

Life Group Notes 3/24/2024
Pastor Richie Cayabyab Palm Sunday

[If you have observations or questions, feel free to send me an email with your comment or observations at tbeachhead@comcast.net.]

Remember: Be good to one another. Be sensitive and kind. Let God heal our hearts...and guide our discussions. **PLEASE PRE-READ THESE NOTES AND CHOOSE THE DIRECTION THAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR GROUP.** BE COGNIZANT OF YOUR GROUP'S TIME AND BE SENSITIVE!

Note: I have highlighted suggested discussion questions that Pastor Mark has raised this week, 3/24. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to guide all our discussions, using the highlights as trail blazes. **The purpose is to minister to one another.** I include each of the passages mentioned in full, to facilitate the enjoyment of these notes. Footnotes are not meant to distract. This week's footnotes include:

1. [On the Shroud of Turin.](#)
2. [On Hosanna!](#)
3. [On Bethphage and Bethany.](#)
4. [On excessive behavior in the presence of God.](#)

*****Important:** At the very [end of these notes](#), I've included passages that were mentioned in this week's message for deeper study using SOAP journaling to help further your study during the week. ***

Pastor Richie began by highlighting the events of the week of Jesus' passion. How many of the days of "Holy Week" can you describe? Try and put the week together.

Look up Mark 11: [1](#)As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent out two of His disciples [2](#)and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as soon as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. [3](#)If anyone asks, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will return it shortly.'"

[4](#)So they went and found the colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. They untied it, [5](#)and some who were standing there asked, "Why are you untying the colt?" [6](#)The disciples answered as Jesus had instructed them, and the people gave them permission. [7](#)Then they led the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, and He sat on it. [8](#)Many in the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut from the fields. [9](#)The ones who went ahead and those who followed were shouting:

"Hosanna!"

"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

[10](#)"Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"

"Hosanna in the highest!"

[11](#)Then Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, He went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

I. Pastor Richie's First Point: God will ask you to do things that don't make sense.

1. What do you see?
2. Why a donkey?
3. Look up Zechariah 9: [9Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your King comes to you, righteous and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.](#) [10And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem, and the bow of war will be broken. Then He will proclaim peace to the nations. His dominion will extend from sea to sea, and from the Euphrates to the ends of the earth.](#) What do you see? Why did Jesus need the donkey?
4. Zechariah wrote this prophecy at the time of the construction of the Second Temple, around 500 BC. Did Zechariah ever see what he foretold?
5. What does that tell you about the nature of prophecy?
6. Why is the King riding on the foal of a donkey, and not in a chariot or a war horse?
7. What is being proclaimed when the King chooses to ride the donkey?
8. Pastor Richie asks, "Has the Lord ever asked you to do something that did not make sense?" Answer him.
9. Did you do it? Do you have a testimony?

Look up Isaiah 55: [8"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways," declares the LORD.](#) [9"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.](#) [10For just as rain and snow fall from heaven and do not return without watering the earth, making it bud and sprout, and providing seed to sow and food to eat.](#) [11so My word that proceeds from My mouth will not return to Me empty, but it will accomplish what I please, and it will prosper where I send it.](#)

1. What do you see?
2. Do you like the rain?
3. What happens to the seed in the ground when it rains? When do we see the results of a rain?
4. What happens when you hear a word from God? Do you see changes right away?
5. What do words produce in a mind?

Richie says, "When we hear words that don't make sense and respond, our faith is activated." Explain. Look at verse 6, above.

1. How did the disciples respond to those who were asking them why they were taking the colt?
2. How did obedience work?

Pastor Richie speaks of when God's Word absolutely makes sense: "You will be holy as your Father in Heaven is holy."

1. What does that mean?
2. How well do you understand these words?
3. How many illegal drugs can one take and be holy?
4. How many nights can one be drunk and remain holy?
5. How much adultery can one commit and be holy?
6. How much pornography can one watch and be holy?

And then he asks, "If you are struggling to obey when the meaning is obvious, how are you going to respond to a command that does not make sense? 'You have too many cars—

Give one away'...'You have accumulated so much because you are diligent. Give to those who have need...'"

1. Do you have a testimony?
2. What is the most difficult thing the Spirit has ever asked you to do? Did you do it?
3. Look up Ezekiel 36: *25I will also sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your impurities and all your idols. 26I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.27And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and to carefully observe My ordinances....* How sure is His promise to deliver us?
4. If the Lord causes us to walk in His statutes as He promises, whose righteousness will our family and our neighbors begin to see? What happens to the sin we used to follow after?

