# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“Jesus Fulfills Old Testament Prophecy”**

**John 12:12-16**

**September 22, 2019**

According to the Gospels of the New Testament, Jesus made the claim that he was the Messiah, also called the Christ, sent by God into the world in order that the purposes of God for the world may be fulfilled through him. To make such a claim is one thing, but to convince people that you are who you say you are is quite another. So when the religious leaders of the Jews confronted Jesus and demanded of him some kind of proof of his messiahship, he appealed to the writings of the Old Testament as identifying him as the One to come: “You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me. Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life” (John 5:39-40).

How, then, did Jesus’ disciples come to be so convinced that what he said about himself was true that they were willing to lay down their lives for that belief? During his arrest, trials, and crucifixion they were anything but convinced. In fact, they ran away in the face of danger and hid behind closed and locked doors. But after Jesus was resurrected, he began to help his disciples understand the Scriptures, and the disciples went out into Jerusalem, Judea and the ends of the earth declaring that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. The proof they offered was the very Scripture they had not previously understood but which Jesus had now explained and the Holy Spirit had helped them to comprehend.

Shortly after his resurrection, Jesus met two of his disciples who were deep in discussion as they walked along the road to Emmaus. Not recognizing him, they openly spoke with him about how such events as the death of the Messiah could possibly have happened. Jesus began to explain to them that his suffering and crucifixion were foretold in Scripture. He gently chastised them:

“You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. Wasn’t it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?” Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself (Luke 24:25-27).

Later that same day he appeared to nearly all of his disciples and clarified what he had been telling them before his death.

“When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:44-45).

The Gospels contain many stories of the disciples’ lack of understanding of how Scripture related to Jesus and how he was fulfilling the messianic prophecies found there. We find one such story in John 12:12-16, and I invite you to turn there with me

The next day, the news that Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem swept through the city. A large crowd of Passover visitors took palm branches and went down the road to meet him. They shouted, “Praise God!Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hail to the King of Israel!”Jesus found a young donkey and rode on it, fulfilling the prophecy that said: “Don’t be afraid, people of Jerusalem. Look, your King is coming, riding on a donkey’s colt.” His disciples didn’t understand at the time that this was a fulfillment of prophecy. But after Jesus entered into his glory, they remembered what had happened and realized that these things had been written about him.

As Jesus enters Jerusalem riding on a donkey, prophecy is being fulfilled before their very eyes but they don’t understand. Five days later Jesus will be crucified and the disciples will go into hiding for fear of their lives, wondering how this could have happened to the One they were so convinced had come from God. How different the event of the death of Jesus would have been for them if they had realized that everything that had happened to him, from the donkey ride to the crucifixion, was all in fulfillment of prophecy, was all in God’s plan for the salvation of humanity, was all under the control of the God whom Jesus called his heavenly Father, the One whom he loved and who loved him. But they didn’t understand, and all seemed lost.

 Five hundred and fifty years before Jesus rode into Jerusalem, the prophet Zechariah was given a vision by God in which he saw the King, the Messiah, coming into Jerusalem, sitting on a donkey’s colt. In Zechariah’s day Israel had no King. They had been defeated by the Babylonian army, taken into exile hundreds of miles from their homeland, and they felt lost and abandoned by God. But, Zechariah proclaimed, there is hope, for God has made a promise and he will do what he has promised. One day he will give you a King and this King will be the only King you will ever need, for no earthly ruler will ever overcome him and no earthly kingdom will ever conquer his kingdom. So, “Don’t be afraid.” Low and depressed as your condition may be now, there will be a day when the King will come, not as a warrior riding a war horse, but a peaceful Prince, a just and holy King, the Messiah who will save your souls for all eternity.

God has a plan for you and for me, as he has a plan for this world in which we live. Many elements of that plan are revealed to us in his Holy Word. Some have already taken place, such as those speaking of Jesus’ first coming, and others are still to take place, such as those that will be fulfilled when he comes again. This world in which we live is not out of control, much as it may feel that way to us sometimes. God has not been taken by surprise. Indeed, in his Word he has told us that things will get worse before they get better. There will be suffering and death before there will be eternal life and no more tears. Evil will increase, but it will not prevail; sin will deepen its hold of many hearts, but the grace of God will always be stronger than sin.

When we read the Word of God, like the prophecy being fulfilled which at first the disciples did not understand, we can be encouraged by the truth that our lack of understanding does not mean that God is not at work in our lives and in our world, putting together his plan for us in his way and according to his time table. God knows what he is doing. What he invites you and me to do is to trust him and place our hope in him. What he has said, he will do. What he has promised, he will fulfill.