



Parish of Finchampstead and California

Palm Sunday –29 March 2015

LENT WELL SPENT ... in the Name of Jesus: Lord and King

Gospel reading – Mark 11:1-11&15-18

¹ When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ² 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.

³ If anyone says to you, "Why are you doing this?" just say this, "The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" ⁴ They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, ⁵ some of the bystanders said to them, 'What are you doing, untying the colt?' ⁶ They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. ⁷ Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields.

⁹ Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, 'Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!'

¹¹ 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.

¹⁵ On the following day they came again to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold doves; ¹⁶ and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. ¹⁷ He was teaching and saying, 'Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations"? But you have made it a den of robbers.'

¹⁸ And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching.

Context and background

The Entry into Jerusalem and the Cleansing of the Temple mark a decisive point in Jesus' life. Both could be seen as challenging the religious leaders at the very time (Passover) when their relationship with the Romans was under greatest pressure. Taken together these incidents almost certainly set Jesus on the collision course with the leaders that led to his arrest and execution within a week.

All four Gospels report the Entry but John places the Cleansing at the start rather than the end of Jesus' ministry (John 2:12-17).

On the road to Jerusalem, Jesus has been hailed by Bartimaeus as *Son of David*. Further, his riding into the city, rather than walking, and his requisitioning of the ass, seem to be making a statement. There is probably a reference to Zechariah 9:9 which describes the coming of Jerusalem's king (see Matthew 21:5; John 12:15). The crowd quotes Psalm 118:25-26. Altogether the passage is full of ideas of *king, Lord* and *Messiah*.

At the Temple Jesus quoted two OT passages - Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11 - to explain his actions. The religious leaders then sought to kill Jesus perhaps because, in addition to the assault on their authority, they and he may have recognised the action as fulfilling prophecies such as Malachi 3:1 and Zechariah 14:21 which have to do with the restoration of holiness to the Temple. Soon they will question Jesus about his authority (Mark 11:27-33).

We have seen in previous weeks how descriptions of Jesus - *Son of God, Messiah, Son of David, Son of Man* - overlap and so do *Lord* and *King*. But *Lord* and *King* introduce ideas going in some ways beyond even *Son of Man* because in the OT *Lord* is the term used in place of YHWH (Yahweh = Jehovah) for God, and God is also described as Israel's king, whether or not there is a human king (1 Samuel 12:12; Psalm 24:7, 74:12; Micah 4:8). So when Jesus was crucified by the Romans as *King of the Jews* they were unwittingly making an extraordinary claim for him (Mark 15:26).

Very early on the church adopted *Lord*, often in conjunction with *Christ* (= *Messiah*) - see eg Acts 2:36 - as their principal description of Jesus. The earliest creed was probably *Jesus is Lord* (see Romans 10.9, 1 Corinthians 12:3), which put Christians on a collision course with Romans for whom *Caesar is Lord*. As an appropriation of God's title it was a claim to divinity (contrast 1 Corinthians 8:6 with Deuteronomy 6:4), and opened the OT to major reinterpretation in the light of Jesus. Prayers were made to

Jesus (eg 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13; 2 Corinthians 12:8) and through him (eg Romans 1:8). The implications of the Lordship of Christ are fully expounded in Philippians 2:6-11.

In almost all respects, earlier ideas about the coming *King* (see handouts on *Messiah* and *Son of David*) were subsumed into the church's concept of *Lord*. John, in Revelation 17:14, writes 'the Lamb will overcome because he is Lord of lords and King of kings'.

Revelation (22:20) ends, echoing the close of 1 Corinthians (16:22): *Maranatha* - Our Lord, come.

Questions on the Bible reading and context

1 What might the disciples have been thinking as the preparations for Jesus' entry into Jerusalem were being made?

2 In what ways does it look as though Jesus had made careful preparations? In what ways does the incident appear spontaneous?

3 Why did the crowd behave as they did (cloaks, branches, quoting Scripture) and why do they seem to have disappeared by the time Jesus and the disciples reach the Temple?

4 In what ways was Jesus being deliberately provocative?

5 How might the disciples have reacted to Jesus' action in the Temple?

6 Why were neither the Entry or the Cleansing brought up later at Jesus' trial?

Questions about ourselves

7 How comfortable are we in joining a demonstration in support of a particular cause? How comfortable are we in taking direct action against something we believe to be wrong? What light does today's Bible reading throw on how we as Christians should behave as we seek to follow Jesus?

8 What are the things we want to celebrate in our own lives? In our local community? Nationally and internationally?

9 What are the things we want to take action against in our own lives? In our local community? Nationally and internationally?

10 Jesus taught and acted authoritatively? In what ways do we resist his authority?

11 What does it mean to us that Jesus is Lord of Lords and King of Kings?

12 How do we pray *Maranatha* - Our Lord, come - with integrity?

Concluding Reflection

Make way, make way, for Christ the King
in splendour arrives;
fling wide the gates and welcome him
into your lives.

*Make way, make way,
for the King of kings;
Make way, make way,
and let his kingdom in.*

We call you now to worship him
as Lord of all;
to have no gods before him:
their thrones must fall.

Graham Kendrick

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week

LENT WELL SPENT ... in the name of Jesus: Suffering Servant

Each evening at 8pm in St James' Church:

Night prayer with a reflection on passages from Isaiah 52-53

Also the Church will be open on Monday morning from 9-10am for silent prayer - come and go as you please.

Note: no Monday afternoon Bible Study.

