today and we have it twice a month. But Thursday, when we come to the meal, the supper, it is special. It is the day of the year when Jesus hosted this special supper for the first time. I remember when I was a boy on Thursday of Holy Week almost everybody in the whole church went to the Lord's Supper. I remember it because especially as young boy I thought it took a really long time. But it was awesome, I will never forget it.

2 What is this Supper about? It's all about Jesus. He gives us His body and blood together with the bread and wine. Because the Gospel is announced during the Supper, He delivers forgiveness of sins to us. It reminds us who Jesus is and what He did. We say to everybody who is watching us: Jesus is my Savior. He lived and died and rose for me. This Supper is to praise Jesus and proclaim His death. It is ***"in Jesus honor."***

3 What else is this Supper about? It's about family. All of us who share in the meal believe the same thing about ourselves. We are sinners. All of us who share in the meal believe the same things about Jesus. He is our Savior. All of us who share in the meal believe the same thing about the Supper. It is the body and blood of Jesus together with the bread and wine. All of us who share in the meal believe the same thing about the blessing. We receive forgiveness. All of us who share in the meal believe the same thing about the Bible. It is God's Word of truth. When we eat together, we are saying, "We are family in Christ."

As we join the Palm Sunday parade we see that Jesus was headed to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. He was also headed to Jerusalem on this particular Passover because He knew it was time for Him to sacrifice Himself as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. He had told His disciples very clearly on numerous occasions that he was going to go to Jerusalem and die. They didn't really listen or understand what he told them but he told them. And he understood what was coming.

2 While He was at this meal in his honor in Bethany he knew he was headed for Jerusalem to die. It was at this time, at this meal, then that ***Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.***<sup>4</sup> ***But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected,***<sup>5</sup> ***"Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages."***<sup>6</sup> ***He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.***<sup>7</sup> ***"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial."*** In Jesus' day bodies were prepared for burial by being washed,

anointed with good smelling stuff, wrapped in clothes and then buried. Jesus' statement is very clear. He considers what Mary is doing an early attempt to prepare his body for burial, which, of course, implies that He is ready to die.

When Jesus was headed to Jerusalem, and when He was at this meal in Bethany, he was completely focused on what was going to happen on Friday. His death. Every year on Palm Sunday our focus is on what we are going to be doing this next week. On Friday, we are going to think a lot about and talk a lot about Jesus' death. That is totally out of the ordinary. People usually don't want to think about death. It is unpleasant. People usually don't want to talk about death. Maybe they think it will go away if you don't talk about it. Even when somebody dies, people say, "She passed. He is gone." They don't even want to use the word, "death."

2 Christians talk about death a lot. We say, "Jesus died for my sins" all the time. That is weird to a lot of people - to be so open about death. If you really want to consider something strange, look at the name of Friday this week. Good Friday. A Friday that is the day on which somebody died is good? A day on which an innocent victim was crucified is good? Good Friday is a good name for this coming Friday. It's good for us. Because Jesus died, our sins are gone. Because Jesus died, death isn't punishment for me anymore. Because Jesus was separated from God while on the cross, I won't ever have to be. On Palm Sunday as we join that Palm Sunday parade we get ready for Friday. Because of the death that happened then. That is what makes it good.

Jesus' presence in Bethany at this meal turned out to be a public event. People heard that Jesus was present. Throughout the three years of His ministry His presence attracted crowds. Some came to hear Him. Some came to see Him do miracles. In this instance they came to see the person who had raised Lazarus from the dead. But we are told that they came for another reason as well. Lazarus had become a media star by this time. <sup>9</sup> Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead." They had heard about him, but they really wanted to see this dead man who was raised.

2 During Jesus' three years of ministry there was another group of people who came to observe Jesus. This group was watching His every step. They were gathering evidence to prove that He was not who He claimed to be. They were gathering evidence on the basis of which they could get rid of Him. This group was present here also. <sup>10</sup> ***So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, <sup>11</sup> for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.*** When they saw the results of Jesus' miracle of raising Lazarus, they were driven to carry out their plan to get rid of Jesus. They hated it that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the death. It was ruining everything. They hated it so much that they were even considering killing

Lazarus too.

When Jesus was headed to Jerusalem, and when He was at this meal in Bethany, he was completely focused on what was going to happen on Sunday. He would rise as He had raised Lazarus. Every year on Palm Sunday as we join this Palm Sunday parade our focus is on what we are going to be doing this next week. On Sunday we are going to see a risen dead Man. Jesus' resurrection from the death is the basis of Christianity. Because of that we know what He says is true. Because of that we know that He is God. Because of that we know our sins are forgiven. Because of that we know He can cover us with His holiness. Because of that we know we will rise from the dead one day. Without Jesus' resurrection Christianity is nothing.

People know that. So people who oppose Christianity still get angry about it. Just like the Jews did about Jesus and Lazarus, so they too ridicule it. "When was the last time you saw somebody rise from the dead and get up and walk around?" they say. "The disciples must have been on something to think that Jesus rose from the dead." Or they divert attention from it. Easter is about bunnies and eggs and flowers and springtime. No. It's not. On Palm Sunday, as we join the Palm Sunday parade we are getting ready to see a risen dead man.

Palm Sunday is about getting ready- for a meal, a death and a risen dead man. On Palm Sunday, we join Jesus in the parade to Jerusalem to get ready for Thursday and Friday and Sunday. For a meal, a death, and a risen dead man. Thanks for coming. I'm glad you like parades.