

“Who Is Jesus?” – Palm Sunday

March 29, 2026

First Christian Church

Scripture Text: Matthew 21:1-11

Hello. My name is Issachar and I was there when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on what you call Palm Sunday. I have been fortunate enough to come to the great city of Jerusalem to celebrate Passover several times, but that day was different. Passover was not until Thursday, but I arrived early to enjoy all the city had to offer. When I first arrived, I could tell there was something different. I couldn't put my finger on it, but it felt like there was, I don't know, more energy in the streets than before. Nothing focused; more like people were excited, but also on edge. Like I said, I couldn't put my finger on it until I heard the roar of a crowd. I heard people chanting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" That was a very curious chant, so I went to find out what was going on.

As I approached the crowd, I saw a man walking with his daughter. Normally fathers bring their sons with them on special trips like Passover in Jerusalem, but this father/daughter team seemed to walk together without their feet touching the ground. I stopped them and said, "Hello, my name is Issachar. Do you know what is going on? Who is everyone over there shouting about?" "I am Jairus," responded the father, "and this is my daughter. All the shouting and commotion is centered around a man named Jesus. He is a great healer. As a matter of fact, He healed my daughter. She was at death's bed when I heard Jesus was nearby. I fought through the crowds, fell at His feet and begged Him to come to my house and heal my daughter. He agreed to come, but on the way, messengers came, saying my daughter was already dead. But Jesus kept coming. He would not be diswayed. When we arrived, He took my daughter's lifeless hand in His, and told her to get up, and she did. We have been floating on air ever since. And it is all because of that great healer named Jesus."

As the father and daughter disappeared back into the crowd, I pressed on. I had to know more. That is when I saw a woman who had this unexplainable glow about her. I said, "My name is Issachar. I am in town for the Passover. What is your name and do you know anything about what is going on around here?" "Never mind who I am," she said. "This day is all about the man we call Jesus. He has the presence and power of God running through Him. I had been sick for 12 years. The doctors did nothing but take my money and make me worse. But then I reached out to Jesus. I didn't say anything to Him and He didn't even see me coming, but I reached out and touched the hem of His garment, and I was instantly healed. That man has the very presence and power of God running through Him. Wherever He goes, He brings that power and presence with Him. That is what has Jerusalem stirred up. God has shown up in its midst and they just don't know what to do."

Wow, these were some fascinating stories, but could they be true. Just then I saw somebody dressed up in fine robes, moving away from the place everyone else was moving to. "Excuse me sir," I asked, "I am hearing some pretty amazing stories about the person they call Jesus. Are they true? Can He heal people? Is the presence of God in Him?" "Son," the man replied, "I am Caiaphas, the chief priest. I can tell you without a doubt that the stories are not true. Sure, Jesus has done some healings and some other tricks, but He has no respect for our law – for God's law. Yeah, He heals people, but He does it on the Sabbath. God's law defines the Sabbath as a day of rest. How could a person be from God and openly stick His nose up at God's law? I don't know who He thinks He is, but I am sticking with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I am standing on God's law, passed down through Moses and upheld by the prophets. In a few days, this man will be gone, but the law is forever. You would be wise to stick with what last." With that, he turned to walk away, but one of the men walking with the chief priest took me aside and said, "He doesn't speak for all of us. My name is Nicodemus and I too am one of the religious leaders around here. But unlike Caiaphas, I am still curious about Jesus. I wonder who He is. He speaks of new life, of being born again. I don't completely understand it, but I know I like it. The man brings hope. The man makes sense.

Just then a bump in the middle of my back got my attention. I quickly turned around to a startled man apologizing. "I am sorry, sir. I didn't mean to bump you. Forgive me, I am new at this." "New at what?" I asked. "And why are you carrying a stretcher?" "Walking, I am new at walking," he replied. "I was completely paralyzed until my friends lowered me through a roof to Jesus and He told me 'your sins are forgiven' and to 'stand up and take your stretcher and go.' Suddenly I was able to stand, so I picked up my stretcher and left, just like He said. And I've been carrying it around ever since just to remind myself of what Jesus did for me." Then he turned to walk away and almost hit me with his stretcher again.

That is when I saw a woman standing by herself who didn't look like she belonged in Jerusalem. I went over to see if I could be of assistance. I said, "You're not from around here are you?" She said, "No. I'm just here for Him." "Him?" "Yea, Him, Jesus. I am from Syrophenicia and I met Jesus when He came to our area. He was kind of laying low but my daughter was sick and needed help. At first Jesus refused to help me because I wasn't Jewish, but then He looked at me again and saw me as a person, a person who needed help. That is when He broke all these people's rules to help me. He showed me God is big enough – God's heart is big enough – to reach even someone like me. I try to keep track of Him now, hoping I can find a way to say thank you for seeing me, and helping me, even though I was out-of-bounds. Oh, and thank you for noticing me, but I must get back to my daughter now." And with that she was gone.

The next person I found said he had been seeking to be a part of what God was doing for years. The puzzled look on my face must have given me away, for he continued. "I was a follower of John the Baptist. I listened to John's call for repentance. I helped him with his

baptisms for the forgiveness of sin. I felt his passion, his conviction, his desire to be exactly who God wanted him to be. After John's arrest, the baptizer sent me to Jesus with a simple question, 'Are you the One who is to come, or are we to wait for another?' Jesus answered, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them." When I read the prophet Isaiah, that is exactly what he says the anointed one of God would do. So I have been following Jesus, listening to Him speak God's truth, seeing how His wisdom and insights about God truly change people's lives. I have seen Him reach the unreachable and love the unlovable. I really like how He shows us God's will while He tells us about it." "So you were a disciple of John and now you are a disciple of Jesus?" "Yes. John brought me to Jesus and now Jesus is bringing me to God."

While we were still talking, another man bumped into me. "I'm sorry," he said. "I just don't understand." "You don't understand what?" I asked. "I don't understand how people who can see can be so blind." Again, my face gave me away. He continued, "My name is Bartimaeus and up until about a week ago I was blind. Seeing is new to me, and I can see who Jesus is. Everyone else around here has been able to see their whole lives, how can they not see who Jesus is?" "Well, I'm Issachar and I can see real well, but I'm still trying to figure out who this Jesus is," I said. "One person told me Jesus was an amazing healer. Another said He carries the presence and power of God in Him. But one learned, religious scholar said Jesus breaks God's commandments while another likes Jesus but doesn't understand Him. I met another guy who carries around a stretcher because Jesus told him to and another who follows Jesus because he wants to be part of what God is doing. I even met a foreigner who is still overwhelmed that Jesus noticed her, saw her as a person, and helped her. So from what I can tell, Jesus is a healer and a teacher, a seeker of the lost and a breaker of stagnant rules. People see God at work in Jesus. Do you see something more?" "Yes!" he exclaimed. "Jesus is more than a healer and more than a teacher. Jesus is more than a religious reformer, more than a prophet, more than a really good guy. Jesus is hope. Jesus is God in our midst to bring us peace, bring us God's love, bring us back home to God again. How can people who are used to seeing be so blind? Jesus is the very Son of God. Why are people resisting Him? Why are they fighting Him? Can they not see? Let Him in. Let Him heal your body and your spirit. Let Him in. Let Him heal your mind and soul. Let Him in. Let Him heal your relationships and your community. I can see who He is, and working eyes are new to me. Do your eyes work? Can you see He brings healing where there is hurt, and reconciliation where there is brokenness. He gives life where there is death and hope where there is dismay. He breaks down barriers and refuses to stand for anything less than love. What will He have to do to make you see? How far will He have to go until your eyes grasp who He is?"

Bartimaeus' words haunted me. How far would Jesus have to go until I can see who He is? More than a healer, more than a teacher, more than a prophet. He is a person who can forgive

sins, bring hope and new life. A person who lets us know God's heart, who shows us God's heart, who reaches the unreachable and loves the unlovable. He is God's Son – God's presence and power with us.

But why? What is He here to do? What will He have to do to change our situation? How far will He have to go for us to see what is right in front of us?

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