

1 Today we're going to talk about Palm
2 Sunday. And to begin with, I want to
3 suggest to you that as we read the story
4 of Palm Sunday in whatever gospel version
5 we find -- we're going to use Mark
6 together today -- we see four types of
7 people:
8 participants, accessories,
9 lookouts, and Messiah.
10 And any of you who are paying close
11 attention, you realize that those
12 four types of people, if you take their
13 first letter, it spells the word
14 palm. A nice memory device.
15 I think God planned it that way. Maybe.
16 We're going to focus on the last of
17 those, the Messiah. And we're going to
18 see how his work gets done with
19 and through the other three types of
20 people that we see in the Palm Sunday
21 story. Messiah, the
22 Master, Christ, Anybody you know what
23 Christ means?
24 The anointed one. The anointed one,
25 right. It is the same word in
26 Greek as Messiah that comes from the
27 Hebrew. So when we say Jesus Christ,
28 we're not giving Jesus last name. We're
29 identifying Jesus. Whenever you say Jesus
30 Christ, you are identifying Jesus as the
31 Messiah. He's the Prince of Peace,
32 accomplishing God's will, saving and
33 revealing his deity, and so, the
34 character of God. If you're keen to do so
35 and you have your Bibles, maybe you do
36 like me and underline Jesus in verse
37 one. That's your first and most important
38 type of person that we find in the story
39 in Mark chapter 11.
40 Jesus, we see here requesting faith,
41 expecting submission and
42 obedience, and accepting
43 praise. And all of these are very
44 significant. Jesus is
45 identified as Israel's
46 Messiah, the anointed
47 one of Israel. This is, as I've said,
48 the meaning of the word Messiah. So let's
49 take a look at our text today and delve
50 in a little bit to who this
51 Jesus is that we see,
52 identifying himself as the Messiah
53 in the story of Palm Sunday.
54 Hear the word of God. Now when they drew
55 near to Jerusalem to Bethpage and Bethany
56 at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of
57 his disciples and said to them, Go
58 into the village in front of you, and
59 immediately as you enter it, you will
60 find a colt tied on which no one has ever
61 sat. Untie it and bring it. If
62 anyone says to you, Why are you doing this?
63 Say, the Lord has need of
64 it, and we'll send it back here
65 immediately. And they went away and found
66 a colt tied at the door outside in the
67 street, and they untied it. And some
68 of those standing there said to them,
69 What are you doing untying the colt? And

70 they told them what Jesus had said, and
71 they let them go. And they brought the
72 colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on
73 it, and he sat on it. And many spread
74 their cloaks on the road, and others
75 spread leafy branches that they had cut
76 from the fields. And those who went
77 before and those who followed were
78 shouting, Hosanna!
79 Blessed is he who comes in the name of
80 the Lord. Blessed is the coming kingdom
81 of our father David. Hosanna in the
82 highest. And he entered Jerusalem and
83 went into the temple. And when he had
84 looked around at everything, as it was
85 already late, he went out to Bethany with
86 the twelve. Let's pray.
87 Lord, once again, we are grateful for
88 your word, and we begin by looking to
89 you, for we understand that we all need
90 your help to understand and
91 interpret and apply rightly
92 your word to us. And we pray
93 that you would help us to do all of those
94 things here today, change us
95 by your truth, and because of your
96 presence with us here today. And we pray
97 this in your name and for your sake.
98 Amen. Okay, so focusing on the
99 Messiah in this text, in this story,
100 Jesus is identified as Israel's Messiah.
101 As Stan correctly identified
102 from the studio audience, there will be a
103 bonus prize for you at the end.
104 It means anointed one, that is what it
105 actually means, Messiah, Christ.
106 the one who would come and put things
107 right. Problem, of course, was that
108 people had all kinds of different ideas,
109 and theologians traced this actually all
110 the way through the Old Testament, all
111 kinds of different ideas of what it meant
112 to put things right. Generally, people
113 just did not appreciate how wrong
114 everything was and where that wrong was
115 located. On Palm Sunday, we
116 see something fascinating, especially in
117 the Gospel of Mark. a reversal
118 of what we've seen and what folks have
119 called, it's not in the Bible, but people
120 have called this the Messianic secret.
121 And the the idea of the Messianic secret
122 goes like this. And it's seen in all the
123 gospels, but especially in Mark. Jesus
124 performs a miracle, or or people
125 start calling him Messiah, whisperings of
126 Messiah, and he tells them pretty
127 consistently not to tell
128 anybody else. Now, the reason for
129 this is not really explained. We just
130 sort of get it. Like, lots of things in
131 the Bible, we we get the story as it is,
132 and and are left, to some extent, to kind
133 of try to figure things out for
134 ourselves. We don't get spoon-fed all the
135 time. In this case, I think, though, it's
136 reasonable to think that Jesus told
137 people not to say anything because
138 people had the wrong ideas about

