

Processional Gospel for Palm Sunday: Matthew 21:1-11

Jesus's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

**1** When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, **2** saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. **3** If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them. 'And he will send them immediately.'" **4** This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet:

**5** "Tell the daughter of Zion,  
Look, your king is coming to you,  
humble and mounted on a donkey,  
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

**6** The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; **7** they brought the donkey and the colt and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. **8** A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. **9** The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

"Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

**10** When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" **11** The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

There's no way around it. Jesus march into Jerusalem is political and subversive. People don't cry out to Rome as they shout "hosanna" which means "save us". The parade into Jerusalem seems not to buy in to Rome's slogan, Pax Romana, that advertises world peace through domination.

Crowds follow Jesus into Jerusalem because they've seen him embody justice and peace for those living in the shadows. The crowds have heard Jesus cast a vision for a world where the poor are blessed, and the downtrodden will be lifted up. Jesus' sermon is just as revolutionary the song as his mother Mary's sings about the poor being filled with good things and the lowly finding God's favour.

Jesus' procession into Jerusalem is subversive and defiant. He marches for God's sake and the world sake in the name of love. The procession itself is a parody of Roman pageantry. Instead of war horses, weapons and soldiers, we have donkeys,

palm branches and common folk. Maybe this farcical procession begs the question about what is counterfeit and false...Rome's rule by domination or God's realm of peace, justice and mercy.

Rome intends Jesus' arrest to quash the movement and get back to business as usual. Pilate could have used his power and delayed or stopped Jesus' execution. Sensing the mood of the crowds and the increasingly vocal religious establishment, Pilate calculates that execution is expedient.

Jesus' arrest and trial seem antithetical to his festive arrival in Jerusalem. The truth is, Rome's prosecution of Jesus and any who dare publicly follow him serves as a repudiation of Jesus' vision for the world. The religious establishment colludes in his arrest to reject his claim to be God's chosen.

The people in power have spoken. The crowds have spoken—they even curse themselves. Nonetheless Jesus doesn't curse or condemn in return. Just remember, God always gets the last word—a word that time and again often sounds like, "Yes".