



## Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2021, Palm Sunday, Stanground Baptist Zoom Mark 11: 1 - 11

**SING:** Be Still For the Presence of the Lord

**Prayer of confession and receive the forgiveness of God**

**Palm branches** If we were dressing the cross this morning we would use the palm branches. For now, we'll pray....

**SING:** Make Way, make way for Christ the King

**Birthdays/notices/etc** Keith

**READING:** Mark 11: 1 - 11

**Talk/Reflection** Mark 11: 1 – 7, As Jesus and the disciples approached Jerusalem, Jesus sent two of the disciples into a village to go and get a donkey. This had clearly been pre-arranged, tell the owner that the Lord has need of them and it'll be fine!! It wasn't like sending a Scouser to rob a donkey!!

The thing about the donkey wasn't some minor issue about transport, there were Biblical and theological issues that made a donkey very significant at that moment:-

- 1) It had to be a donkey to fulfil the ancient prophecy, the promise of God in Zechariah 9:9 *"Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion, shout daughter of Jerusalem, see your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, humble and riding on a donkey, the foal of a donkey.* The events that would follow in the week ahead would shake people's faith. They needed to be able to look back and say "This is just as God had said from ancient times, this is the Christ, the Son of God". This is what God told us about.
- 2) It had to be a donkey because Jesus was being welcomed INTO Jerusalem as King. When King David had left Jerusalem, David had left by the same route, over the Mount of Olives. Jesus, a King in the line of David, was using the same route to return to Jerusalem. King David had left in a hurry, in mourning, in danger. His son had betrayed him and his life was in danger and so he had escaped. There had been other kings but none anointed by God as King David was. As one king had ridden out of Jerusalem on a donkey, another was about to ride into Jerusalem on a donkey. These people knew their history, the symbolism would not have been wasted on them
- 3) It had to be a donkey because a donkey symbolised peace and said something important about the mission and message of Jesus. There were people who were waiting for a Saviour who would come and rescue them from Roman occupation. They didn't have it too bad under the Romans, they had to pay taxes (death and taxes eh!) but nobody stopped them from going to work, or stole their land, or built a big wall around them. They still wanted an end to the indignity of being an occupied nation though so they were looking for a king who would come as a soldier and chuck out the Romans and set them free. But Jesus didn't come on a warhorse. He came on a donkey. The Prince of Peace came in peace.



The disciples had thrown their cloaks over the donkey so Jesus had a soft saddle to sit on. As Jesus rode into Jerusalem his disciples and the crowd that gathered covered the dusty road with their cloaks and with palm branches. This was a sign of honour, it was like getting out the red carpet when royalty comes – to stop the dust stirring up and getting this honoured person grubby! If we read 1 Kings 9 we'll find that when Elisha anointed Jehu as King, the people covered the dusty ground with their cloaks as they welcomed their newly anointed King. Jesus had been anointed in Bethany and here the crowd spread their cloaks and cut palm branches to give Jesus, their King, the "red carpet treatment".

In John's Gospel it says that a lot of the crowd had been there when Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead and they were all speaking openly about Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth. People cried out "Hosanna to the Son of David, Hosanna in the highest". Jesus was being welcomed as king, as Messiah.

Arriving in Jerusalem Jesus went first to the Temple where, because it was late, he just had a look around and then went to Bethany where his best friends lived, Bethany, his place of refuge. And he spent the night.

We're not reading on to the next, rather violent episode where Jesus grabbed the tables of the money changers and tables of the people who sold the temple sacrifices and he threw them about, overturning the tables. The Jewish ritual Law said that people had to be pure and holy in order to make a sacrifice to God. The sacrifice had to be perfect and without blemish or else it was not good enough for God. Gradually, over time, the Temple officials had to say whether or not a sacrifice was considered pure enough and so you ended up only being able to buy your sacrifice in the Temple, where no doubt the Temple officials got a cut of the profits. Once in the Temple, regular money was considered sinful and so they developed Temple currency and you had to change your own money for Temple currency (with the Temple officials taking a cut off the profits made from exchange rates) and then you had to buy your certified sacrifice with the Temple money (with the Temple officials taking a cut of the profits) THIS is what Jesus was driving out, the exploitation of those who wanted draw near to God in repentance and faith.

Theologically Jesus was doing something really significant. He wasn't just standing up for justice for the poor, even though this is really important. Jesus had come to Jerusalem to go the Cross to die so that we could be reconciled with God. As Jesus was driving the traders out of the Temple He knew that within a week the whole system of Temple sacrifice itself would be overturned because HE, the spotless Lamb of God, would be taking away the sin of the world. This violent protest against the exploitation of worshippers was a call for justice, it was also an announcement that His once and for all sacrifice on the Cross was about to overturn the whole, old way of approaching God. How will we reflect on Holy Week I wonder? How will we marvel at the gracious gift and mercy of God between now and his death and resurrection?

### **Prayers for others (intercession) and say the Lord's Prayer**

**SING:** Ride On, Ride on in Majesty  
**Pray the Grace**