

PALM SUNDAY: PREPARE!

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So, how many people would like to win the lottery? Let's call it \$10 million. Who'd like to win \$10 million in a lottery? You know, everybody wants to win the lottery, but studies show that the people who do win are not prepared in how to handle all that money all of a sudden. They are not prepared on how to manage it, how to spend it, how to save it, how to invest it, how to handle all the responsibility of having that level of money ... and including how to handle the pressures of family and friends who keep asking for loans.

If I could snap my fingers and give each and every one of you \$10 million, how many of you feel that you are prepared to manage it, handle it, and enjoy it as best as you can? Almost the entire church believes they're prepared. [Laughs]

You know, John DeMartini -- who is an author and has written books on wealth and prosperity -- says if you really want to be wealthy ... if you want to be wealthy and you are not in a mindset of prosperity with a plan, with a purpose and what to do and how to enjoy and invest that money, that you really aren't as prepared as you think to attract significant wealth. So, on a scale of 1 to 10 -- 10 being the highest -- just for yourself, how prepared are you really and honestly within yourself to handle that level of wealth and abundance right now?

You know, Ralph Marston says, *"Great opportunities are everywhere, and the people who take benefit from them the most are those who are best prepared."*

You know, one of the things that Jesus did by his example, was about the importance of being prepared and preparing yourself. Jesus prepared himself before beginning his ministry by withdrawing for 40 days: 40 days of prayer, of fasting, of cleansing and purifying, of listening and deepening his connection and oneness with God.

And even after his ministry began, he would always prepare himself before he preached, before the miracles, before whatever challenges he faced. He prepared himself spiritually and deepened his oneness ... and unifying his mind with the mind of God daily and regularly.

So today is Palm Sunday: the day that we honor Jesus' triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, riding on a donkey with people praising, worshipping, cheering him on with palm branches and cloaks laid on the ground, singing, "Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest."

You know, Jesus prepared himself. for Palm Sunday internally and also prepared externally as he sent some of his disciples to get a colt and a donkey to ride upon to enter Jerusalem. You know, Palm Sunday then paved the way for all the other things that happened during Holy Week, including the betrayal, the arrest, the trial, the torture, the crucifixion and, of course, culminating in the miraculous resurrection.

This morning we're going to talk about the spiritual practice and the spiritual principle of preparation. Being prepared is the prerequisite, for me, for success in any area of our lives and including and especially in our spiritual life. Preparation absolutely allows us to do greater things.

So, let's look at four lessons from Jesus's entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

And the first one, to me, is about **BEING PRE-PRAYERED**. You know, Jesus took very seriously being prepared. You know, he had a systematic way of preparing, connecting with God. He prayed every morning. He prayed in midday. He prayed in the afternoon and evening. Whether he, quote, "needed it

or not," he prayed consistently and systematically, because he was trying to build up his consciousness. You know, Palm Sunday didn't just happen. He was prepared for that moment. He was prepared internally, because he knew that being prepared was absolutely necessary to take your consciousness and your life up to the next level. He absolutely knew that it was about first within, then without. And prayer was the absolute key.

You know, Jesus prayed consistently. He prayed frequently to develop an unshakable faith grounded in God. And he built his Christ consciousness; the God consciousness. And the more consistently he prayed, it builds up a momentum and creates a flow. You know, it creates a nice increase in our awareness and a sense of oneness that moves through us.

And so, my question for you is: Why do you think Jesus prayed so often? I mean, he was Jesus. Would he need to pray that frequently and that consistently?

I think two reasons. One: he wanted to demonstrate what we need to do to lift up to the God consciousness and the Christ consciousness. And the second reason is because he knew how much the world and life can distract us and pull our minds away. And he also knew that our minds tend to be easily distracted.

How many people have ever prayed and your mind wandered during your meditation? How many people have ever been in a conversation and your mind wandered off? How many people have ever had your mind consumed with worry or fear or negative thoughts?

See, this is why, exactly why the Apostle Paul said, *"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* Because our minds need renewing a lot because they tend to get distracted!

So, this whole idea of being pre-prayered and lifting up our consciousness to God and being a one with God takes a lot of work. It takes time. It takes consistency and to pray frequently.

How many people know that you could pray more consistently, frequently, and deeply than you do now? And how many people know that you've got the bandwidth and the time to actually do it if you wanted to do it?

I think we should all make being prepared and increasing prayer in our life our mission. It should be our number one spiritual focus. Because the more frequently we pray, the more consistently we pray, guess what? The deeper we feel a sense of peace. The deeper we sense a level of clarity and wisdom and insight. The deeper we go, we are inspired and guided with greater clarity and ease.

