

PALM SUNDAY

Mark 11

This second of our special lessons can easily be tied in with the course by referring to the Christmas lesson and reminding the classes of the purpose of the Lord in coming into the world. The meaning of the words *Messiah* and *Christ*—the anointed one—should be mentioned as well as the fact that anointing is putting oil on a person or object, that oil is the symbol of the Lord’s unselfish love, and that this means that the Lord came into the world as the Messiah out of pure love for mankind.

Doctrinal Points

Our natural selfishness keeps us from ever fully controlling our natural reason.

The “temple” of our minds needs to be cleansed of any tendencies to use our religion for selfish purposes.

The “mountains” our faith can move are those things which stand in the way of our spiritual progress.

Notes for Parents

Today in the churches is known as Palm Sunday and as the beginning of Holy Week, commemorating the last week of the Lord’s life on earth. It was the week of the Jewish Passover, and the Lord and His disciples had come up to celebrate this feast. On Sunday, the beginning of the week, the Lord entered Jerusalem riding on an ass, as was the custom for kings and judges. He was acclaimed by crowds of people who cast their garments and palm branches in His path and hailed Him as their king and savior. During the first two days of the week He taught in the temple, having first driven out the money-changers and sellers of doves who had brought their business into the very temple court itself. At night He went out to Bethany and lodged at the home of His friends Mary and

Martha and their brother Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. On Wednesday He did not go into the city because the people had begun to turn against Him. They thought that the Messiah, when He came, would set Himself up as their earthly king, overthrow the power of Rome, and make them a great nation again. That was why they hailed Him on Palm Sunday. But when they found that He had come to save them from sin instead of from Rome, from their spiritual enemies instead of from their earthly enemies, they rejected Him.

On Thursday evening He came into Jerusalem again and ate the Passover with His disciples. We have probably all seen copies of the famous painting which depicts this “Last Supper.” It was then that He instituted the “Lord’s Supper,” the Holy Communion, which in the Christian Church takes the place of the Passover. After supper, knowing that Judas had betrayed Him, He went out into the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. There He was taken by His enemies and brought to trial, and on Friday He was crucified. His body was placed in the tomb and the tomb was sealed.

This is in brief the story of Holy Week. We should think this week as we prepare for Easter of all that the Lord’s coming has meant to the world and of what it means to us. And we should ask ourselves how far we are like the people who welcomed the Lord as their king on Sunday and crucified Him on Friday. For we are all like them sometimes. We say we believe in the Lord, but when His way is not the way we want to follow, we put Him out of our minds.

Primary

Start by telling the children what day this is and why it is called Palm Sunday. Then give the introductory connections in a simple way before reading the lesson from the Word. Read the children the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9 to show them why the people knew that this was the Messiah. Be sure they know the meaning of the words *Messiah*, *Christ*, and *Hosanna*. Tell them briefly what happened between Palm Sunday and Easter which leads us to call this “Holy Week.”

What is the New Testament story about?

How many Gospels are there?

Gospel means “good news.”

You remember that all through the Old Testament story the people were growing more and more wicked.

The good people who were left were unhappy about it.

They clung to the promises given them through the prophets that someday the Lord would come into the world as the Messiah to save them.

So His coming and His life were good news.

We have learned how He came into the world and how He began His ministry.

We shall have more lessons about that ministry.

But today and next Sunday are special days.

What are they called?

Of what did the Passover feast remind the Jews?

The Lord went up to Jerusalem every year for this feast.

The Lord and His disciples were on their way to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. The Lord, because He was God, knew that this was the very time when His enemies, who hated Him because He pointed out their wickedness, would seize Him and put Him to death. He had told His disciples this and they had begged Him not to go. But He told them that it was necessary for Him to do everything that had been prophesied about Him, and also that He would rise again from the dead.

He had to pass through death and rise again to fulfill the prophecies and to teach us what death really is, so that we would not be afraid of it.

How did He enter Jerusalem on Palm Sunday?

