

## JOURNEYING THROUGH HOLY WEEK TO EASTER WITH MARK'S GOSPEL

*It might help to have read and prayed through the separate Introduction to this series first!*

### **PALM SUNDAY (Sunday 28 March 2021)**

Focus your attention on God and become aware again of God's presence with you, and of joining with other worshippers (as in the Introduction to this series).

Thank God for bringing you safely to this day. Ask God to inspire you.

Then read this passage, paying attention to it as you do. What catches your imagination? What puzzles you? How does it make you feel?

#### **Mark 11:1-11 (NRSV)**

<sup>1</sup>When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples <sup>2</sup>and said to them, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. <sup>3</sup>If anyone says to you, "Why are you doing this?" just say this, "The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately." ' <sup>4</sup>They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, <sup>5</sup>some of the bystanders said to them, 'What are you doing, untying the colt?' <sup>6</sup>They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. <sup>7</sup>Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. <sup>8</sup>Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. <sup>9</sup>Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

'Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

<sup>10</sup> Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!'

<sup>11</sup> Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

#### **Reflection**

At Caesarea Philippi in Mark 8:27-30, Jesus had posed the question to his followers "What are people saying about me? And who do you say that I am?". He poses the same question to us now. What do you make of him as he comes riding into your life, whether you are noticing him for the first time, or are a longstanding follower? What would you have made of him if you had been there at the time of the story? If you were a disciple, would what he had been trying to tell you since Caesarea Philippi about his own destiny, and about what following him entails, help you see more clearly what is happening before your eyes? If you are in the crowds, would you even notice him among all the people flocking into the city and up to the Temple?

It was a time of festival. Do you remember the days when we could have mass gatherings of more than two people? Jerusalem was overwhelmed with pilgrims, and with merchants trying to provide them with provisions and services. Why would you pick Jesus out from all the other pilgrims? He is not the only one with a colt (meaning here an ass or donkey). Donkeys were the white vans of the day. There were lots of them.

There was, of course, the strange way that he had acquired it. Did he have second sight, or was it pre-arranged? Or was he commandeering it in the name of God, like a king could commandeer goods and services in a time of war? So – was he God’s king coming in power to recapture the city and the world and bring about the kingdom of God? But if he was and is, what sort of power is he coming with? Mark does not mention it, but as we look on might we hear an echo of Zechariah 9:9 where the king coming on a donkey rather than a warhorse means that he is coming in peace? Is the power of Jesus not that of authority and might, but the power of self-giving love?

As people went up to the temple, the streets were steep and became slippery. People might well have put cloaks and branches down to help provide grip. Or were they making an impromptu red carpet in homage to him?

As they went up, they would also be singing the festival songs or psalms. These were a bit like an opera or a musical, in that they told a story and different voices sang different parts. You can find two of them in what we know as Psalm 24 and Psalm 118, versions of which are attached below. You can hear bits of them being echoed in Mark’s story, both in this passage and in the following chapters.

So was Jesus a pilgrim coming in amongst all the other pilgrims? Or a king coming into his kingdom? Or a representative of God coming into God’s house? Or some sort of mixture of all those? Whatever the answer, people would have seen things in various ways at the time. Some things would only become clear as the disciples looked back with hindsight after the crucifixion and resurrection.

“Who do you say that I am?” said Jesus in and through it all. He still says it to us now. What do we make of him, in our lives and our world?

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you humbled yourself in taking the form of a servant,  
and in obedience died on the cross for our salvation:  
grant us the faith to know you and love you,  
that we may be found beside you  
on the way of the cross,  
which is the path of glory;  
give us the mind to follow you  
and to proclaim you as Lord and King,  
to the glory of God the Father. **Amen**

*Common Worship (adapted from a Collect and Post-Communion Prayer for Palm Sunday)*

### **The Lord’s Prayer**

**Psalm 24:**

*A psalm of a procession (with a leader) ascending the Temple mount and going into the Temple.*

*The procession may have seen itself as accompanying God into God's house. It may originally have been carrying the ark of the covenant or some other thing symbolising God's presence, or its members may have had the king or someone else representing God's presence amongst them.*

Leader: The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it,  
**Procession: the world, and those who live in it ;**

Leader: for he has founded it on the seas,  
**Procession: and established it on the rivers.**

Leader: Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord ?  
**Procession: Who shall stand in his holy place ?**

Priests at the Gates:

Those who have clean hands and pure hearts,  
who do not lift up their souls to what is false,  
and do not swear deceitfully.  
They will receive blessing from the Lord,  
and vindication from the God of their salvation.

**Procession: Such is the company of those who seek him,  
who seek the face of the God of Jacob.**

*(the procession asks for admission)*

**Lift up your heads, O gates !  
and be lifted up, O ancient doors !  
that the King of glory may come in.**

Priests: *(asking for the equivalent of a 'password')*

Who is the King of glory ?  
**Procession: The Lord, strong and mighty,  
the Lord, mighty in battle.**

**Lift up your heads, O gates !  
and be lifted up, O ancient doors !  
that the King of glory may come in.**

Priests: Who is this King of glory ?  
**Procession: The Lord of hosts,  
he is the King of glory.**

*Based on NRSV text adapted by KGH*

## Psalm 118

*Ascent of the Mountain to the Temple of a procession (with a leader) accompanying the King*

Leader Give thanks to God for God is good

**People in Procession (all) God's steadfast love endures for ever!**

Leader Let Israel, the people of God, proclaim

**People in Procession (A) God's steadfast love endures for ever!**

Leader Let the priests, the house of Aaron, proclaim

**People in Procession (B) God's steadfast love endures for ever!**

Leader Let all who fear the Lord proclaim

**People in Procession (all) God's steadfast love endures for ever!**

King In distress I called to the Lord; God answered me and set me free.

With the Lord on my side, I am not afraid; what can human beings do to me?

With the Lord on my side as my helper I shall see the downfall of my enemies.

**People It is better to take refuge in the Lord than put your trust in a human being.**

**It is better to take refuge in the Lord than put your trust in princes.**

King The nations all surrounded me, but in the name of the Lord I drove them back.

They surrounded me, they surrounded me on every side,

but in the name of the Lord I drove them back.

They swarmed about me like bees, they blazed like fire in brushwood,

but in the name of the Lord I drove them back.

I was pressed so hard that I almost fell, but the Lord came to my help.

The Lord is my strength and song, and has become my salvation.

**People Listen! Shouts of triumph in the camps of the righteous:**

**the right hand of the Lord does mighty things;**

**the right hand of the Lord raises up,**

**the right hand of the Lord does mighty things.**

King I shall not die but live; I shall proclaim the works of the Lord.

The Lord has disciplined me hard, but has not handed me over to death.

*At the entrance to the Temple, with the Priests guarding the gates*

Leader Open the gates of righteousness, and I will enter and praise the Lord.

Priests This is the gate of the Lord; only the righteous shall enter.

King I will praise you, Lord, for you answered me and have become my salvation.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the head of the corner!

**People (A) This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.**

**People (B) This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

**People (All) Lord, save us, we pray; Lord, send us prosperity.**

Priests Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord;

from the house of the Lord we bless you.

*In the central court of the Temple*

Leader The Lord is God, and God has given us light

Priests Guide the pilgrims up and join them to the horns of the altar

Leader You are my God, and I shall praise you

**All You are my God, and I shall exalt you.**

Leader Give thanks to God for God is good

**All God's steadfast love endures for ever.**

*Adapted by KGH*