139 who Messiah was supposed to be. like
140 limited to some military hero who would
141 defeat the pagans and restore Israel's
142 national power. Probably Jesus
143 didn't trust what people would think of
144 him when they heard the name Messiah
145 attached to him. He knew what they would
146 do as a result of their faulty thinking.
147 And he knew the time was not yet right
148 for people's terrible
149 misunderstandings to be put into
150 action. Well now, On the day
151 we call Palm Sunday, the time
152 had come, apparently, and so Jesus
153 intentionally shows himself to be the
154 Messiah. He does so especially
155 using Zechariah's messianic
156 prophecy.
157 9, Behold,
158 your king is coming to you,
159 righteous and having salvation is he,
160 humble and mounted on a donkey.
161 Now Jesus will show who
162 Messiah truly is and how he
163 accomplishes his work. It is
164 interesting to note that as far as we
165 know, Old Testament
166 interpreters before Jesus
167 did not connect messianic prophecies,
168 like Zechariah 9 or Psalms
169 2 or 110 or 118 that we heard
170 earlier as our call to worship, with
171 Isaiah's suffering servant
172 passages, which you can read about in
173 your Lenten devotional guides. Hopefully
174 many of you have already read about
175 those. The thought was that the
176 suffering servant of Isaiah was a
177 picture of God's people as a whole,
178 and the anointed one of God, Messiah,
179 spoken of in other places, would come one
180 day to usher in their days of
181 renewed peace and prosperity.
182 It was Jesus who brought these
183 prophetic streams together.
184 So it wasn't until after Jesus that
185 people realized that these prophetic
186 parts of the Hebrew scriptures were
187 referring to the same person,
188 and that person was Jesus.
189 And this Jesus, this true Messiah,
190 was also the true
191 Israel. taking upon himself the
192 God-given purposes that God had
193 given to his people, and,
194 in Jesus' case, accomplishing them all.
195 Behold the man. Behold
196 Israel. Behold
197 Messiah. What was Israel's
198 identity and purpose? Well,
199 overarching. To make a very long
200 story, and in many ways complicated story,
201 A little more simple and to the point,
202 God's people were to
203 exhibit themselves as God's chosen
204 people, living in covenant faithfulness
205 with the living God. That's what they
206 were supposed to do. That's who they
207 were. They then were supposed to be

208 God's partner for worldwide
209 blessing, for all the other people groups
210 in the world. In
211 Jesus, Israel's identity
212 and purposes as God's faithful
213 people are fulfilled, thus enabling
214 us to share the glory and challenge of
215 this high calling and eternal work.
216 Jesus, as we all know,
217 because we've read ahead in this story,
218 had a surprising way to
219 fulfill his mission.
220 The hosannaThe cry that means,
221 Yea God, yea Jesus, or a
222 little more literally, Save,
223 save us, would quickly
224 turn into a cries of a different
225 sort: Crucify.
226 Jesus would die in the place of
227 sinful humanity. He would
228 rise from death to life eternal.
229 And in each of these earth-shaking events,
230 Jesus was showing the real
231 identity, character, and
232 purpose of Israel's Messiah,
233 humanity's Savior, and the world's
234 light. Behold the man.
235 We talk now about Jesus and
236 our identity and purpose today.
237 What kind of Palm Sunday person am I?
238 The other three types of people that we
239 see in the story of Palm Sunday
240 offer some interesting insights.
241 And I would suggest that
242 everybody is some kind of Palm
243 Sunday person in
244 relationship, knowingly or
245 unknowingly, to Jesus the Messiah.
246 First, we have what I'm calling
247 accessories of Christ.
248 Pawns, doing God's will, compelled
249 and compliant. In verse
250 five, we have the phrase, some of those
251 standing there. You can underline that
252 one as a second group of people. He got
253 the Messiah, and he got accessories.
254 There are people who just, as far as we
255 can tell, just happen to be there. But
256 with God, of course, nothing just happens
257 to be. Some of them ask questions and
258 then go along with Jesus' plan to use the
259 colt, the donkey, to proclaim his
260 messianic identity. Some of them
261 joined in the chorus of Crucify, crucify!
262 a few days later, while
263 others certainly simply
264 watched or did their best to stay clear
265 of the whole ugly scene. People
266 quickly concluded it seems that Jesus was
267 an aggravating or ignorant
268 disappointment, a deceptive or deluded
269 liar. Religious leaders had already
270 decided he was a dangerous presence among
271 their people. So they saw to it, or
272 passively agreed, that Jesus was rendered
273 weak and helpless with the help
274 of Roman imperial power.
275 The will of the people was going to be
276 violently pressed upon Jesus,

