

**Mark 11:1-14 – Palm Sunday – “The Hidden Power of the King” – March 24<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

Grace and peace to you all from God our Father and Jesus, our King and Savior. Amen.

This past August a huge deal was made about the solar eclipse that graced our skies. Why was it such a big deal? Because it was going to pass right over, right through the heart of the United States of America – starting in Oregon and finishing in South Carolina. People traveled hundreds, thousands of miles to see it. When I was in Milwaukee last July I remember the church we worshipped in was advertising for a big bus they were taking down to Missouri to catch a glimpse of the solar eclipse. Solar eclipses happen twice every year, sometimes 3 times a year – they happen every 177 days – so it’s not like it only happens once in a hundred years, but we don’t pay too much attention to them until we can get an up-close view ourselves. However, this solar eclipse was kind of special – it was the first one in 99 years that went coast to coast. Now, and more to the point, solar eclipses, as everyone was warned over and over, are dangerous. You don’t want too direct of a view of the eclipse and why? Because of the damage it can cause to your eyes. Think about that: For a brief period of time, the sun, the star that shines throughout our solar system and shines on our dear planet Earth, helping plants to grow, snow to melt, and cheers Yoopers up after long, grey winters, the sun is blocked, is *hidden* if you will. The sun is *hidden*, yet its rays are so *powerful* that even when the hidden sun begins to slowly appear, and all that start to you see is a sliver of light, a quick, unprotected view of the sun can still damage your eyes. Though the sun is blocked, is *hidden*, during a solar eclipse, the sun’s *power* still remains. This is how I want you to think of Jesus on Palm Sunday. He is almighty God *hidden* in human skin and bone. He is all-powerful, yet hides his power for a time. Saint Paul puts it so beautifully in Philippians 2:5-11 – “...though he was in the form of God, [he] did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited (meaning Jesus hid his omnipotent power), but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave...became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross...” Jesus

is the solar eclipse, if you will, the hidden power of almighty of God. John 1:9 puts it this way: Jesus is the “...true light...[who has come] into the world.” Or as Jesus himself says in John 8:12 – “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

On Palm Sunday nearly 2000 years ago, Jesus – the promised King of Israel, the true King of Israel, the King of all creation, the “light of the world”– Jesus concealed, hid his power. King Jesus hid his power from the sight of the crowd, the disciples, the Romans who were occupying Jerusalem at the time, King Jesus hid his power from everyone. He gave a partial view of his hidden power when He came humbly riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, in fulfillment of the prophecy found in Zechariah 9:9, written 500 years before Jesus was born. And he gave a partial view of his power as he curses the fig tree – an indictment on Jerusalem for rejecting their Messiah. Jesus also is the very glory of God who has returned to Jerusalem, as Ezekiel 43:4 prophesied about 550 years before Jesus was born. Jesus entered Jerusalem, his power was hidden, and his power would remain hidden until Easter morning and even when Jesus rose again on Easter, he still hid a large part of his power and why? Because if we saw the unmitigated, unhindered, uninhibited, unobstructed, unadulterated, unmasked, unsullied – I could go on all day – if we saw the unhidden, completely revealed display of the power of God we would die. We would be “blinded by the light” – to quote Bruce Springsteen’s song that Manfred Mann’s Earth Band made famous. We would be blinded, incinerated by the holy light of God. When Moses wanted to see the full glory of God, the unhidden power and presence of God, what did the Lord tell him? The Lord told Moses in Exodus 33:20 - “...you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.” In Christ, God’s power and glory is present, but hidden. In King Jesus the fullness of the power of God is hidden, is eclipsed for a time, but will be on full display when

Jesus comes again, when Jesus returns to this weary world and brings heaven down to earth with him.