Pastor Richie clarifies the command to be "holy." "When God asks you to be Holy, He's saying 'Be different from the world. Be set apart from the world's way. Be set apart.' The world is saying, 'You've got to be first.' And God says, 'If you want to be first, be last.' The greatest has to be the servant of all." He says, "Everything we do needs to be focused on Jesus."

1. Does this make sense to you?
2. How are you doing?
3. Have you ever tried helping in a church? How did that go?
4. Has your focus changed at all in recent years? What have you learned?
5. What are you being asked to do?

II. Pastor Richie's Second Point: Don't let the rocks cry out.

Pastor Richie sets the stage for the events of Palm Sunday. This happens on what the Jews call the "first day of the week," with Passover approaching. This means that the city is beginning to fill with millions of Jews from all over the world who come to Jerusalem by the commandment of Moses to celebrate. Moreover, this is only days after Lazarus was raised from the dead in Bethany, a town just on the other side of the Mount of Olives, a hill which stands across the Kidron valley opposite the Beautiful Gate which leads to the Temple in the city of Jerusalem. Everyone had heard the news of his resurrection. Even strangers from remote lands were now curious. Jesus, like John before Him, is now becoming world famous.

Look up Luke's account of this same event in Luke 19: *36As He rode along, the people spread their cloaks on the road. 37And as He approached the descent from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of disciples began to praise God joyfully in a loud voice for all the miracles they had seen:*

38"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

39But some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples!"

40"I tell you," He answered, "if they remain silent, the very stones will cry out."

1. What do you see?
2. How is Luke's account different from Mark's version?
3. How is the crowd behaving?
4. What is the response of the Pharisees?
5. Why would they want Jesus to rebuke His disciples? Are they breaking any law?
6. Have you ever been boisterous? Have you been asked to calm down? When?

7. Look at Jesus' response to the Pharisees who are complaining.
8. Do rocks cry out? Is Jesus being poetic, or was His entry into Jerusalem of such cosmic power that he could animate nature?
9. Look at what Paul tells the Romans in Romans 8:[19](#)*The creation waits in eager expectation for the revelation of the sons of God.* [20](#)*For the creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will, but because of the One who subjected it, in hope* [21](#)*that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.* [22](#)*We know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until the present time.* What happens when the stones see the Son of God, humble and riding victorious on a donkey, if no one else is shouting?

10. What do the stones see when they see you?

Pastor Richie points out certain characteristics of the Holy Spirit in response to Jesus:

- He is all about Jesus.
- He is not embarrassed to speak of Jesus.
- He is not grieved when a crowd gets excited about Jesus.

Can you add to this? Have you seen a time similar to Palm Sunday, from the Old Testament? Look up 2 Samuel 6: [13](#)When those carrying the ark of the LORD had advanced six paces, he [David] sacrificed an ox and a fattened calf [14](#)And David, wearing a linen ephod, danced with all his might before the LORD, [15](#)while he and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and the sounding of the ram's horn....

1. Describe the progress. How long did it take to bring the Ark of the Lord into Jerusalem, and to the City of David?
2. How did David behave?
3. Is there a record of how the crowd behaved? What does shouting sound like?
4. Who started the excessive behavior?
5. Now look at the rest of the story. 2 Samuel 6: [16](#)As the ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Saul's daughter Michal looked down from a window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, and she despised him in her heart...[20](#)As soon as David returned home to bless his own household, Saul's daughter Michal came out to meet him. "How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today!" she said. "He has uncovered himself today in the sight of the maidservants of his subjects, like a vulgar person would do." [21](#)But David said to Michal, "I was dancing before the LORD, who chose me over your father and all his house when He appointed me ruler over the LORD's people Israel. I will celebrate before the LORD, [22](#)and I will humiliate and humble myself even more than this. Yet I will be honored by the maidservants of whom you have spoken." Who played the role of the Pharisee in this story?
6. What was Michal's problem? Have you ever been embarrassed by someone else's behavior in a church service that seemed excessive to you?
7. How did you respond? Was Michal's point legitimate?
8. What was David's response to Michal? Was he right?
9. Look at John 1: [3](#)Through Him all things were made, and without Him nothing was made that has been made. Why would the rocks cry out...when their creator passed by humble and riding on a donkey? Do the rocks understand something that we don't?