The other Gospels tell us that the colt was an ass’s colt. Do you think it was strange that the Lord chose to ride on an ass or donkey? It was not strange to the disciples who believed Him to be the promised Messiah, for it was the custom in that country for kings and judges to ride on asses, and they knew the Messiah was to be both king and judge, and it had also been prophesied that He would come riding upon an ass’s colt.

The word with which the people hailed the Lord—*Hosanna*—is a Hebrew word which means, “Save, we pray thee.” The trees which the people cut branches to strew in His path were palm trees. That is why we call this Sunday “Palm Sunday.”

Junior

Have the class look up and read the Scripture references in their notes, and try to show them something of what was in the minds of the people who welcomed the Lord and why they so soon turned against Him. Make the connection between this and our own experience and urge the children to think about it during Holy Week as a preparation for Easter.

How many Gospels are there?

What are the Gospels about?

We interrupt our regular course for the special Palm Sunday and Easter lessons, and then go back to our schedule after Easter.

What do we celebrate on Easter Sunday?

We remember that there were many prophecies in the Old Testament which pointed to the coming of the Messiah. A few of them even foretold some of the details of His life on earth. Read Psalm 22:1-18 and Isaiah 53. These tell especially about the end of His life. The Lord knew that He had to pass through death to show us the whole way of life. He had to let men do their very worst to Him so that we might understand that our real life is not affected by what others do to us but depends on what we do ourselves. So when He told His disciples that He would be put to death at this time and they tried to persuade Him not to go to Jerusalem for the Passover, He merely answered that it would be wrong for Him not to complete the work He came into the world to do.

What did the Passover commemorate?

What kind of animal did the Lord ride into Jerusalem on?

We learn from the other Gospels that the colt was an ass, not a horse. It was the custom for kings and judges to ride upon mules and asses. Read Judges 5:10, 10:3-4, 12:13-14, II Samuel 16:1-2; and the specific prophecy of the Lord's entry into Jerusalem upon an ass, which is found in Zechariah 9:9. When the people saw the Lord riding upon an ass, they understood that He was declaring Himself to be the Messiah, their king and judge, and they accepted and acclaimed Him.

What had the disciples put upon the ass for the Lord to sit on?

What did the people spread before Him?

From what kind of tree did they cut the branches (John 12:13)?

What did the people cry?

Hosanna means, “Save, we pray thee.”

This was a triumphal journey. But we learn from many things in the Gospels that most of the crowd who welcomed the Lord imagined that He was coming to set Himself up as their earthly king, to deliver them from the Roman rule and make their nation once more a leading one in the world. They very soon found that this was not the kind of king He came to be. His kingdom is in the hearts and minds of men. Read His conversation with Pilate, the Roman governor, in John 18:33-37. The people who welcomed Him on Palm Sunday did not want this kind of king. So they turned against Him only a few days later, and put Him to death.

We call the week from Palm Sunday to Easter “Holy Week.” The Lord spent Monday and Tuesday teaching in the temple, but at night He went out to the little village of Bethany on the slope of the Mount of Olives not far from Jerusalem. He had friends there with whom He could lodge—Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead.

What did He do in the temple before He began to teach there?

What happened to the fig tree on which He found no fruit?

Some people cannot understand why He made the fig tree wither, but if we remember that “fruit” is the symbol of good deeds, we can see that He was merely using the fig tree to teach His disciples and us that anyone who does not do good to others is spiritually dead. Everything the Lord did while He lived in the world is a parable, teaching something that happens in our souls.

The Gospel of Mark does not tell us about the Lord’s Prayer, as Matthew and Luke do, but in this chapter we are given an explanation of one of the petitions in the Lord’s Prayer.

Which one is it?

The chapter also gives us an example of the way in which the Lord often answered the charges of the scribes and Pharisees—by asking them a question they could not or would not answer. They

never could get the better of Him, of course, and that made them hate Him all the more.