277 and he was going to be punished for his
278 failure and wrongdoing in their eyes.
279 Here there is irony in the
280 extreme. They were off
281 by 180 degrees.
282 That's a walk, by the way, for those of
283 you that don't remember your high school
284 geometry.
285 The will of God was going to be
286 graciously pressed upon them.
287 And Jesus was going to atone for their
288 sinful failures and wrongdoing in God's
289 eyes. Jesus was not truly going to
290 be rendered weak and helpless, it was
291 gonna look like it, but it wasn't going
292 to be true. With the help of Roman
293 imperial power, he was going to show
294 the fullness of his love and of his
295 Father's glory. And he was going to do
296 it on their cross, which
297 would become his cross
298 forever after. Far from
299 delusional or deceptive, he
300 was the truth
301 of God. I'd refer you to last
302 Sunday's message about truth.
303 Far from a dangerous presence, he was God
304 himself, come among
305 us to save us. Far
306 from a disappointment, Jesus was going to
307 show himself to be God's beloved
308 and utterly obedient and
309 eternal son, and our
310 courageousness. champion. And all
311 those ignorant and gullible people were
312 accessories to this amazing
313 outworking of God's gracious,
314 unstoppable plan.
315 Other people, along with the Messiah and
316 the accessories, were what I'm calling
317 lookouts for Christ.
318 People observing God's will, watching
319 and judging, In verse 9, you see the
320 phrase those who went before and those
321 who followed. You can underline that one
322 in your Bible. It has a third group of
323 people, type of people. Hosanna
324 means saved. It's a quote from Psalm
325 118 about messianic hope.
326 Psalm 118 that has very much
327 messianic overtones. This one that's
328 supposed to come. Crying out to Him,
329 Hosanna, which is what they did on Palm
330 Sunday. Could this be the Messiah? People
331 were looking out. Why did they cry
332 Hosanna? Well, it seems, largely,
333 in light of events in the very near
334 future, because everybody else was.
335 People tend to take their cues from each
336 other. By the way, I'm so thankful that
337 we live in a culture where we've gotten
338 beyond that.
339 People are sheep. This
340 fourth group is what I call participants
341 with Christ. Partners
342 choosing God's will. Called, chosen, and
343 willing. Again, back to verse one, you
344 could underline the name disciples.
345 Now the key idea in this, in all of this

