

## Palm Sunday 2020

There was once a cowboy who listened attentively to the story of the first Palm Sunday. After hearing it, . . . he had only one small response to make to the story. In his own straight forward way, . . . the cowboy simply stated, . . . Jesus must have had wonderful hands. But his words only confused the others around him. Out of curiosity they asked, . . . What do you mean by that statement? Well, the cowboy replied, . . . if Jesus could sit on a colt . . . on which no person ever sat, . . . an untried, . . . unbroken animal; . . . if he could soothe it . . . and control it . . . and guide it . . . while people were shrieking hosannas in its ears, . . . waving the branches of palm trees in front of its eyes, . . . and throwing down clothes in front of its feet, . . . Jesus must have had wonderful hands!

The hands of Christ are indeed wonderful hands. Those hands reached out to people from every walk of life. Those hands touched the sick and dying, raised the dead, fed a hungry throng of people. Those hands of Jesus calmed the wind, were folded in prayer as he prayed to the Father for the strength to carry on his mission. Those hands of Christ are hands that now reach across the span of time and touch our lives through his Holy Spirit.

The hands of Christ are indeed wonderful hands. Those hands allowed Christ to ride on a colt into Jerusalem on what we now call Palm Sunday. Those hands held the reins of that animal so that it would not be frightened with all the shouting and throwing of palm branches on the ground as Jesus rode as a king into the city.

Those hands of Jesus calmed the animal as he calmed the sea. Jesus rode into the city as one who would be king and those hands waved to the crowds that he understood what his mission was. He knew that this ride was going to end with his death. But Jesus held on to the reins for he knew he must follow through with the will of His Father.

Those hands of Jesus in a few days would be clasped in prayer and he prayed in the garden for the strength to follow through with the will of the Father. Those hands were clasped so tight in prayer and sweat and beads of blood came from the body of Christ as he prayed for the peace of God which would allow him to undergo the ordeal of the crucifixion. Those hands reached out to the disciples who were with him in the garden and woke them from their sleep as they could not stay awake while Jesus was praying. Those hands reached out and touched the ear of the man that Peter hurt with his sword as the guards came for Jesus. Jesus reached out and healed the man's ear as those hands were extended in compassion for this man.

Yes that hands of Jesus are truly remarkable hands.

But I wonder as the crowds saw Jesus ride into town, did they realize what was really going on. Did they see more than just a man riding on a colt, did they see Jesus as the Son of God or did they miss it. Did they just see that Jesus was king for a day and nothing more.

The crowds were like the little boy in the following:

There's a story about a little boy who lived in a small country town where there had never been a circus. He knew about circuses from his school books, but never had he seen a real, live circus. And then one day there was a poster on the side of a building announcing that a circus was coming to his town. Well, he knew right there and then that he must see that circus, so he began to save up for it, and he started counting the days. On the last night before the great event, he was too excited to sleep. He was up before daylight to get all his chores finished and be down on the main street by nine o'clock. Shortly after nine, the great circus parade came down the street. He saw lions and tigers, beautiful horses, tremendous elephants, jugglers, clowns, acrobats, and the circus band. His eyes were wide with excitement, his feet couldn't stop jumping up and down, and he couldn't stop shouting.

When the parade finally ended, the little boy stepped out of the crowd handed his money to the last man in the parade, and went back home. He thought to himself that the circus was just about the greatest thing he had ever seen. Not till years later did he discover that he still had never seen a circus, he had only watched the parade and gone home.

The boy saw the parade but missed the circus. The crowds in Jesus day saw a king for a day, but I think missed was truly important that Jesus was the Son of God. They missed that idea so it was easy for them to nail him to the cross in a few short days.

And what of us. Do we just see the parade and miss the circus? Do we see the glory of Jesus, but miss that he is the Son of God? Do we see the glory of Jesus and miss that he was nailed to the cross for our sake?

Do you see the hands of Christ as special hands that have reached across the eons of time to touch our lives?

And what about your hands? What do you see in them? Do you see them as the man in the following did:

An old man, probably some ninety plus years, sat feebly on the park bench. He didn't move, just sat with his head down staring at his hands. When I sat down beside him he didn't acknowledge my presence and the longer I sat I wondered if he was ok.

Finally, not really wanting to disturb him but wanting to check on him at the same time, I asked him if he was ok. He raised his head and looked at me and smiled.

"Yes, I'm fine, thank you for asking," he said in a clear strong voice.

"I didn't mean to disturb you, sir, but you were just sitting here staring at your hands and I wanted to make sure you were OK," I explained to him.

"Have you ever looked at your hands," he asked. "I mean really looked at your hands?"

I slowly opened my hands and stared down at them. I turned them over, palms up and then palms down. No, I guess I had never really looked at my hands as I tried to figure out the point he was making.

Then he smiled and related this story: "Stop and think for a moment about the hands you have, how they have served you well throughout your years. These hands, though wrinkled, shriveled and weak have been the tools I have used all my life to reach out and grab and embrace life. They braced and caught my fall when as a toddler I crashed upon the floor. They put food in my mouth and clothes on my back. As a child my mother taught me to fold them in prayer. They tied my shoes and pulled on my boots. They dried the tears of my children and caressed the love of my life. They held my rifle and wiped my tears when I went off to war. They have been dirty, scraped and raw, swollen and bent. They were uneasy and clumsy when I tried to hold my newborn son. Decorated with my wedding band they showed the world that I was married and loved someone special. They wrote the letters home and trembled and shook when I buried my parents and spouse and walked my daughter down the aisle. Yet, they were strong and sure when I dug my buddy out of a foxhole and lifted a plow off of my best friends foot. They have held children, consoled neighbors, and shook in fists of anger when I didn't understand.

They have covered my face, combed my hair, and washed and cleansed the rest of my body. They have been sticky and wet, bent and broken, dried and raw. And to this day when not much of anything else of me works real well these hands hold me up, lay me down, and again continue to fold in prayer. These hands are the mark of where I've been and the ruggedness of my life. But more importantly it will be these hands that God will reach out and take when he leads me home.

And He won't care about where these hands have been or what they have done. What He will care about is to whom these hands belong and how much He loves these hands. And with these hands He will lift me to His side and there I will use these hands to touch the face of Christ."

No doubt I will never look at my hands the same again. I never saw the old man again after I left the park that day but I will never forget him and the words he spoke. When my hands are hurt or sore or when I stroke the face of my children and wife I think of the man in the park. I have a feeling he has been stroked and caressed and held by the hands of God.

Thank you, Father God, for hands."(1)

Yes, thank you God for hands that reach out for a million reasons to touch those around us as Jesus reached out to touch those around him. For today, you and I

are the hands of Jesus in this world, touching those who are sick, who are in prison and who are feeling the brokenness of this world. We are the hands that touch the lives of those who are hurting in this world.

Jesus indeed has special hands.

Amen

Written by Pastor Tim Zingale March 10, 2008

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(1)The Laugh and Lift (Author Unknown)  
[Edited]