You know, being prepared spiritually is the key to a spiritual foundation that helps us transform and improve in every area of our lives. If we want a better life the key is to be prepared and pray consistently and frequently. If we have challenges in front of us the best thing we could do is be prepared and pray consistently and frequently.

And you know the thing is? Prayer is available for free 24/7! And yet, we don't always take advantage of it and keep preparing ourselves with prayer consistently.

And yes, the mind will wander ... but you keep bringing it back, you keep bringing it back, and you keep bringing it back. Because, over time, it will deepen the foundation and deepen our consciousness and feeling a sense of oneness with God.

So, the first thing we learn from Jesus on Palm Sunday is the importance of being prepared and pre-prayered.

The second thing we learned is the importance of **WELCOMING WHAT IS OURS TO DO**, even and especially when it's hard to do.

In John 12:27, it says, *“Now my soul is troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour?’ No. For this purpose I have come to this hour.”*

And here, Jesus: his humanness is feeling a little like, *“Wow, this is really big stuff.”* But then his soul and his deeper spiritual sense says, *“No; this is why I was born. This is what I am here to do.”*

Remember in Gethsemane, he had a moment like that, as well. He said, *“Father, if you can, take this cup from me. But not my will; thy will be done.”* Again, showing his humanness, but then allowing the strength of his spirit to come forth in knowing that this was his work to do. It was hard, and he couldn't pass it off to Peter. He had to do it himself. This was what he was called to do.

How many people ever had a situation in life that was hard, draining, frustrating, and you just wish it wasn't there or that you could pass it to someone else? Anybody have one of those experiences? You know, we all have those experiences -- those times and situations where we think, *“You know, I didn't sign up for this. I'm not enjoying that. You know, how could this happen? Why is this happening to me again? This is wrong. This is unfair. You know, I don't deserve this.”*

You know, we have all kinds of ways where we complain and reject and we hate things that have happened. to us. And yet, really the truth is that we need to welcome those things. Not resist them, not hate them or dislike them, but to face them and to step into them like he was willing to step in to Jerusalem. He knew it was going to be hard. And we know there's situations in our lives that we are meant to do, and they're going to be hard, but we've got to be willing to welcome them and step into those situations.

The fact is: we can whine and we can complain until the cows come home and it will not change the fact that whatever is in our lives is meant to be in our lives, to teach us, to show us, to grow us and expand us. And eventually we will open our spiritual eyes and see that the thing in our lives that we don't want - - that we want to avoid or pretend or deny or reject – is actually good for us. That it is a part of our soul's journey and our own unfolding to expand into the incredible being that we are here to be.

You know, Tagore, the great Indian writer, said, *“To find God, you must welcome everything.”* To find God, we must realize that what's in our lives isn't there as a mistake, but it is actually a part of our soul's journey; a part of our soul's experience and unfoldment.

And the temptation is always so strong to avoid this stuff. Who doesn't want to avoid pain or struggle or hardship? But the truth is: when you avoid those things, we also avoid life. We avoid growth. We avoid a deeper and fuller experience of God and life itself. Avoidance actually robs us of life; robs us of strength and wisdom.

So, the question is: What are you avoiding in your life? What are you avoiding doing? What are you avoiding saying? What are you avoiding facing or feeling?

You know, our job is to face and embrace and welcome all of life so we can experience a full experience of life and God. And to rob ourselves or cheat ourselves by avoiding is not the way that we are meant to live, as Jesus said, *“and live life abundantly.”* That is not abundant living.

And so, the first thing we learn is to be prepared or pre-prayered. And the second is to welcome what is before us ... because if it is in our lives, it is there for us and there for us for a reason -- and a good reason -- to teach us and to grow us.

The third thing we need to do is to **RELEASE THE THINGS THAT DO NOT BEAR FRUIT**. So, the next day Jesus is walking and he's hungry. And he sees this fig tree, and there's no fruit on it, just these dried leaves. So, he gets a little upset, and he says, *“May no fruit ever come from you again.”* And immediately the tree withers.

And we learn two things from this. The number one thing is: Jesus, when he gets hungry, he gets cranky. And so ... A lot of people don't know that, but that's ... yeah. Every time I read that Scripture, I always think, "*Boy, he needed a Snickers.*" If Snickers were invented back then, that tree would be alive to this day. Just an observation.

The second thing -- which is really the most important thing -- is the lesson he's trying to teach is to get rid of the things in your life that are not bearing fruit.

Sometimes we stay in jobs, in relationships, and situations that are just not bearing fruit. They're not feeding our soul. They're not bringing us joy. They're bringing us hardship; draining our energy. There are a lot of things that we do and that are engaged in that are unproductive; that are bad habits. I mean, there are all kinds of different things from a poor diet to drinking or eating too much. There are all kinds of things that lower our vibration that we keep doing.