On Thursday of that week the Lord came into the city with His disciples to eat the feast of the Passover, and it was at that feast that He instituted the Holy Supper, about which we shall have a lesson later this year. After the feast He went out to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. There His enemies seized Him, and the next day He was crucified—only five days from the triumphal entry into Jerusalem! This seems very sudden and strange, but it really was not. The resentment of the scribes and Pharisees had been building up for three years until it suddenly ended in unreasoning violence. Does this ever happen to us? Do you ever let a feeling of dislike and resentment against someone work and work in your mind and heart until the temptation to do something bad to him becomes too strong for you? The disciples and the few good people in Jerusalem were not strong enough or brave enough to oppose the determination of the Lord's enemies. Do you know that every one of us has in his own soul ideas and feelings that correspond to both the disciples and the scribes and Pharisees? We have our good intentions and we have our selfish and worldly desires. Let us think this week about the last few days of the Lord's life on earth, and try very hard to strengthen our good intentions and to condemn and put away those selfish things which are always trying to destroy the Lord's life in our souls.



Intermediate

The correspondence of the details of the entry into Jerusalem is the important lesson for this class, especially the correspondence of the ass and what our “natural reason” is. The Intermediates are at the age when the natural reason seems the arbiter of everything, and a lesson in Sunday school can very well help them to see its limitations and the necessity of subjecting it to the Lord's direction.

The special lessons for Palm Sunday and Easter seem to interrupt our orderly study of the Gospel of Mark, but we may find

that they help us to understand better some of the lessons we shall have after Easter.

We all know that the Sunday before Easter—Palm Sunday—is celebrated in the church in commemoration of the Lord’s entry into Jerusalem at the beginning of the last week of His life on earth, and that the week between Palm Sunday and Easter is called “Holy Week.” During that last week the Lord taught in the temple, celebrated the Passover with His disciples, was betrayed, seized, tried, and crucified, lay in the tomb from Friday night to Sunday morning, and then rose from the dead. During this week we should think about all these things and try to understand a little of what the Lord did for us and of what we must do for Him if we are to be His true followers.

On Palm Sunday the Lord entered Jerusalem as king and judge. The Gospel of Mark speaks only of His riding upon a “colt,” but the other Gospels make clear that it was an ass’s colt. This had been prophesied in Zechariah 9:9. The people knew the prophecy and they also knew that it was the custom for kings and judges to ride upon mules and asses. Read Judges 5:9-10 and I Kings 1:33, 44. There are several other passages in the Old Testament which testify to the same custom. Such customs were not without meaning, for we know that ancient Jewish history was directed by divine providence in such a way that it could be used for the writing of the Word. In our lesson on Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac, we learned the correspondence of the ass. It pictures our natural reason, that faculty which enables us to live and accomplish our tasks in the world. It is a very necessary and useful faculty but it needs to be kept subject to a higher power, the understanding of what this life is given us for. We all tend to use our natural reason to get things for ourselves. When we are asked to do something which will take time and effort, the first thing we are likely to think of is: What will I get out of it? Will it be fun? Will it interfere with my doing other things I like to do? Our natural selfishness keeps us from ever fully controlling this tendency of our natural reason. The Lord was the only one who really mastered it. Notice that when

He sent the disciples to bring Him the ass, He said, “ye shall find a colt tied, *whereon never man sat.*” Then notice that when the disciples brought the colt, they “cast their garments on him” for the Lord to sit on. Garments picture the truths in which the mind is clothed. The Lord’s garments are the letter of the Word and the various senses within it. Our garments are the ideas of truth we have in our minds. We must make these subject to the Lord. So to symbolize this the people also cast their garments before the Lord for Him to ride over. The branches of the trees picture the principles according to which we conduct our everyday life. The Lord must rule these, too. We learn from the Gospel of John that the branches were palm branches, which picture our knowledge from the letter of the Word that the Lord is our savior. If we let our daily lives be governed and directed by the thought that only obedience to the Lord’s truth can lead us to a heavenly character, we are casting palm branches before the Lord. The people of the Lord’s day did not know what their action really meant, but again in following an established custom they knew that they were acknowledging Jesus as the promised Messiah. The same acknowledgment was in their use of the word *Hosanna*, which means “Save, we pray thee.”

The people welcomed the Lord as savior and king, but very soon they discovered that He was not the kind of king they wanted and had expected Him to be. They wanted a king who would overthrow the power of Rome and restore their nation to a place of special prominence. There are two other incidents in our chapter which teach us this. One of these is the cleansing of the temple by the Lord (verses 15-17). When He said they had made His house a “den of thieves,” He meant that they were using their religion as a means to get things for themselves. We do this today if we go to church to make people think we are good or just to “get in” with someone whose acquaintance we think will be of advantage to us. The other incident—that of the fig tree (verses 12-14 and 20-21)—teaches that although the people had the knowledge of what was right, they were bringing forth no genuine goodness in their daily

lives. The fig tree represents the natural plane of our lives, its leaves the truths proper to this natural plane, and its fruit natural good works. In the sermon on the mount (Matthew 7:19) the Lord says, “Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”

The people who welcomed the Lord on Palm Sunday crucified Him on Good Friday. We wonder how this could have been possible. But we may do the very same thing. Did you ever hear something in Sunday school which you saw was true and right and then afterward, when you tried to obey it, found that it did not seem to “get you anything,” and therefore you put it out of your mind? We welcome the Lord as our king when we acknowledge that we ought to live as He wants us to live. Then if we keep on trying faithfully to obey Him, we are like the disciples who really loved Him, but if we give up trying as soon as we find that what we ought to do is not what we want to do, we are like the crowd who turned so quickly against Him and put Him to death.

There is something else in this chapter which has puzzled many people. In verses 22-24 does the Lord really mean that if we have faith enough, we can move mountains and get anything we pray for? The trouble is that people have come to think of “faith” as something just in the mind, to think that merely saying, “I believe in the Lord,” is really believing in Him. Their own practice in things other than religion should teach them better. When they have faith in a doctor, they consult him often and obey his instructions and take his medicine. When they no longer are willing to obey him, they say it is because they have lost faith in him. It is the same with faith in God. If there is no obedience, there is actually no faith. If we have true faith in the Lord, we shall try constantly to find out what He wants us to do and we shall do it, and we shall not pray for or try to do things which are contrary to His order. The mountains which we can move are the things which stand in the way of our spiritual progress, the selfish feelings and thoughts and the bad habits which we have to “get over.” See how we use correspondence in our everyday language. Often if we think just

what we mean by an expression like “to get over” something, it will help us to read the Bible with more lively interest and understanding.

Basic Correspondences

- garments = truths
 - trees = general principles
 - branches = principles used to govern
our day-to-day life
 - mountains (as obstacles) = selfish feelings and thoughts
we have to “get over”
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Senior

Use this familiar lesson to introduce a discussion of what true faith is and our constant need of faith in the Lord instead of faith in ourselves.

Each of the Gospels differs just a little from the others in its account of the Lord’s entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and the events immediately following it. The Gospel of Mark places the incident of the cleansing of the temple on the day following, John places it near the beginning of the Lord’s ministry, and Matthew and Luke make it His first act upon entering the city on Palm Sunday. We should note that the order of events is important only as it affects the internal sense, and that the recording of the sequence of events in the various Gospels was under the control of divine providence, and each sequence has its own purpose. Only Matthew and Mark record the incident of the fig tree. John does not record the question of the Pharisees concerning the Lord’s authority. In Mark and Luke the animal on which the Lord rode is called merely a colt, but John calls it a young ass and Matthew says that the disciples were sent to find “an ass tied, and a colt with her.” The prophecy which the Lord fulfilled in this journey is found in Zechariah 9:9: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” That kings and judges were

accustomed to ride on mules and asses we learn from many passages of Scripture. The people knew this custom and they knew the prophecy. So they hailed the Lord on that day as the promised Messiah, the king of the line of David who was to come as their savior. *Hosanna* means, “Save, we pray thee.”

