



Weaving God's Promises

LESSON 25

JESUS ENTERS JERUSALEM (PALM SUNDAY)

SUMMARY OF TODAY'S STORY

Jesus and his disciples come to Jerusalem for the Passover. Jesus tells his disciples to find a donkey and bring it to him. He gets on the donkey and rides into Jerusalem.

As he enters the city, a crowd of people spread their cloaks on the road. Other people spread palm branches on the road before him, shouting, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

KEY CONCEPTS

- **Palm/Passion Sunday**
- **Holy Week**
- **Hosanna!**

WHERE YOU'LL FIND TODAY'S STORY

In the Bible

We recommend the *New Revised Standard Version* Bible.

Matthew 21:1-11

In Our Sunday Lectionary

Today's story is told in church on the following Sundays:

Year A: Palm/Passion Sunday



WEAVING OUR STORY WITH THE BIBLICAL STORY

Most of the people at the time saw Jesus as an earthly messiah or a prophet. But we know him as the Messiah, the one who comes from heaven to reconcile us with God.

This story of Palm Sunday, though it depicts Jesus' "triumphal entry into Jerusalem," contains in it the seeds of sorrow. For we know also that his journey ends not in triumph but in death. We know that later he "was crucified, died, and was buried." We know that the people later deny him, that Peter later denies him, that even we sometimes deny him. And Jesus knew that, too.

Still Jesus stayed with us to the end, to his crucifixion and death. He remained true to his mission—to be God with us. This event, which we call Palm Sunday or Passion Sunday, is the beginning of the end of his mission. But it is also the beginning of new life for us, as Jesus gives his own life to bring us new life in him.

That is why this time—the beginning of Holy Week, the most solemn time of our church year—is so important to us as Christians.

It is fitting that this Palm/Passion Sunday event begins our Holy Week, for in Jesus' life and ministry his entry into Jerusalem just before the Passover was an enacted symbol of the coming of the reign of God. Jesus knew the prophetic writing of **Zechariah 9:9**:

**Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud,
O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.**

Zechariah here proclaims the coming of the ruler of God's people, one who would restore Jerusalem to the eschatological glory promised to her as the mother of Israel. Jesus takes this symbolic story of Zechariah and enacts it in reality, to signal the reign of God coming to fulfillment in him—God with us.

Jesus' enactment of the coming of the reign of God will continue as he brings to his people a renewed covenant between God and God's people in his Last Supper. As he shares his body and blood with his disciples, it becomes clear that Jesus himself is the center of that new covenant. Jesus becomes for us the fulfillment of God's promises of union with God in a new creation.



THE EPISCOPAL THREAD

The service of The Sunday of the Passion/Palm Sunday (*BCP*, p. 270-273) is one of the most majestic services of the entire Church year, the beginning of Holy Week, the most important week of the Church year.

On this day, Episcopalians will ring out with the processional hymn for the Liturgy of the Palms, #154 from *The Hymnal 1982* (New York, NY: Church Publishing, 1985):

**All glory, laud, and honor to thee, Redeemer, King!
to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.**

When the people greet Jesus with the acclamation, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” we are reminded of the words we sing at the beginning of the Holy Communion (the Sanctus): “Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest” (*BCP*, p. 362). So at every Eucharist, we sing the song that the people cried as they waved their palms to Jesus, acclaiming him as the Blessed One of God.



Weaving God's Beloved Community

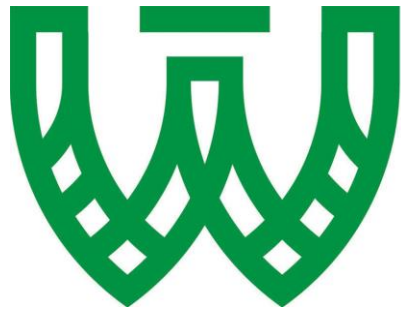
Jesus enters Jerusalem as a king in a universe that reflects God's reality, the reality that we see in front of us. This king is humble, not arrogant; generous, not greedy; compassionate, not spiteful.

If we follow this king into God's Beloved Community, we must leave our own personal arrogance, greed, hypocrisy, indifference, and prejudices behind. We must celebrate the leaders who would forgo the stallion and ride the donkey, and who put aside their own personal benefit and work to benefit the less fortunate. The Beloved Community is built upon the foundation of God's law, imprinted on our hearts.

Topics that can be discussed with children:

Jesus rode into town on a donkey, even though important people always want to ride on a horse, like a prince. He did this on purpose because he wanted to show that he was not going to be the kind of king that shoves people around. Think of a time when you gave up something, like the biggest piece of cake or being the first in line, so that you could make somebody else happy.

In the United States, we don't have a king. But we have other leaders that make laws and set up programs to help people to live better. If you were a leader, what ideas might you have that would help people?



Weaving God's Promises

MATTHEW 21:1-11

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem with his disciples. He knows that when he gets there, the leaders will try to arrest him. He wants to make too many changes, and changes are dangerous.

Jerusalem closes on them as they walk from Jericho. Its hills and small mounts stand tall, with the temple shining bright in the sunlight on the temple mount.

Jesus has a plan for entering the city. He remembers what one of the old prophets said to the Israelites a long time ago: "Tell the daughter of Zion: Look, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

Jesus is the King now. He is not just any king. He is the Son of David, the holy One of Israel, whom God has sent to save Israel and her people. He is the Son of God, sent from God. Later, we will also call Jesus the King of all creation.

So Jesus will now show himself as king, the humble king coming to Israel. He calls two of his disciples and says, "Go to the village just up ahead. When you get there, you will find a donkey tied up to a fence, with her colt with her. Untie the donkey and her colt and bring them to me."

The disciples say, "But what if somebody says something to us? They are not our animals."

Jesus says, "If anyone says anything to you, just say this. 'The Lord needs them.' The owner of the animals will give them to you right

away.” The two disciples go to the village up ahead. There, just as Jesus told them, they find a donkey and her colt tied to a fence. They take the ropes off and walk the two animals back to Jesus.

Jesus goes up to the donkey. One of the disciples puts his cloak on the donkey. Another puts his cloak on it also. Then Jesus gets up upon the animal and the donkey starts to walk straight toward the gates of Jerusalem.

A crowd sees Jesus on the donkey. Maybe they too remember Zechariah’s words, “Your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey.” Maybe they just recognize Jesus and know what he has done for them. Maybe they know that Jesus has been sent from God.

As the donkey with the colt ambles along toward Jerusalem with Jesus on it, people take off their cloaks and spread them on the road – a greeting for a king. Other people cut some big branches from the palm trees that line the road. They take these branches and spread them on the road also. Cloaks and branches fill the road to greet Jesus and welcome him to Jerusalem.

Other people in the crowd go ahead of Jesus. They are announcing his arrival. They shout, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

Jesus rides into Jerusalem, the crowd in front and behind him shouting and waving and cheering. The whole city is excited. Some people ask, “Who is this person?”

The crowds shout excitedly, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth! Jesus is here!” Yes, Jesus is now in Jerusalem. Soon the welcome will be gone. But now, he enters in triumph, to the cheers of the people of Jerusalem