John 3:16

In his book, the “Cross and the Lynching Tree,” James Cone compares the cross of Jesus Christ with the instrument of intimidation the South had become notorious for, the lynching tree. I have always seen some similarities between both the cross and the lynching tree. Both are used for the purpose of punishment and intimidation. However, it was not until I began reflecting on the Palm Sunday entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem that I really saw the parallels between the two. On the surface, the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem looked like a coronation of a king. It looked like a ceremony that any person would appreciate from people who supposedly loved Him. But underneath the garments of celebration lingered a festering odor of deceit and treachery. A deceit that had been festering from the time Jesus began His ministry.

It began in a synagogue in Capernaum when He healed the man with the demonic spirit. Yes, everyone appreciated His teaching but when He healed the man with the demonic spirit this man Jesus possessed too much power. It reminded me of the scene in “Malcolm X” when Malcolm had the men of Nation Islam line up in front of the police station demanding the release of one of their brother members. One of the officers at the front desk that night who had witnessed the scene made a statement that has haunted men given the power that is used for the good of their people have had to deal with from time immemorial: “That is too much power in the hands of one man.” This not only began the latent insecurities of those above Malcolm and the

lingering downfall of Malcolm X, but this speaks volumes about the circumstances Jesus found Himself. It did not help Jesus when we find Him in the Gospel of Luke 17:18 chapter speaking the words of Isaiah in a synagogue in Nazareth, “The Spirit of the Lord is on Me because he has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” This did not sit well with those who were in power; they remembered Capernaum and the power He displayed there and they continued their plot to kill Jesus.

To say the words they continued their plot to “kill Jesus” sounds so wicked. It sounds worse than “they plotted against Him” because the former describes the singular intent of their plan. It addresses the desires of their heart. It speaks to the evil of their intentions. It uncovers a secret plot that no one is aware of save those who are involved and God. “The murder of Jesus” what a statement. Even worse, what a thought! We think in our minds. How can anyone plot to kill Jesus? What kind of mind would do such a thing? What resides in a person that would allow them to house such a thought? We should not be so hard on these people. As horrid as their actions seem. They were only acting out of their individual best interests. We do the same thing. It is not so much that we kill Jesus but we break His heart. I remember the words of the song Lou Rawls sang “Love Is a Hurting Thing.” Lou Rawls sings, “Yes, love is a hurting thing, Oh love is a hurting thing. When love brings so much joy, why must it bring so much pain? Guess it’s a mystery that nobody can explain. Maybe I’m a fool to keep on loving you Cause’ there may come a time you’ll break my heart in two But I want you so, I want you, though I know that, Love

is a hurting thing." I juxtapose, lay beside these lyrics with the scripture John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son, that whosoever, believeth in Him shall have everlasting life." Yes, we break His heart when we fail to love Him like He God/Jesus loves us. Love is a hurting thing. We all know this. We have been disappointed by loved ones. We have been betrayed, tricked, and abused. And we continue to love.

It's Wednesday and Good Friday is in front of Jesus. The day when the world of Jesus came crashing down. It was the day when the divine plan of God would move forward toward its final stages. Palm Sunday was no ordinary day. Even though it began as one. I'm sure most people got up that morning with nothing on their minds except the errands they had to run and get done. Yet there were those who had specific tasks to do. There were those who had a murderous plan in place and now they were about to unfold it. They had been talking about this man Jesus. He was that uppity preacher who was stirring up the crowds. This man Jesus was giving hope to people who previously had none. He was telling the marginalized people of Jerusalem things that would give them hope. Things that were creating unrest in the minds of the power brokers of that city.

Palm Sunday is the day that Jesus presents Himself to the world as the "Sacrificial Lamb of God. The masses did not know, however, Jesus did. This was the time when Jesus began preparing for His Last Supper. This is the time frame Judas used to betray Him. This is the time when Peter and the disciples pledge their loyalty and would run when trouble half-baked became an entire loaf. Yes, Palm Sunday is a significant day in the life of the church and in the life of every

Christian. It begins our journey toward resurrection. It testifies to the fickleness of us all. It speaks to the truth that we can love the Savior one moment and crucify Him the next. It speaks to the fact that no matter what we do the love of God in Christ is undying. Even though it is undeserved it remains intact in spite of the most horrendous deeds of humanity. Palm Sunday is not only a testament to how ruthless humanity can be. It is a greater testament to the fact that even though the son of God knew He would be killed, even though He knew He would be betrayed. Jesus continued moving forward to the cross.

We can only imagine the heartache Jesus must have felt as He rode toward His death. I want you to lay beside the heartache of Jesus; the love Jesus must have had to continue forward. Consider the love Jesus must have had for us to advance while in the midst of His Gethsemane moment. Imagine if you can what the words mean, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (to be murdered in order to save us,) and whosoever, believeth in Him shall not die, but have everlasting life.”

Blessings,
Pastor Gool