

# St. Paul's Lutheran Church

## Muskego, WI

Palm Sunday – March 24-25, 2018

Mark 11:1-10, John 19:28-30

### TRUE LOVE SEES IT THROUGH

The woman reached into the glove compartment of the brand-new car, her hand shaking. What would her husband say? What would he do? It was only Tuesday! They had picked up the car only Friday. The other driver had run the red light! “It wasn’t my fault...but what will he say?” Her hand grabbed the owner’s manual where she knew the insurance papers would be. She opened the book and there inside, attached to the insurance information, was a pink post-it note with her husband’s handwriting: *“Honey, if you ever need this document, please know that I love you more than life itself and I pray that you are OK. I love you and NOT the car. Give me a call and let me help.”*

The children were sitting in the lawyer’s office. Mom was in heaven with Jesus but there were practical details to be taken care of: the reading of the will and the dividing of the estate.

- “**Mandy** gets the family bible for you were always the one mesmerized by the pictures of your Jesus. I always cherished the memory of the joy & amazement on your face!”
- “**John**, you get your dad’s fishing stuff for you loved the hours with him in that boat. He taught you about Jesus and about fishing for men...and a little about Jesus’ gift of Sabbath rest! Remember to take some time, my son.”
- “And **Jason**, you get the collector’s edition Monopoly Board and the pizza oven that helped you kids put down the social media and learn to enjoy face-to-face relationships—how to win, how to lose, and how to laugh along the way! The gift of family with its heavenly reunion is Jesus’ most splendid gift!”

“And now, onto the less important THINGS...” all in the caps mom used, along with a smiley emoji!

Is *TRUE* love in the fine details, or is true love in the doing? Today God teaches us that true love is in BOTH as **LOVE SEES IT THROUGH...With Attention to Detail So That We Know Him; With Attention to Doing So That We Are Saved!**

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**TRANSITION** On wedding days here at St. Paul’s, a key moment is when the husband-to-be is asked to take the lead on loving in the marriage. Do you recall what that loves looks like and sounds like? *“John, will you take Mary to be your wife? Will you be GUIDED by the counsel and direction God has given in his Word and love your wife AS Christ loved the Church? Will you be FAITHFUL to her...CHERISH her...SUPPORT her...and HELP her in sickness and in health as long as you both shall live?”*

What joy resonates through the soul of the wife-to-be when her husband says, “I will”! For with that promise she is assured that she will always know who her husband is by how he loves her with his attention to the details! So it is with our Jesus! He loves with attention to detail so that we *know* him!

#### 1 With Attention to Detail So That We Know Him

A. He Had a Date with Prophecy

On the Sunday of his “last week”, Jesus’ love for us *had a date with prophecy*: “**Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.**”

“I’m late! I’m late, for a very important date!” said the rabbit in *Alice in Wonderland*. Jesus is never late for his important dates of loving us and of taking care of the details. So on that first day of the week he was right on time! “I have a celebration to get to...I am to arrive as a king...but not on a horse for I am not here to wage war...but on a donkey for I come to bring peace...the prophet said, ‘humbly’...so on a *short* donkey, a colt. I need to make a show of it...but the right show that will respect my Father’s word and his plan.”

So off the disciples went to take care of the details! *And each detail was important* for some of God’s people knew the prophecies and were watching to see what he would do and who he would be...the Messiah who was to come?!

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#### B. He Had a Date with the Devil!

Jesus was so meticulous in his attention to detail for another reason: *he had a date with the devil!* This date had been scheduled since ancient times: “**I will put enmity between you (Satan) and the woman, and between your offspring and hers. One of hers will crush your head...though you will strike his heel.**”

Jesus rode in on a donkey so that we would recognize him; but he also rode in on a donkey so as to force his date with the devil! He stoked the hatred of the Jewish leaders that would bring about the true intent of his love, dying for our sin and destroying the devil’s power to accuse!

He rode in as a king, and in a rare moment for him he accepted the accolades: “**Hosanna!**” the people cried, waving their palms and paving the road with their cloaks--“Lord, save!” “**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!**”--the words of the psalmist directed at, and now accepted by, the Messiah King! “**Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!**” The words of the people—what they wanted him to be...their king...and what they wanted him to do...reestablish the throne and the kingdom and the glory of David!

But, he WAS a bit of a confusing king! The *short donkey*. Not soldiers but *disciples*. Not swords but *words*. He didn’t check out his palace upon his arrival but the *temple*—a bit of a violent scene! And then he went quietly away outside the city with no meeting with the Jewish leaders...? A strange Messiah, still! Unless you knew the prophecies to recognize the signs and what was to come!

