Palm Sunday marks Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem for the last week of his life, a week before his resurrection. It is known as “Passion Week” and symbolizes the final seven days of Jesus’ earthly ministry. This event fulfilled prophecies from the Old Testament, such as Zechariah 9:9, which speaks of a humble king bringing salvation and peace to Jerusalem,

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

This prophecy was then fulfilled when Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time, as it says in Luke 19: 37,

“[T]he whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!”

We can try to imagine how it happened, the emotions and enthusiasm at the time. As Jesus entered the holy city, the crowds were shouting excitedly to celebrate Jesus’ coming. Finally, he is here! And as he entered Jerusalem, they declared the expectation they had of him as a savior when they said, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”

At first sight, it seemed that everyone was confident Jesus was the Messiah on the day he arrived at Jerusalem as crowds celebrated his arrival. However, Judas betrayed him just days later and was arrested as his enemies tried to sentence him to death. Even when Pontius Pilate, governor of the Roman province of Judea, offered to release him, many in the crowd yelled, “Crucified him!” Soon after, Jesus faced physical and verbal abuse as he was led to the cross, where he died after being hailed by thousands.

Palm Sunday quickly moved from a story of triumph to a story of sorrow. It is hard to imagine that people who had knowledge of the prophecy would miss its fulfillment in Jesus after everything he did and reject him the way they did.

But what happened then can be explained. Many of them were never really praising Jesus as the Messiah he was but as the one they wanted. Many people in Jerusalem wanted Jesus to bring political, social, and military liberation from the Romans but were let down. More than a savior of sin and evil, they expected a warrior king to liberate them from Roman rule, and when Jesus didn't meet these expectations, they chose their desires over him. Their lack of understanding of who Jesus was made them fickle and easily influenced by Jesus’ enemies, as they stirred trouble against him.

Is it possible for us to also turn our backs on Jesus due to discouragement or disappointment? Can we also be misdirected by negative voices around us? Consider how often we might act similarly: praising God when everything goes according to our plans but questioning his love and presence when our lives take an unexpected turn.

We, too, may encounter moments when our plans are disrupted, and we feel tempted to turn away from God. We, too, have to deal with unhealthy influences in our lives. It is easy to judge the ancient Israelites, but how often do we find ourselves in a similar position? We think we have a great plan for our life, family, careers, or ministry, but then Jesus takes things in a completely different direction for us. We don’t get the promotion. Our spouse does something terrible or disease strikes down someone we love. Then we question the same Jesus we praised when things were going according to plan. “Lord, do you really love me? Lord, are you really who you say you are? Lord, this hurts so much, how can this be something ending in good?”

Palm Sunday is not just about the ancient Israelites; it is a lesson for all of us too. We can lose hope, give up, and turn away from God when it may seem that God is letting us down.

So, we don’t have to pretend this does not happen to us. If there is one thing we have in common, no matter who we are or where we come from, it is that we all struggle in different ways despite our faith. We are not shielded from pain and disappointment.

From my experience, I can recall times when I felt compelled to ask God, “Why are you allowing this to happen to me? Please do something! Years ago, I faced a challenging period in my life, dealing with injustice and emotional pain. Someone I thought was a friend was really a foe. If there was a time when I had the “right” to demand something from God, it was then. What was happening to me was not right because I did nothing to cause the suffering, yet I was in the middle of chaos, afraid and confused.

This experience taught me that, as Christians, we are not exempted from dealing with the consequences of sin in other people. But what we do have is the promise that God makes things right over time if we stay with him.

I understand why we expect God to explain things we don’t understand and fix what gets broken in our lives. Because no one else can, and we believe God is supposed to fulfill all our wants. However, when our expectations of what God should or must do for us are unmet, or when it appears that our desired outcome is not happening, our disappointment may lead us to turn against God or simply lose faith in Him.

I am going to tell you something that you are not going to like, but it is true. In this life, there is suffering, disease, betrayal, corruption, death, and so many more terrible things that God did not mean for us, but due to sin and evil, affect us. We live in a world where innocent people suffer and die, and even young children fall victim to tragedy. Why? Because of evil and sin. Why was Jesus killed? He did nothing but good to those people. He fed, healed, and looked after them, and they killed him? Because of evil and sin. This is a messed up world.

But that is why Jesus came, to change our hearts, to turn us away from sin and evil, and heal us from all illnesses and even death in the next life. That is the big picture. God’s plan for us is not to get us everything we want in this life but to give us what we need to make it through this one and onto the next one as we still make this world better.

We must believe that this is not the end and that this world is not what God desires for us. We need to trust that God will make everything right, even when we lack answers to our questions or feel confused and discouraged thinking about how the end can be good when everything seems to be going out in flames. But even as we trust God, we also need to stay engaged in what God is doing. If we care about seeing less evil in the world, we will always take our faith seriously—when we get what we ask or don’t get what we want, it does not matter.

Here is the invitation and good news for us today: Trust that God will make everything right, even when it seems impossible. Resist the temptation to let our circumstances dictate our faith and instead embrace God's unwavering, ever-present love despite the evil and sin we experience and turn our hearts toward God, seeking his guidance instead of turning away.

On this Palm Sunday, let us remember that God is always with us, in the highs and the lows, and his love for us is unfailing even when we doubt and fail. Let us leave room for God to work in unexpected ways and trust that God’s desires for us are greater than our own. Let us embrace God’s guidance and walk in faith, knowing that God will never forsake us.

May our hearts be filled with peace and strength, may we find comfort in God's loving embrace during in the good and difficult times, and may we share our faith with others, contributing to a kinder and safer world for all.