This hidden power of the King means two important things as you celebrate Palm Sunday, this year and every year. First is this: You can be yearning, longing for King Jesus to return as he promised, to return with all of his power to dispel all the darkness of this world, to rid this world of all wickedness and injustice, to usher in the age of everlasting peace and righteousness, to complete the work of redemption he began that first Holy Week almost 2000 years ago. When this happens, everyone will know it. As Christians we cannot ever lose or forget the hope and promise for Christ's return. Second, because you know King Jesus will return one day, and unexpectedly, this means you can be living your life of faith as if every single day matters, because every single day does. Now, let me unpack those two things a bit more.

Number one: When you yearn and long for King Jesus to return with all his power, you need to realize what you are asking for: You are asking for an end of this world as you know it so that God can bring about the world as he knows it, as he wants it, as he has always intended it to be: A world without sin and sadness, a world without death and destruction, a world without violence and vehemence, a world without cancer, heart attacks, Alzheimer's, accidents, a world forever healed and uncorrupted by Satan's power, a world that is teeming with life, a world that is full to the brim with joy, a world that reflects all the goodness of God because God will be with his people again, unhidden, unmasked, and you won't be blinded by his light, you won't be incinerated by his glory because you have Christ, the King, whose blood has purified you, whose life has been given to you, whose claim has been placed upon you in baptism and because God

has you, he will never let go. The hidden power of God in this life will be revealed completely one day. About this day, King Jesus says in Matthew 24:29-31 "...the sun will be darkened (an eclipse!)...the heavens will be shaken...all the tribes of the earth will mourn and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. He will send out his angels...they will gather his elect..." The elect, Christ's Church of true believers will be gathered, saved, given and shown all the beauty of heaven; everyone who has not clung to Jesus for mercy and forgiveness, who have not believed, on the other hand, will not. As we heard in John 3:18 a couple of weeks ago, "...whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God." What makes the fact that people will be eternally lost so sad is that everyone *is* given a chance, but when they see Jesus in all his unhidden power, then it will be too late. It's like people looking at the solar eclipse. You warned not to look at it, but as soon as the eclipse fades, the sun will shine and do its damage on unprotected eyes. Christ, the son of God, comes in to Jerusalem, in to our lives this very day in mercy; Jesus will return again but it will be for judgment.

And briefly, the second thing I mentioned again was this: Because you know King Jesus will return one day, and unexpectedly, this means you can be living your life of faith as if every single day matters, because every single day does. The time you spend in fellowship and in worship with other brothers and sisters in Christ is time well spent. In worship you feast on the promises of God. The time you spend in prayer for friends and family and neighbors that do not know Jesus or have forgotten how sweet is his mercy, that time isn't wasted time. The time you spend talking with friends or family or neighbors about worship, about Church, about God, about King Jesus and his love, isn't wasted time. Even if it seems like they're not listening or they don't care, you're sowing seeds for God to water and grow, you're showing a glimpse of the

light of God that may one day flood their mind and heart with a love for King Jesus. The time you spend knowing more about King Jesus and his power to save, but also his power to judge, by being in the Holy Scriptures is time that is well spent. If you know your Bibles, if know the story of God, I guarantee you that worship becomes more meaningful, prayer more powerful, talking about God with others easier to do, and so on. I can't stress enough how important is the use of your time.

You all are living right now in the middle of a massive shift in culture where more and more people know less and less about God, less and less about the Bible; a time where everything is true and nothing is true; a time where Christ's Church is looked at with so much skepticism and distrust. But you know what, this is a beautiful time to be the Church, people of God. Let us take every opportunity to point as many people to King Jesus and his power as possible – both his hidden power, what we see on Palm Sunday through Good Friday; and in his fully revealed power, which beings to break out on Easter Sunday. This Palm Sunday we remember and celebrate: That even though in King Jesus the fullness of the power of God is hidden, is eclipsed for a time; it will be on full display when Jesus comes again, when Jesus returns to this weary world and brings heaven down to earth with him. May that day come soon and may we be ready to welcome our returning King. Amen.

HOD: ELW # 335 – “Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross”