

## Sermon Palm Sunday 2022

It was early morning in Jerusalem, during the Festival of Passover and Stephen was sitting in the kitchen eating his breakfast. His mum Ana asked 'What are you and your friends doing today?' Stephen said 'they would probably go to the Mount of Olives, it's always nice there. Be careful said his mum there are a lot of people in Jerusalem and around it for Passover and the Roman soldiers are nervous about all these people, in case they cause trouble.

We will mum said Stephen; well, here is your lunch, some fish, bread and honey cakes, your favourite. Thanks mum said Stephen who then asked, is dad coming home today? Stephen's dad, Joseph, was a master mason and builder and a member of the Chief Priests Council; his workmen were finishing a Roman Way Fort on the road beyond Bethany and Joseph had been to inspect it. Yes, he is said his mum, now go out, I have lots of work to do and don't be late for dinner, your dad will want to know what you've been up to. Bye mum shouted Stephen as he ran out the door with his lunch to meet his friends Saul, Timothy and Barnabus.

Later that day Stephen ran into the house and there was his dad. Stephen shouted his mum, go and wash your hands and dirty feet, I don't want that dirt in my kitchen. Stephen did as he was told and then sat down next to his dad. What have you been doing then Stephen asked his dad; we went to the Mount of Olives and played and eat our lunch, it was good.

I suppose you went with Saul, Timothy and Barnabus said his dad. Of course, said Stephen. The Rabbi said you all did well in school while I was away. The Rabbi took us to the Temple and we met an old holy man called Simeon, Stephen said. Dad, Simeon said that he had a vision from God that he would not die until he saw the Messiah from God. I know Simeon said his dad and I believe what he says. When will it happen Dad asked Stephen; That's Gods time Stephen and we like Simeon will have to wait said his dad?

Dad, a man called Jesus rode into the city today on a colt, like a king and people were cheering, waving branches and laying their cloaks in front of him. Who is he dad asked Stephen? It is Jesus of Nazareth Stephen and he has been preaching and curing

people of all sorts of illnesses and carrying out other miracles. The Chief Priest and Pharisee's don't like him because Jesus says they must change their ways and stop imposing harsh, wrong religious laws on the people.

Stephen said we followed Jesus to the Temple and as he got off the colt, he looked at me, Saul, Timothy and Barnabus and smiled. Dad, he looked so kind; Saul said that he wasn't and we should do as the Priests and pharisees tell us but we laughed at him and said he was kind. He then went into the Temple and overturned all the stalls and forced the traders out. It was so funny dad, there were sheep and lambs running around, doves flying all over the place and people trying to pick up the money from the money changers stalls and the Temple Guards and pharisees could do nothing.

He then said 'It is written that my house shall be a house of prayer but you have made it a den of robbers. What did he mean Dad?

Joseph said that the Temple market place was often discussed in the Council but the Chief Priest and Pharisees made a lot of money from it and their greed means they won't stop it.

Perhaps this is what Jesus meant.

Eat your dinner and stop talking you two said Ana before it gets cold.

After dinner Stephen asked Dad, is Jesus the Messiah that Simeon talks about? I don't know said Joseph. I think he is said Stephen and so do Timothy and Barnabus, Dad. Well, you will have to wait and see and ask God for guidance. However, remember always to be honest and stand by what you believe as you grow up and trust in God. Now up to bed with you and remember to kiss your mum goodnight, I will said Stephen.

As Stephen lay in his bed, he felt that Jesus smiling on him and Timothy, Barnabus and even Saul today was something which could change all their lives as they grew up into adults, who knows.

As we remember the celebrations of Palm Sunday, we must never forget that Jesus and God will always look down on us and smile, as he did on Stephen and his friends. So, open your hearts and lives to God and His Son Jesus Christ and celebrate the gift given to us all of a new life through Jesus.

Let us pray. Lord, we pray that all people will come to know you and celebrate the sacrifice you made for each and every one of us, so that we will change this world for ever and inherit eternal life. Amen.

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