The Lord was the Messiah. He did come as king and savior. But, as He told Pilate at the time of His trial, His kingdom is “not of this world” (John 18:36). The people were expecting a king who would overthrow the power of Rome and restore their nation to prominence. As soon as they realized that Jesus had not come to Jerusalem for this purpose, they turned against Him and put Him to death.

The state in which the church was in those days is pictured by the incident of the fig tree which withered away because the Lord found no fruit on it. The fig tree represents the natural man and the external church. If these do not bear the fruit of good works, there is no spiritual life in them. The same condition is pictured in the incident of the cleansing of the temple. The people then were using their religion for selfish ends, just as people sometimes use it today, joining whichever church they think will be most profitable for their business interests or for their social position or as a cover for their own un-Christian practices.

What does the Lord’s entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday mean in our individual lives? Jerusalem and the temple always represent the inmost place in our lives where the Lord should dwell. Swedenborg tells us many times that a person’s idea of God is what really governs his life. If we form our idea of God from our own selfish character, we shall be governed only by considerations of self-interest. If we believe there is no God, we shall be blown about by the shifting winds of materialistic thought. If, however, we believe the Lord Jesus Christ to be God, we shall govern our lives according to His precepts and example.

In Mark’s account of this incident there is one verse (verse 4) which adds a very striking detail not found in the other Gospels. The two disciples “found the colt tied *by the door without in a*

place where two ways met.” We remember that the ass pictures the natural reason, that faculty which enables us to “put two and two together,” to see the connections among the things we take into our minds through the senses and their bearing on our everyday life in the world. It is a very necessary faculty, the first one we have to develop as we pass out of our infancy. It is, just as our verse says, “tied by the door without,” at the very entrance of our souls. It is said to be “tied” because it is not safe to give this natural reason its freedom. The ass is a useful animal but a willful and stubborn one. It is very sure-footed, but it looks at the ground. Our natural reason, if left to follow its own direction, sees nothing above the things of the natural world. The particular ass in our story was a colt “whereon never man sat.” It was in a place “where two ways met.” It had never been made to go in either direction. When we are very young, our natural reason is in just this position. The two ways picture the choice which is offered us, the choice between our own selfish way and the Lord’s way. The colt can be safely loosed if it is to be brought to the Lord for His service. That is, if we recognize the Lord as our God and accept His direction, our natural reason will readily perform its true function of confirming spiritual truths by means of natural ones. To the man who believes in the Lord, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.” We all find our natural reason unruly many times during our lives. The Lord was the only one who actually rode the ass’s colt into Jerusalem, i.e., completely controlled His natural reason.

The same truth is carried further in the other details of the story. The disciples put their garments on the colt for the Lord to sit on, and the people threw their garments in the road on which the Lord was riding. Our garments are the ideas which clothe our minds. These must be submitted to the judgment of the Lord’s truth. And the palm branches were also cast before the Lord. Trees represent our general principles and their branches the more specific principles which grow out of them. These must likewise be submitted to the Lord. The palm tree in particular represents the

principle that all goodness and truth come from the Lord alone.

There is a beautiful coherence in this chapter in the internal sense. First we are shown what it means to acknowledge the Lord as our king and savior and we are warned against the danger of hypocrisy. Then suddenly in verse 2:2 the Lord says: “Have faith in God,” and tells His disciples that if they have faith, anything they ask will be granted. This has puzzled many people, but we should see that the Lord has been showing us that faith is not an empty statement of belief but is the kind of belief which includes obedience. If we really have faith in God, we shall believe that His ways are right, and the things we ask for will be things which He can grant because they will be good for us and for others. The mountains we shall be able to remove are the “high places” of self-will and self-intelligence which stand in the way of our spiritual progress.

