

My dear people, today is marked by both joy and sadness. We rejoice with the Noel and Anderson families with the marriage of Jack and Hannah. And we thank all of you guests for coming out here to make this celebration possible.

But we also grieve deeply today with the Van De Kieft family, for yesterday our precious Sydnie died, and went to go be with Jesus in Heaven.

Ecclesiastes says there is a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.

But what happens when it is both of those times at the same time? What are you supposed to do?

Such is also the case for a day like Palm Sunday. A day marked both by rejoicing and shouts of Hosanna, Save us Lord! And yet in the background are heard the dissonant notes of Christ's impending death on our behalf.

Right before Christ's Triumphal entry, he raised Lazarus from the dead, and because of that many of the Jews were going over to Jesus, and believing in Him. And because they were envious of Christ, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together to plot Jesus' death. And not only Jesus, but also Lazarus, because on account of him being raised from the dead, even more Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

And so we see that Christ' entry into Jerusalem, was through the valley of the shadow of death. Just as His resurrection is also. For Christ cannot rise from the dead unless he first die. And neither can Sydnie rise from the dead unless she die too. And all of us.

We all must die with Jesus, and in Jesus, if we are going to rise to life again with him.

But in order for us to be confident that our own deaths will also lead to resurrection, we must believe the same message about Jesus Christ that he taught in the resurrection of Lazarus. Which is what the crowd was testifying to on that first Palm Sunday as Jesus was entering into Jerusalem and the people were waving palm branches. And what is that message?

It is what Jesus said to Martha, who was mourning the loss of her brother Lazarus. *Jesus said to her, "your brother will rise again."* *Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again on the last day."* *And Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*

Do you believe this, people of God? Do you? Because these palm branches here today testify that you do. For these palm branches are not just being waved by us today. They are being waved by Sydnie too right now. Because she has entered into the Heavenly Jerusalem, and she too greets the Lord Jesus with palms. Rev. 7 says:

⁹After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

Here on earth, we cry out Hosanna. Save us Lord! Future tense, as we wave palm branches. But Sydnie is with all the saints waving

palm branches saying, present tense, *Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the lamb.* What we are looking for, she now has. She has gone before us to show us the way. The least of these has become the greatest.

¹¹ *And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."*

¹³ *Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

¹⁵ *"Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.*

¹⁶ *They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.*

¹⁷ *For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."*

And so, we rejoice in sadness this day, because we have lost our precious Sydnie, but she is in Heaven with Jesus and the angels and all the saints, and God has wiped away every tear from her eyes, and he protect her with his presence.

And one day he will wipe away all the tears from eyes, too. And we will come to rest under the shadow of His protection too. Because we also are ones coming out of the great tribulation, for the Apostle Paul says, *it is only through much tribulation that we must enter the kingdom of Heaven*. And we have washed our robes white in the blood of the lamb in holy baptism, and by faith in His name. So believe, people of God. Believe that everyone who lives and believe in Jesus will never die. And let these palm branches serve as a faithful witness to that truth today.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.