



[Leader note: This was originally a sermon delivered on Palm Sunday, but it would work any time of the year. It works particularly well during seasons of natural “Fresh Starts”: New Years, Easter, Back to School... but the scripture and the questions it leads to will be powerful at any point in the year.

INTRO: Tell a story about a time you narrowly avoided catastrophe (bonus if it was because someone asked you the right question(s) at the right time.) Read Doug's story below to get some idea of where you could head.]

My wife Cathy and I went Italy to celebrate our 30th anniversary and visit our daughter--who was studying there. Cathy did everything to plan an amazing trip. She handled all the details—I didn’t do anything. She’d asked me some questions in preparation about (1) different places that I wanted to go, and (2) places I wanted to see (3) questions about timing and budget. She was on her game! She asked all the right questions, except for one. That Sunday night—we’re having our weekly family dinner and my father-in-law asked one question that created massive chaos: “*When does your passport expire?*” Good question. Not an obvious question, but a very important one. One hundred smaller questions had been asked--but not this one big one. Her passport expired in 10 weeks, and entrance into Italy required 12 weeks. Chances were high they wouldn’t let her board the plane. Boom! Chaos ensued. She drove to CVS that night to get passport photos, woke up at 4:30am and raced to the passport agency to try to get a new passport issued as quickly as possible. Meanwhile, I boarded my flight in Orange County to Denver (Oh yeah, I’m going with or without her!) then Denver to Munich—where I saw a woman unable to board the international flight because of an expired passport. Cathy worked her magic, caught a flight, and arrived in Italy just a few hours after me. It was a great reminder of the importance of asking the right questions.

[Leader Note: Wrap up your story and pick up here.]

I think many of us ask a lot of the right questions about our future. What classes do I need to take now to make sure I can get in to a good college? What college do I want to attend? What do I want to study? Where should I

eat lunch today? We ask the right questions to plan for a good life, but too often, we miss some of the most important questions.

Today, I want to give you four questions to consider that aren't just important as you look ahead at your future, but are also important for a good present.

I'm just curious. Has anyone ever experienced a point in their life where you just wanted something different, but you were not exactly sure what *different* should look like?

Sometimes, in our rush to experience or feel something different—we forget to ask the right questions to find the *right* kind of change or direction for our lives. We're in such a hurry, we move quickly to a new activity, a new plan, a new action, and start *doing* instead of taking time to pause and reflect.

Today we're going to look at the story of Palm Sunday—an event described in all four Gospels where Jesus makes a triumphant entry into Jerusalem during the last week of His life. As we do, we'll take a little time to pause and think about our own answers to some very important—I would say life-changing—questions.

The 'Palm' in Palm Sunday refers to the Palm Branches that the crowd laid down along Jesus' path as a symbol—a tribute—to Jesus. This act shouted, "This is someone special!"

Matthew 21:1-3 [NIV]

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."

I'd love to know the story of the donkey's owner. Did he willingly give the donkey to these two disciples? What would you say if two guys walked up to you and said, "Give me that bike!" and when you said, "But it's my bike." they said, "The Lord needs it!" Would you just say, "Oh, okay, here you go"? I'm not sure I would. I know... it's an interesting question, but it's not

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