346 really, is the idea of purpose. Jesus
347 came to do something, and what he came to
348 do was the same things that God's people,
349 Israel, the descendants of Abraham, had
350 been chosen, called, and commissioned to
351 do. To be a light to the world by
352 living in a faithful covenant
353 relationship to Yahweh God.
354 Obey him, follow him,
355 listen to him, and let the blessings
356 flow. Blessings that he had promised
357 and always delivered on. Most
358 notably, to be God's agents of blessing
359 for the rest of humanity, through
360 you, God said to Abraham at the very
361 beginning of redemption history, through
362 you all the nations of the earth will be
363 blessed. I put in your
364 bulletin on the front there a quote from
365 the New Testament in its world by M.T.
366 Wright and Michael Berg, the book that
367 we're studying together on Thursday
368 afternoons in our all church Bible study
369 together. They say this, the word
370 election as applied to Israel is not
371 simply the divine choice of this people,
372 but more specifically, the divine choice
373 of this people for a particular purpose,
374 to extend Yahweh's salvation to the
375 ends of the earth. As Israel's Messiah,
376 Jesus had drawn the identity and vocation
377 of God's chosen people onto himself.
378 He was Israel in
379 person. As we discovered
380 again and again in our lengthy
381 examination of the Old Testament books of
382 First and Second Kings, and as testified
383 throughout the Bible, Israel as a whole
384 was unable and unwilling to fulfill
385 such purposes. Thus, they
386 unwittingly set up the coming of the one
387 who would be the true Israel on behalf of
388 God's people, and who would provide the
389 ultimate blessing of eternal salvation
390 for all who would believe and follow him.
391 Jesus, unlike the
392 the people of Israel in general, did
393 accomplish his purpose,
394 willingly, and perfectly. So when God
395 said, Through you, speaking to the people
396 of Israel, all the nations of the world
397 will be blessed, that promise
398 came to fruition in
399 Jesus as true Israel.
400 He lived in perfect harmony with his
401 Heavenly Father, trusting and obeying at
402 every turn, all the way to the cross.
403 He was the full and final agent of
404 blessing for all humanity. This
405 is the true Messiah.
406 Whatever your ideas about him
407 were, set them aside and
408 look at Jesus, who he is and
409 what he does. And in accordance with his
410 heavenly Father's character and will,
411 Jesus did his work in full connection
412 with human partners and remained master
413 over all that was taking place.
414 Some of us we see on that first Palm

415 Sunday so long ago were faithful
416 participants with Christ. Doing the will
417 of Christ, which is the will of his
418 heavenly Father. Joining their wills and
419 their actions to those of God. God's
420 purpose were being carried out willingly
421 by them. Hosanna,
422 save us. Some people really meant it.
423 Some of us we see were cautious
424 lookouts for Christ.
425 watching to see if Jesus of Nazareth
426 was going to do their will,
427 restore their political power, bring them
428 greater economic stability, et cetera.
429 Would their purposes be carried out
430 through him? It looked like maybe he would
431 do for them what they were hoping for, so
432 they would provide for him a fan base,
433 so they would cheer him on, but what
434 would happen? when it appeared their
435 purposes were not going to get
436 done by him.
437 Some of us were merely accessories of
438 Christ, doing the will of Christ, but
439 independent of their own will. The
440 purpose of God was being accomplished
441 by them, but not because they chose to do
442 so. Without their understanding or
443 assent, they were rightly identifying the
444 true Messiah when they called out
445 Hosanna, even though they didn't really
446 mean it. Waiting to see. And they were
447 submitting to Jesus and his good plan
448 even later as they mindlessly screamed,
449 Crucify! And through it all,
450 with or without our human consent or
451 cooperation, Messiah Jesus,
452 the Christ, was accomplishing the
453 good and perfect will of his Father,
454 fulfilling his redemptive purposes as the
455 true Israel of God.
456 Sadly, We see some
457 dynamic now with these different types of
458 people. Palm Sunday people
459 become Good Friday people.
460 Participants become
461 lookouts. You can see
462 Jesus' own predictions about this. He
463 tells his disciples, his
464 participants, for so long,
465 he said, You will all
466 fall away. You participants are going to
467 turn into lookouts. You see, Peter's
468 denial. Even if I have to die, I'll
469 never deny. I never never never knew that
470 guy. What are you talking about? I'm not
471 one of his people. Then lookouts
472 for Christ become lookouts against
473 Christ. Hosanna, blessed is
474 he, becomes crucified. Cheers and
475 palm branches become jeers and a Roman
476 cross. This Jesus didn't save,
477 at least not like we thought he would or
478 should. He's raised no army, led no
479 armed rebellion against Rome. He must not
480 be the real Messiah. He's a phony.
481 Why'd they say this? Probably largely
482 because that's what others were saying.
483 This crowd mentality thing has a very