Adult

The story and its meaning should be so familiar to the Adults that it needs only a brief review, and most of the time can be spent on the controversial incident of the fig tree and the statement about faith and prayer. The reason for the variation in the order of events in the four Gospels should be mentioned.

We are all familiar with the story of the Lord’s entry into Jerusalem at the beginning of the last week of His life on earth, and probably with its general correspondence. He fulfilled the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9. The people knew the prophecy and also that it was the custom for kings and judges to ride on mules and asses. Read Judges 5:10, 10:3-4, 12:13-14, II Samuel 16:1-2, 13:29, and I Kings 1:33, 38, 44. They had no doubt that they were welcoming the Messiah who was come to be their king and savior. Palm leaves have always been the victor’s award. The palm tree represents the principle that the Lord alone saves. The cry of the people—*Hosanna!*—means, “Save, we pray thee!” This word, which in our English translations of the Bible appears only in the New Testament, was in common use in the musical service of the temple.

The translators of the Old Testament translated instead of transliterating it.

The ass's colt "whereon never man sat" pictures the natural reason, which only the Lord fully mastered from beginning to end in His earthly life. Our natural reason, like the ass, is very sure-footed but looks always at the ground and is stubborn and willful. It is a very necessary and useful faculty, but it must be kept under control. We remember that Abraham, when he was moved to sacrifice Isaac, "rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass." His natural reason, which would have rebelled against such a sacrifice, had to be prepared to obey. Our natural reason is the first reason we develop as we come out of infancy. Mark—alone of the four Evangelists—tells us that the two disciples "found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met." The "door" is the entrance to our souls—the same door at which the Lord stands and knocks (Revelation 3:20)—and the natural reason is tied to it on the outside, the side where our senses connect us with life in the material world. In that life from the beginning two ways are set before us, the way of self-interest and the way of the Lord's service. It is safe to "loose" the ass only if he is to be brought to the Lord. We "bring the colt to the Lord" when we are willing to rethink our natural ideas in terms of the Lord's teaching concerning eternal values. We "cast our garments before the Lord" when we submit all our thinking to the test of comparison with the truths of the Word. A king is one whose laws are acknowledged and obeyed. We welcome the Lord into Jerusalem as king when we accept His precept and example as the inmost law of our life.

In the Gospel of Mark the order of events is slightly different from the order in the other Gospels, and we need to remember that the order as well as the words was preserved under divine inspiration. The development in each Gospel has its special use. There are three major events in our chapter which follow the Lord's entry into Jerusalem, and they represent the immediate effect on heart, mind, and conduct of the Lord's entry into our souls as king and judge. The cleansing of the temple is the examination of our

motives; the incident of the fig tree pictures the judgment of our conduct; and the question posed by the chief priests, scribes and elders, and the Lord's answer to it, search our thoughts.

In this Gospel the first two incidents are interwoven. As in Matthew and Luke, the Lord is said to have gone directly to the temple, but in Mark it says He merely looked about and then, because evening was come, went out to Bethany. In the morning, as He came toward Jerusalem again, He looked for figs on the fig tree and finding none said, "No man eat fruit of thee henceforth forever." Then He entered the temple, cast out the money-changers and dove-vendors, and told them they had made His house a den of thieves. Again He went back to Bethany for the night, and in the morning on the way to Jerusalem the disciples noticed that the fig tree was withered away.

The incident of the fig tree has been a favorite point of attack on the authority of the Bible story, the argument being that certainly the Lord would not have been so petulant as to curse a tree for having no fruit on it when it was not the season for fruit. That there is something more in the story than this we should know from the parable of the barren fig tree in Luke 13:6-9. Swedenborg tells us that the Lord had to open the Word in order that belief in it might not perish. See the quotation from AC 885 below regarding the incident of the fig tree.

