

LET US DRAW NIGH
Sermon Series: "From Old to New"
Palm Sunday –March 24, 2013 – Hebrews 10: 19-25
The Church of the Covenant

The first year we brought a real live donkey in for Palm Sunday the donkey wouldn't move at all. He sort of took the scriptural motto of the Presbyterian Church, *"I shall not be moved"* (Psalm 10: 6), and brought it home to Palm Sunday. This *Presbyterian* donkey was perhaps a representative of the old way of being church. And as we have been preaching in Lent and Holy Week on the book of Hebrews we will see today why we can move, we can draw near to God, and we can have access and approach the throne of grace with boldness and confidence because of what Jesus Christ has done for us.

The book of Hebrews refers to *"the shadow of the sanctuary"* (Hebrews 8: 5). It is a great metaphor for understanding the movement of from Old to New, from Old Covenant to New, from Old Testament to New. Think about it this way. If someone were standing around the corner and we couldn't actually see them in person, but the sun in the sky were behind them, they would cast a shadow. We would see a shadow and be able to see the outline of who they really are but not the substance of who they are. We would see the shadow but not the real thing. So in Old Testament times there was a High Priest and this was the shadow and the prefiguring of the coming of Jesus Christ as our high priest. There was the constant sacrificing of animals in the Temple and this was the shadow and the prefiguring of Christ coming as the Lamb of God and being the one sufficient sacrifice, the Lamb of God sacrificed on the cross that wiped away our sin, once for all. There was the Old Testament law itself which was the prefiguring and shadow of the true relationship with God through Jesus Christ who is the fulfillment of the law; through the New Covenant in His blood Jesus has reestablished the broken relationship broken through our sin. And then there is the Temple itself, the shadow and the prefiguring of the Body of Christ itself, for it was to be Jesus' body, broken and killed and cast down on Good Friday, that would be raised up in three days on Easter in a glorious resurrection that is the shadow and the prefiguring of our own resurrection from the dead. The Old points to the New, but it is not the substance, it is just the shadow. Old church is stuck in the Old Testament, under the law, under the Old Covenant; NEW CHURCH will fully adopt and appropriate the new thing which Jesus Christ has done through His blood.

So what was happening on that first Palm Sunday? Jesus Christ as Son of God, as High Priest and sacrifice, as Messiah and God in the flesh, entered into the Holy City of Jerusalem and entered into the outer courts of the Temple in order to reclaim it for His Father in heaven. He was reclaiming it from empty ritual and meaningless religiosity. He was moving it from "Churchianity" to a real and living relationship with God through HIM and what He has done for us. The Holy City became Holy because the Holy God entered in and reclaimed it for Himself. The one all sufficient sacrifice, the Lamb of God without blemish or sin, arrived and presented Himself to be sacrificed on Palm Sunday. They would never need to sacrifice another animal ever again. He would restore a broken relationship with His Father through His own flesh. No longer would the people of God need prophets; they would be spoken to directly by the Son. Religion isn't about the dead hand of the law anymore, it isn't about empty and meaningless rituals anymore, it isn't about trying hard to be perfect in the sight of God anymore --it is about a *"new and living way"* that Jesus Christ has opened up for us, to establish a strong, unbreakable relationship with a loving God.

The second donkey here at The Church of the Covenant was pregnant, I believe. And when Jesus entered the Temple on that first Palm Sunday the situation was supercharged and "pregnant" with possibility. Something was about to be given birth that would change the world forever.