And this message is saying: get rid of the things that are no longer bearing fruit; that are not serving or supporting the kind of life that you deserve, the kind of person that you are, and the way that you want to live.

And it could even extend into clothing and clutter that we keep in our house. These things, if they're clogging up our lives, they're not bearing fruit. They're not supporting the kind of life that we want to live.

So, the question is: What behaviors, what beliefs, what relationships is it time for you to release because they're just not bearing fruit? They're not productive? They're not supportive. And when we get rid of those things, guess what? We create energy and space. We become lighter. Things become clearer. We tend to live more in the flow when we eliminate things that are just not bearing fruit anymore. No longer there for our highest and best.

And then the last thing is of how we **ENTER IN THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF GOD**, in the nature of God. You know, every single one of us, including Jesus, gets to choose how we enter and show up in the situations of our lives.

And Jesus ... It says, "*Jesus entered in the name of the Lord.*" In the consciousness of the Divine. That he chose to step into Jerusalem in a godly way, in a triumphant way, in a prayerful way, in a spiritual way. He stepped with his head held high -- calm, confident and caring.

And notice, he didn't come in on a horse. You know, you'd think, "*You're the king. You'd come in on a horse.*" But, instead, the opposite. Not a powerful animal, but a simple domestic animal: a donkey, which means, symbolizes that he came in a consciousness that was humble, that was soft and gentle.

And yet, he didn't play small. He didn't shrink. He may have come in humble, but there was a presence about him that was strong, that was clear. You know, he radiated peace *and* strength. He radiated power *and* grace. He radiated confidence *and* humility at the same time.

You know, he knew he had the spiritual power within him; that he did not have to act powerful or aggressive. That he had the resources in him to handle what was before him. And so, he chose the consciousness to enter with humility and grace and strength and an awareness of that Spirit that was in him.

In the same way, we have the choice to choose how we enter into the relationships; how we enter and show up in our work or in our community; or any area of our world. That we can choose to step in a consciousness of love or peace or kindness or compassion.

I love when it says, "*Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.*" The word blessed means

enriched. Enriched is the one who enters in the name -- which means nature, the nature -- of the Divine.

So, I want you to think of how you're showing up in a situation right now in your life where it does not feel as cohesive or being as in sync as you'd like. And then ask yourself the question: Is there a way you can enter that with an even higher consciousness than the way that you are demonstrating right now?

You know, we are all being called to a higher consciousness. And we can complain or we can choose to lift ourselves to a higher level of awareness, a higher spiritual perspective.

How many people heard of Steph Curry? The basketball player Steph Curry? His favorite Scripture is, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."* And so, it gives him the confidence -- no matter what he's doing on or off the court -- that that is the way he is meant to live, that he has got that Spirit and that divine essence in himself.

And here's what he said: *"Obviously, there's a lot of hoopla and fanfare that follows you wherever you go, but I know where my talent comes from. I know why I play the game, and it's not to score 30 points a night. It is to use the stage I'm on. I have been put here for a specific purpose: to be a witness and to share my testimony as I go through."*

And I love that he realizes basketball is just a vehicle through which he is meant to express his spirit and his gifts and to allow his light to shine in a way that it will bless all others.

And so, for each of us, you know: Are you willing to enter whatever situations in your life -- particularly the challenging ones -- are you willing to enter in a consciousness of the Divine and a consciousness of love and a consciousness of peace? Because you will be enriched. Blessed will you be if you enter situations in the nature and the consciousness of God.

A college student was failing all of his classes, and he was getting ready to go home for the Christmas holiday break. He was feeling anxious about telling his parents, especially his dad. So, he texted his mom to be a buffer. And he texted her: *"Failing all classes; prepare dad."* Later, his mom texts back and says, *"Dad prepared; now prepare yourself."*

The NCAA basketball tournament is going on right now. And one of my favorite quotes -- and one of the most powerful, simple truth quotes -- is from Bobby Knight. He won three NCAA championships with Indiana years ago. But here's what he said he said: *"Everyone has the will to win. Everybody wants to win. But everyone does not have the will to prepare to win."* He said, *"If we want to win, we must be willing to prepare."*

And sometimes it's tedious and hard, but it is the behind-the-scenes work that makes the great things possible. Sometimes we just want the great things. But the truth is: it's the preparation; it's the key that makes greater things possible.

Palm Sunday reminds us that, if we want to have a greater success and achieve the work we're doing, we need to be pre-prayered. We need to welcome the things that are ours to do, especially the challenging ones. And to release the things that do not bear fruit. And to enter all situations in the consciousness of God.

You know, the Palm Sunday message, to me, is about the power, practice and principle of being prepared.

God bless you all.