484 long history. People are still sheep.
485 All of them become
486 accessories in both the greatest crime of
487 history and in the deepest revelation of
488 God's glory ever. And through all this
489 shifting of human sentiments, the
490 Messiah remains the
491 Master. He doesn't change.
492 The Messiah of Good Friday is the
493 same as the Master of Palm
494 Sunday. His purposes are still
495 being done. He is still saving.
496 He is still revealing Himself as God the
497 Son. He is still and especially now
498 revealing the Father heart of God toward
499 us, the loving character of God
500 Almighty. He is still requesting
501 faith. He is still
502 expecting submission.
503 People, even his enemies, are doing his
504 will. Jesus' prayer before the
505 events of his crucifixion.
506 28, he prays, Father,
507 glorify yourself. And this is right
508 before all the events start happening,
509 and he's on his way to the cross. Father,
510 glorify yourself. And And the Father
511 replies from heaven, I have glorified it,
512 and I will glorify it again.
513 Jesus prays, Remove this cup, but
514 not my will,
515 but thy will be done. To
516 Pilate, you would have no authority
517 unless it were given to you from above,
518 everyone is going to submit. to my
519 Father's goodwill
520 and redemptive plan. Some of them,
521 well actually, none of them are really
522 going to know it. Not in the moment.
523 And Jesus is still accepting praise. This
524 is very significant. People are crying
525 out to him, Save, save!
526 Yea Jesus, yea God! And he has to
527 say, Oh, stop that, only God is worthy of
528 praise. No, no, you guys are
529 aiming at the Sinner to target here.
530 Praise God, praise me, it's one and the
531 same. But then the Messiah is
532 alone. None of his friends stand with
533 him, no one shares in his suffering and
534 death, no one helps him save. It's just
535 him. Palm Sunday people have become Good
536 Friday people, but,
537 and this is a very large but, friends,
538 Good Friday people become
539 Easter people. Oh, what
540 glorious good news this is.
541 The master alone has made the
542 difference. Nobody helped him. Jesus,
543 Messiah. Behold the man.
544 The Messiah accomplishes his work once
545 and for all, and then, like God with
546 Abraham, but now with the greater
547 inspiration of his completed work and the
548 greater power of his Holy Spirit
549 unleashed in a new way, he calls
550 his people to
551 join with him in bringing his salvation
552 to the ends of the earth and to the end

553 of our block. In
554 Jesus, Israel's identity and purposes
555 as God's faithful people are fulfilled,
556 thus enabling us to share the
557 glory and challenge of this high calling
558 and eternal work. Participants turn
559 lookouts, become participants again.
560 And lookouts against Christ, follow after
561 them. Peter's restoration
562 after he denied Jesus. The
563 apostle Paul, a persecutor
564 turned spokesman for Christ.
565 The whole book of Acts and the birth of
566 the church is all about this.
567 All of us here today who trust in Jesus
568 as Lord and Savior are
569 people who are used to be's,
570 but now ours.
571 Meanwhile, other lookouts for Christ,
572 turned lookouts against Christ, drift
573 back into the mass of humanity as Christ
574 disappears. Except
575 He doesn't disappear. He
576 rises from the dead, and He is
577 alive today.
578 So everyone becomes, in the final
579 analysis, either a participant
580 in the greatest miracle of history,
581 or merely an accessory
582 through whom God is glorified.
583 This is because, in the end, it is God's
584 glory that is the real issue,
585 and it is God's purposes that are carried
586 out, not ours. That's
587 good news, by the way. As
588 we pray almost every week here,
589 Thy will be done on Earth
590 as it is in heaven. And this, our
591 prayer given to us by Jesus, becomes a
592 reality through his completed work.
593 Behold Israel.
594 Behold the Messiah.
595 Behold the man. Let's
596 pray. Lord God, we
597 thank you once again for your
598 presence with us, and
599 for the insight and
600 encouragement, challenge and inspiration
601 of your word. On this Palm
602 Sunday, help us,
603 help us to cooperate with you evermore,
604 as participants with you, doing
605 things for you and with you on purpose,
606 and not settling to be the only
607 alternative there is, which is
608 accessories. Accessories in your
609 work that is getting done and will be
610 completed. accessories in the
611 reality of God being glorified in all
612 things. And Lord, help us to
613 be your agents, encouraging others
614 to be participants as well.