Matthew 21 1-11

**21**As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, **2**saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. **3**If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”

**4**This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

**5**“Say to Daughter Zion,  
    ‘See, your king comes to you,  
gentle and riding on a donkey,  
    and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2021:1-11&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23832a)]

**6**The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. **7**They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. **8**A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. **9**The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

“Hosanna[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2021:1-11&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23836b)] to the Son of David!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2021:1-11&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23836c)]

“Hosanna[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2021:1-11&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23836d)] in the highest heaven!”

**10**When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?”

**11**The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

I’d like to start our journey into Palm Sunday by reading you a little piece written by an unknown author called One Solitary Life

“He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman.

He grew up in still another village, where he worked in a carpenter’s shop until he was thirty. Then for three years he was an itinerant preacher.

He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a house. He did not go to college. He never visited a big city. He never travelled two hundred miles from the place where he was born. He did none of the things associated with greatness.

He had no credentials but himself.

He was only thirty three years of age when the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends ran away.

He was turned over to his enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While he was dying, his executioners gambled for his clothing, the only property he had on earth. When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Nineteen centuries have come and gone and today he remains the central figure of the human race, and the leader of mankind’s progress. All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together have not affected the life of man on this planet so much as that one solitary life”

Of course, this is written about Jesus, and today we begin our journey with Christ to the cross and his resurrection

Usually we would gather in Church and reflect on the points of this journey, but for the first time that I can remember, there will be no services and we will be worshiping at home, maybe this enforced solitude may help us to reflect on how Jesus felt in those last lonely hours?

But for now, we focus on the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.

According to the Gospel of Matthew, Palm Sunday was the first time Jesus ever appeared in the great, metropolis of Jerusalem.

Jesus knew that His ministry would not be complete and His mission would not be successful unless and until He took His gospel message from the small towns of Galilee in the northern part of Israel and declared it in the great Temple in Jerusalem.

Jesus had spent three years preaching, teaching and healing throughout the small and sometimes remote towns of Capernaum, Nazareth and Bethsaida. Like a football player who wants to show his stuff in the premier League or an entertainer who knows a career is not complete until you get to play Wembley.

Jesus knew that He had to take His message to the great city of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was the centre of Jesus world, and there is doubt about the fact that the key to the gospel being able to reach to the ends of the earth as commanded in Matthew 28 was that Jesus first take the gospel to Jerusalem.

The gospel had to be declared in places that served as the crossroads of culture and ideas. The message had to be preached in places of hustle and bustle, where the crowds gathered from near and far, so people who heard it could take the message with them wherever they went.

Coming to Jerusalem was a strategic decision and a necessary first step in the releasing the Gospel to a global audience.

If we wanted massive media exposure today, we would promote through the internet, get adverts in the middle to tick tock films, get the great and the good to indorse the product. Maybe get Kim Kardashian like you or get the cast of Made in Chelsea to visit you.

If you are going to get the message to the maximum audience, you need to be at the right place at the right time and Jesus understood this.

So on the day we now call Palm Sunday, He left behind places such as Nazareth, Capernaum and Bethany and marched His followers into Jerusalem. He had the right message and Jerusalem was the right place to preach it if He wanted to reach the widest possible audience.

In the account that Matthew gives of Palm Sunday we can see 2 distinct groups of people.

Some in the crowd knew who Jesus was and had heard all the stories about Him. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem this first group, got excited and ran into the streets shouting at the top of their voices, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.”

Whereas, there were others in Jerusalem that day who had no idea who Jesus was. Their response was not to line His path with palm branches and a garment-laden welcome mat; their response was a little more reserved, maybe they were fed up with the avalanche of country folk in town getting ready for Passover, their response was Who is this?

In order to enter into this text, you need to use your imagination and wonder about the tone of voice in which their question was being asked.

You can tell a lot about what people think simply by listening to their tone of voice when they ask questions. I think there are two possibilities when it comes to how the question: Who is this?

On the one hand, it might have been a tone of contempt and derision. It was as if they were looking down on Jesus as a country boy who was not ready for the big city. He wasn’t dressed in the latest fashions or riding a chariot

A carpenter’s son from the sticks, dressed in common robes. Worse yet, instead of riding on a magnificent charger as a Romans would do, Jesus came into Jerusalem riding on a donkey.

I’m not sure if the average person would have been aware of the prophecy found in Zechariah 9:9 that the Messiah would ride into Jerusalem in that way, I’m not sure many people today would be aware of it, for that matter. So, we get one possible response, who is this? A sneering and contemptuous dismissal of Jesus.

So, not everybody was waving palm branches on that first Palm Sunday; some people were too busy laughing at One who seemed to be an over-reaching, common, country bumpkin.

I am sure that there were some in Jerusalem who were very impressed that Jesus could bring crowds of people out into the streets to cheer as He passed. They may not have known who Jesus was, could not fail to see that he was someone who stirred the imagination of the crowd.

Who is this who can cause people to take off their coats and lay them on the ground so His donkey could walk over them?

Who is this for whom people would tear palm branches off the trees to create a carpet?

None of the priests or Rabbis were welcomed in that way. Certainly no Roman—not even the governor, Pontius Pilate—had received a hero’s welcome like this, so who is this?

The question of Palm Sunday remains the question for us to consider on this Sunday 2,000 years later: Who is this?

Here were are in 2020 and Some people are still contemptuous of Jesus. It seems that in our modern society there are an increasing number of people who are disinterested in religion of any form, to deny this would be foolishness, however, to dwell on this would be defeatism.

I am sure there are still people throughout the world who say: Who is this?

Who is Jesus, and why should I listen to Him? In a world full of many religions and philosophies, where people either believe all religions are the same or that some vague spirituality is all they need or want, it is important for us to have an answer to the question: Who is Jesus?

Who is this Jesus the man who took men such as Peter, James and John and turn those fishermen from Capernaum into household names in every corner of the earth? Who is this that could take a Pharisee named Saul—an opponent to Christianity—and in a single encounter on the Damascus Road turn him into the rock on which the Church would be founded?

Who is this who can take people who passed through the dark night of the soul and transform them into the great and the good?

Who is this? was the question racing around Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday, and that question stands here today waiting for each one of us to offer an answer. Who is this?

Do you speak the words with scorn and contempt? Or do you hold a better view of Jesus?

Jesus asked his Disciples plainly at Caesarea Philippi “Who do you say that I am?” and that’s the question he is asking us today

Amen