10. What part of creation would not cry out if Jesus passed by, humble and riding on a donkey? What is their problem?
11. How can we help them, who refuse to cry out, to understand like the rocks do?
12. Pastor Richie related the story of the delivery of his dishwasher, when he prayed for the man who delivered it who was in such pain. Do you remember? What was the man's response?
13. Pastor Richie said the gesture touched the man, because, "No one has ever asked to pray for me before." How does a simple gesture promote healing?
14. Explain how praying for someone can be like boisterous, exuberant behavior in church.
15. Have you ever laid hands on someone for healing? Do you have a testimony? Look at what Jesus said about believers in Mark 16: *17And these signs will accompany those who believe: In My name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18they will pick up snakes with their hands, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not harm them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will be made well.* ... *20And they went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked through them, confirming His word by the signs that accompanied it.* Do you have a testimony? How do signs confirm the gospel?
16. Did you see a sign that brought you to the faith?
17. Which is easier for you: to dance with joy in church? Or to pray for a sick or weakened friend?

Look up Matthew 10: *21Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rise against their parents and have them put to death. 22You will be hated by everyone because of My name, but the one who perseveres to the end will be saved.*

1. Do you have a testimony?
2. How do you respond?
3. What does it take to persevere?

Now look up Mark 8: *36What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? 37Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? 38If anyone is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in His Father's glory with the holy angels."*

1. Answer Jesus' questions in verses 36 and 37.
2. Explain the difference between being ashamed of Jesus, and being shy.
3. Look closely at verse 38. How great has the contrast become between the spirit of this world and the Spirit of God?
4. Where do His words come into your conversations?
5. Why is God's Word being stifled? How strong is the effort to stifle His words? Why?
6. Are you able to speak His Word with boldness? Do you feel stifled? Explain.
7. Do these verses encourage you, or do they discourage you? Why?

III. Pastor Richie's Third Point: Are you praising God for the right reasons with the right expectations?

Look back at the passages in Luke and in Mark.

1. Why were the people shouting Hosanna? (See [footnote 2](#) below.)
2. How did Psalm 118 suddenly come alive for them? How old was the tradition of this psalm at Passover?
3. What were their expectations?

4. How did Jesus disappoint their expectations? What were their imagined enemies?
5. How did Jesus meet their expectations? What were their real enemies?
6. How does the Lamb of God become the conquering King? Has He overthrown your enemies yet?
7. Think of this...the same people who cut the palm branches and took off their coats to lay them under Him in the street cried "Crucify Him" five days later. How does that happen?
8. Do you have a testimony of where you were severely misled by a crowd?
9. How does that happen?

Pastor Richie spoke of a recent popular song that says, "Bless me...bless me... bless me... bless me... bless me..." What is good about this song? What is the problem with this song? Have you ever seen the prayer of Jabez in 1 Chronicles 4: [9](#)Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. His mother had named him Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain." [10](#)And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, "Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!" So God granted him what he requested. Look closely at this prayer.

1. Compare the prayer of Jabez to the Lord's prayer.
2. What do you see?
3. Why is Jabez asking to be blessed?
4. Who benefits from the blessing?
5. Who else benefits? How do you know Jabez wants to be a blessing to others?
6. What is God's response to such a prayer?
7. Have you ever dared to pray such a prayer?
8. Why not? Are the rocks louder than your prayers?

Pastor Richie calls us back to Mark 11: [3](#)If anyone asks, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will return it shortly.'"

1. What is the owners' immediate response?
2. Does God need us?
3. How does your answer to this question adjust your relationship to understand His love better?
4. Do you let Him use your donkey because He needs it?

Look at Micah 6: [7](#)Would the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? [8](#)He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you but to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?

1. Put the requirements in your own words.
2. What does this verse change in the concept of religion?
3. What is required?
4. Does Jesus keep the donkey, or does He return it?
5. If Jesus is saying, "I need you to be my hands and feet..." what is your response?
6. Does He keep the hands and feet, or does He return them?
7. If we are His body and He is the head, what can we do without Him?
8. What can He do without our full cooperation? What can He do without hands or feet?
9. Who will reach the lost and the dying, when His hands and feet do not cooperate?

10. Who will reach your workplace or your school, when His hands and feet do not cooperate?

The Follow-up Application

1. Use the [SOAP journal studies](#) below throughout the week.
2. As this week progresses, think of what we know Jesus said and did on each day.
3. Pray that God align your mind and your heart with God's. Write down what you see.

Take the time to pray.