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**APPLICATION** Palm Sunday happened specifically so that the Messiah’s people would know him—some to ponder over his “kingship” and what his love would do...some to be incensed by his message and by his “taking away of our authority!” Every detail of the prophets’ words was coming true! Every detail of the prophets’ words was being met...in the “confusing” love of this Nazarene!

Do we always SEE God’s love in the “details” of our lives? Is the loving attention of our King OBVIOUS in this salvation account but hard to see sometimes in the day-to-day? What is LIMITED—the power and love of my KING for me, or the ability of my FAITH to see?

*Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. He sent horses and chariots and a strong force to the city of Dothan. They surrounded the city at night. When the servant of Elisha got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. “Oh no, my lord!” he said to Elisha. “What shall we do?”*

*“Don’t be afraid,” the prophet answered. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” And Elisha prayed, “Open his eyes, LORD, so that he may see.” Then the LORD opened the servant’s eyes and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.*

Do you SEE the Lord’s holy angels sitting next to you for worship this day? Did you see their protection on the drive here? Do you know how the Lord is loving you even in the struggle that is unique to you? That is unique to me? Sometimes we have a confusing King...but **only** because we can’t physically SEE his love and his attention to detail that is always all about saving us!

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## **2 With Attention to Doing so That We Are Saved!**

### **A. He Never Flinched in His Quest to Be King**

Yet...our King will ALWAYS confuse the world because his Kingdom is SO NOT of this world!

Jesus *never flinched in his quest to be King* and to save even though the world, looking upon this strange procession, thought he was nuts! On the following Friday he would stand before Pilate, a governor of powerful Rome! Looking at this pathetic-looking, spit-upon man, Pilate would ask, *“Are you the king of the Jews?”*

Jesus owned the title—but in a calculated, confusing way for Pilate: *“My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest. My kingdom is from another place”*...and therefore IS different and LOOKS different and ACTS differently! Not a kingdom of visible power—yet—not a kingdom of soldiers—yet—but a Kingdom on a path to victory that confused almost all!

Jesus owned the title on the cross and under the moniker Pilate had sarcastically posted for all to read: **JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS**. He owned the title as he went through the list of what he needed to do earn the title of King:

- “Crucified with criminals.
- “Condemned for being the Messiah.
- “Clothes divided; lots cast.
- “Care plan for my mom—John will do nicely.
- “Suffer hell for the world’s sins—‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’”

He never flinched in his quest to be his Father’s kind of king! Humble--on a colt, the foal of a donkey—yet righteous in all that he did and victorious in his mission to save!

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### **B. He Never Balked in His Love to Save**

Our second text highlights our God who is a master of the details to love from beginning to end! He began his week with a To-Do list to save involving the foal of a donkey, and he would complete that list with a truly amazing task involving a soldier’s ration of “wine vinegar”.

*Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”*

Jesus never balked in his love to save! Think about it. The price of sin had been immense—hell itself. AND the VILE rejection of mankind, his creatures HUGE—but Jesus was all about one

final attention to detail that was critical! David had written in Psalm 69 that the Messiah would receive vinegar for his thirst in the midst of his suffering. Lest Jesus discredit his Father and create any doubt of his Father's detailed plan to save he declared in his last moments, "I thirst."

Have you ever been super thirsty? Have you ever been super in pain? About WHOM are you most concerned in that moment? Isn't me, myself and I? But Jesus did not seek a drink so much to quench his thirst, but to make sure that we would know him as our faithful King with attention to detail. To make sure that we know the extent of his love! Throughout his agony and in the moment of his dying, he was still all about you and me! Love beyond MY comprehension. Love that sees things through in a way beyond my ability to love! But a love that saves and inspires little ol' me!

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**APPLICATION** Jesus' attention to detail was NOT because he was obsessive-compulsive. His attention was because of his love! I pray that truth is reassuring.

Who remembers your record of sin better, you or the devil? Who is more than happy to remind you of your sin? Who would love to be able to stand before God and point out the details of our sin, and the repetitive nature of our sin, and the immensity of our sin?

But who is it who knew the details better than you or I or the devil? Yes, it is the King of the Jews! He suffered for every sin! He sweat the details of hell for every sin! Like a tailor ironing out the wrinkles of a shirt, he made you holy—every corner of your life, every corner of YOU—washed clean in his blood. So cool!

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**CONCLUSION** Might I suggest a Palm Sunday exercise for you when you get home today? Find a pad of post-it notes. Hot pink if you are an emotional sap! And write on five of them this love note from your God! ***"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*** And then post them scattered around the corners of your life—the glove compartment, your computer screen, above the kitchen sink—wherever it takes to remind you and to surprise you again and again that God, in true love, "see it through". You cannot step beyond his love; you cannot sin beyond his ability to forgive. You cannot escape his attention! Amen.

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