So what was going to be happening on that very first Good Friday, when Jesus Christ went to the cross and died for our sin? As Jesus died and breathed His last, the curtain in the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The curtain separated the people from the Holy of Holies, from the literal place where the people believed God dwelt. If on Palm Sunday Jesus reclaimed the Temple and the Holy City for God, then on Good Friday He entered into the Holy of Holies into the very presence of God His Father, presented Himself as the one, all-sufficient sacrifice, and His blood was shed, and He atoned for our sin, and He restored our broken relationship with God, ONCE FOR ALL. Now, as Hebrews notes, *“We have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus...”* (Hebrews 10: 19) Jesus Christ has opened up that relationship with God, as Hebrews notes, *“by the new and living way He has opened for us through the curtain...”* (v. 20) And because we have such a High Priest in Jesus Christ, we can *“draw near”* we can *“DRAW NIGH UNTO GOD with a true heart and full assurance of faith...”* Do you finally and fully understand that what Jesus has done is to draw you near to God, not in fear, not under compulsion, not out of duty or obligation, not because we FEAR God, but because of a CONFIDENCE we have and a TRUE HEART we have and an ASSURANCE of FAITH we have because of what Jesus has done for us that we could never do for ourselves under the law??????? Beloved, draw nigh unto God, because Jesus has drawn nigh unto us!!!!!!!!!!!!

Last year the donkey for Palm Sunday the name was “Stuart”. Last year as Jesus entered into the Church of the Covenant He was riding a different kind of donkey.

So what does it mean for us, this year and this Palm Sunday, more personally, when Jesus draws nigh and seeks to enter once again? What does it mean if you will to “Stuart”? To each of us? Jesus draws near to Jerusalem and rides across the Kidron Valley and through the Golden Gate of the Temple to reclaim us for His Father this year. He presents Himself as the one, all-sufficient and complete sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God. It is no more what we do that pleases God; it is now what Christ has *already* done that is pleasing to God. And this week on Good Friday Jesus rides into the very Holy of Holies of the love of God when He goes to the cross and dies for us and our salvation. The veil separating us from God is torn in two and we have full access to God through the HOLY SPIRIT. No longer is there separation between God and His people. Jesus has paid it all. So we can approach God with assurance and boldness, through faith and a true heart, knowing that through the LIVING WAY that Jesus has provided God will not turn us away, but embrace and accept us fully. But, beloved, even this is but a shadow, is but a partial understanding, it but a metaphor for what God wants to do today in my life and in yours. For now, according to the Bible, WE are the Temple of the Holy Spirit; we are the place where God dwells. *“Do you not know that you are the Temple of the Holy Spirit?”* (1 Corinthians 3: 16) We are the place where the Holy God takes up residency; it is our heart that is the Holy of Holies of God. Jesus comes riding into our Jerusalem today and he has come to reclaim our Temple, our HEART for Himself and for His Father in heaven. He has come to bring His Holy Spirit and His holiness to come and live in us, through a NEW and LIVING Way, as Hebrews notes. The Old Temple worship is gone, it is but a shadow of its former self. In its place is worship in Spirit and in Truth where the Almighty God has come in all His fullness to live within us. Jesus came to the Temple on Palm Sunday and made the one sacrifice on Good Friday so that He can come on THIS Palm Sunday to live within our heart, to satisfy in us the just requirement of the law, to erase the divide between us and His Father in heaven. Beloved, DRAW HIGH UNTO GOD today, because Jesus has drawn near to us this Palm Sunday!!!!!!

I think there are still a lot of people out there who fear God, are afraid if one day they approached Him and invited Him in that perhaps He would turn them away. Old way. I think there are still a lot of Christians out there who think they have to please God through trying harder and harder to obey His

law, even though by now they know that no matter how hard they try on their own they can never be perfect. Old way. I think there are a lot of preachers out there who try to scare people into the Kingdom, who use the law to beat up people and put them down in a way that is controlling and soul-killing. Old way. I think there are still a lot of people out there who aren't entirely convinced that when they die and they ultimately approach the Almighty that they are afraid God might turn them away from the gates of heaven and eternal life. All of that is the old way of being church. No, beloved, because of what Jesus has done we can have confidence and assurance and boldness as we draw near to God. We can draw nigh to God because of a *new and living way* paved by the blood of Jesus. We can draw nigh because Jesus has already drawn nigh. Palm Sunday is Jesus drawing nigh. This Palm Sunday draw nigh unto God and He will draw nigh unto you! Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*