Scribe's Notes:

1. **On the shroud of Turin**—Since the shroud, said to be the burial cloth of Jesus that Nicodemus and Joseph wrapped Him in, first appeared in *Time Magazine* in the sixties, I've been fascinated by the controversies that this artifact has ignited. Not surprisingly, more evidence in the shroud's favor comes out every year, even to where it soundly refutes the claims of forgery that began with a "carbon dating" that has proven to be deliberately fraudulent. The image on the cloth is that of a perfectly proportioned 3-D photo negative of a crucified Jewish male who was severely beaten and crowned with thorns, whose blood, which preceded the image itself by days, shows the serum that trauma produces when fluoresced with ultraviolet light. This image cannot be duplicated with anything we have in modern technology, making the possibility of it being a middle-age forgery utterly impossible. Beyond this fact...there is a second artifact called the Sudarium of Oviedo, the head cloth which we are told was folded neatly beside the "cloths in which He was wrapped, that, having the same blood staining the cloth showing the same trauma and matching the stains on the head of the shroud, gives its testimony as well in Oviedo, Spain. Here are two lengthy YouTube videos by a forensic scientist that will help you understand where the investigation has gone in the last decades...and they might convince you that, as at the crossing of the Red Sea, God did not leave us without physical evidence of His boundless love for us. Did Jesus actually leave us the world's first selfie?
 - A. "The Shroud of Turin: Photograph of the Resurrection - Part 1: Science of a Miracle" On the science of the Shroud itself:
<https://youtu.be/xq5kHkoj904?si=62WBUzFkIKYShp>
 - B. "The Shroud of Turin: Photograph of the Resurrection - Part 2: History of a Miracle" On the history of the artifact from the tomb to Turin, Italy.
<https://youtu.be/AjMeEwWrAGM?si=n5kYBPIeKwimRUx>
2. **On "Hosanna!"**—The word is the transliteration of "*Hoshiana*" from the Hebrew language that has made its way, like the word "*Hallelujah*," into

every language I have seen. In Hebrew, it is a compound word from *yasha*, which means “save/deliver [us]”, and *na*, which means “now/please/we beg of you.” *Yasha* also happens to be the root of Jesus’ name which means “Yahweh saves/delivers.” The words being shouted on the streets as Jesus enters Jerusalem are the lyrics of well-known psalms (118 and 148) that were sung each year as Hallel (praise) psalms for Passover.

3. **On Bethany and Bethphage**—The Hebrew word “*Beth*” means “house.” These are two towns that lie on the Mount of Olives and that are found on the opposite side from Jerusalem. Bethany, called in Arabic “the village of Lazarus”, and known to this day for the miracle of his resurrection, is where Jesus apparently stayed during his last days with us. His friends, Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived there, and it was a “Sabbath day’s journey,” the permissible distance to walk on a Sabbath without risking violation, from Jerusalem. Here is where Mary poured expensive ointment on Jesus’ feet, and where Judas was publicly humiliated when he criticized her for the waste. At the crest of the hill lay Bethphage, where the disciples found the donkey. The name means, “house of the sour fig,” which is interesting, because this is where Jesus cursed the fig tree.
 4. **On excessive behavior in the presence of God**—David is not the only one known in the Old Testament for excessive behavior before the Lord. At the dedication of Solomon’s Temple in 1 Kings 8, the priests were unable to carry out their service because the glory of the Lord became a cloud that prevented the priests from even standing: **10**And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, the cloud filled the house of the LORD **11**[so that the priests could not stand there to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.](#) This is exactly what happened again in Acts 2, when the Holy Spirit came on the church for the first time: **2***Suddenly a sound like a mighty rushing wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.* **3***They saw tongues like flames of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.* **4***And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them...* **12***Astounded and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”* **13***But others mocked them and said, “They are drunk on new wine!”* The behavior of the disciples, newly filled with the Spirit, was so unusual they were accused of drunkenness. Presumably, like the priests at the dedication, they had difficulty standing for the Glory of the Lord. When Peter explains, he states in the English translations, “These men are not drunk.” The Greek makes it even more clear. Peter’s words do not say, “These men are not drunk...” Literally, he says, “For not as you imagine, these men ARE drunk...” The negative particle is on the imagination, not the drunkenness. He is actually saying, “These men are drunk, but not the way you’re thinking.”
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For further study:

Take a moment each day this week to apply the **SOAP**... (**S**cripture—Copy the scripture. / **O**bservation—Write what you see. / **A**pplication—What is God saying? / **P**ray—What is your response?) ...method to some of the scripture we looked at this week:

Monday: Ezekiel 36:25-27
Tuesday: 2 Samuel 6:13-15
Wednesday: 2 Samuel 6:20-22
Thursday: Isaiah 55:8-11
Friday: Mark 16:17-20
Saturday: Romans 8:19-22
Sunday: John 1:1-3

Once again, some passages suggested here have more than the usual number of verses. This is not to increase the burden but to provide clarity of context. Pick the verses that speak to you most clearly, and run these through the SOAP steps.