

Gospel reflections

Mark 11:1-11

Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King

11 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples,²saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'"

⁴They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, ⁵some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?"

⁶They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. ⁷When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. ⁸Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. ⁹Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

"Hosanna!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

¹⁰"Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"

"Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

¹¹Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.



A procession through the streets seems to generate its own excitement. In the small town where I grew up every parade included the local Caledonian band, complete with bagpipes. I'm not sure bagpipes are for everyone, and I later learnt they were used by Scottish clans as they went to war but for me the sound of the bagpipes swirling through the air is a reminder for me that something exciting is also in the air.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the words, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord' swirl through the air. He comes in triumph; people shout with joy and lay down their cloaks for him while others wave tree branches in the air. It's a great procession and like most processions everyone seems to be caught up in the excitement.

This is not the first time Jesus has been to Jerusalem, but it will be the last in such triumph. And Jesus knows this. He had previously visited Jerusalem during the Feast of the Tabernacles but he had entered the city quietly, without fanfare because he knew the Jewish leaders were looking for him to kill him. However, the time was not right. This time, however, the time has come for him to fulfill his purpose.

When he returns from Bethany, he and his teachings will be challenged by the chief priests who persistently try to trap him. He knows also that the excitement of the crowd, the shouts of Hosanna will soon turn to shouts of 'Kill him!' Despite knowing all of this he still comes. The crowd that so enthusiastically greets Jesus does not know what is in store for him. They welcome him as an earthly king and have no understanding that his ministry has an express purpose: he will die on the cross. They also do not know that his death has an even greater purpose and that he will rise again because only then can he overcome eternal death.

The picture of palm fronds together with a cross made from fronds captures the sentiment of Jesus' triumphal entry to Jerusalem as well as his death. Just as the palm fronds are a symbol of his welcome, they also become a symbol of his death because many of those who waved them in welcome were quick to turn on Jesus and send him to an undeserved and humiliating death. The dual nature of the crowd, welcoming and condemning, mirrors the dual nature of humanity, both saint and sinner. We too can celebrate on Palm Sunday, even though, unlike the crowd in Jerusalem so long ago, we know what is going to happen. Even though we know that this entry into Jerusalem will end in death we also know there will be a resurrection and humbly we can accept the wonderful gift of salvation that is therefore offered to us.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, lead us as we follow you particularly when our way seems hard. Forgive us as we sin against you even though that is not our intention. Save us from following the crowd and hold us close with you always. Amen

Song: How deep the Father's love for us: <https://youtu.be/8rYR-w3Ddaw>