The direct cause of the barrenness of the church was the perversion of their worship through self-love. So the cleansing of the temple—the exposure of this self-love—followed immediately. Then the result became apparent in the withering of the fig tree. That the cursing of the fig tree was no careless outburst should be evident from verses 21 and 22, for when Peter called attention to the fact that the fig tree was withered, the Lord's answer was, "Have faith in God." The verses which follow have also often been brought into question, but this is because of a wrong idea of what religious faith is. We understand well enough what faith is in every other field. If we have faith in a doctor, we follow his advice. If we have faith in a friend's honesty, we believe what he says and act

accordingly. But men seem to think that a man has faith in God if he merely says, “I believe in God,” whether he knows and obeys God’s teachings or not. We should know better. True faith—which involves the belief that the Lord is all-wise as well as all-powerful—is a prerequisite for the fulfillment of the promises in verse 23 and 24. Read AE 405⁵³.

Finally we have the question posed by the chief priests, scribes, and elders: “By what authority doest thou these things?” This is the reaction of the self-satisfied mind to the impact of the Lord’s coming. Its immediate thought is, “What right has anyone to tell me what I ought to be and to do?” “Why should I believe the Bible?” And the Lord’s answer is the one unanswerable one: “The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?” The people believed John to be a prophet. All our common mental faculties recognize that virtue is better than vice, unselfishness better than selfishness, humility better than pride—that is, that the precepts of the Lord present the true ideal of what life ought to be. If we deny these things, we put ourselves outside the pale of common decency. But if we accept them, we are admitting their right to authority, and condemning ourselves.

So the Lord put squarely before the religious leaders the question of accepting or rejecting Him. That they rejected Him we know, and their rejection brought their dispensation to an end. If we accept the Lord as our king and savior, we must accept His laws as the laws of our life. We must “loose the ass” only to bring Him to the service of the Lord.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Arcana Coelestia, n. 9212⁶: “By the disciples putting their garments on the ass and her colt, was represented that truths in the whole complex were submitted to the Lord as the Highest Judge and King: for the disciples represented the church of the Lord in respect to its truths and goods . . . and their garments represented the truths themselves. . . . The like was represented by the multitude strewing their garments in the way, and also branches of trees.”

Arcana Coelestia, n. 885: “Specifically, by this fig-tree there was meant the

Jewish Church, in which there was no longer anything of natural good; and the religious teaching or truth that was preserved in it, are the 'leaves'; for a vastated church is such that it knows truth, but is not willing to understand it. Similar are those who say that they know truth or the things of faith, yet have nothing of the good of charity; they are only fig-leaves, and they wither away."

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. Where was the Lord born? *Bethlehem*
- P. Where did He grow up? *Nazareth*
- P. Who was sent before Him to prepare His way? *John the Baptist*
- J. How long was His public ministry? *about three years*
- P. What is today called? *Palm Sunday*
- J. What did the Lord do on that day? *rode into Jerusalem as a king*
- P. What animal did He ride into Jerusalem on? *an ass or donkey*
- J. Where did His disciples find the ass? *tied outside a door*
- P. Why do we call this *Palm Sunday*? *people spread palm branches (John 12:13)*
- J. Where did the Lord spend the night? *Bethany*
- I. What did He do in the temple? *drove out money-changers and sellers of doves*
- J. What happened to the fig tree which had no fruit on it? *withered*
- J. What did the Lord tell His disciples they could do if they had faith? *move mountains*
- J. To what part of the Lord's Prayer does He refer in this chapter? *forgive debts*
- J. What question did the priests and scribes ask? *"By what authority . . .?"*
- I. How did the Lord answer them? *asked source of John's baptism*
- J. What is this week called? *Holy Week*
- J. What happened on Thursday of the week? *Last Supper, arrest*
- J. What happened on Friday? *crucifixion*
- I. What is represented by the Lord's riding on an ass on which never man sat? *His mastery of His natural reason*
- S. What does the incident of the fig tree mean? *if there are no good works there is no spiritual life*
- P. What will next Sunday be? *Easter*