

Palm Sunday 2023

Matt 21:1-11; Isaiah 50: 4-7; Ps 21; Phil 2:6-11; Matt 26:14 – 27:66

Loud acclamations of joy as Jesus enters Jerusalem ring in our ears! Shoulders jostle together, necks strain, children squeeze between the clumsier legs of parents and passers-by to catch sight of this spectacle. One voice sings out '*Hosanna to the Son of David*' and then others pick up the chorus and the warm still air of Jerusalem is disturbed by the throng's voice which sing out '*Hosanna to the Son of David*.' And the city of Jerusalem is in expectant turmoil.¹ Is this the Messiah? Is this the return of the King? Roman ears pick up on the energy of the crowd's eagerness. Roman eyes scan the exuberant gathering for signs of danger. The noise reaches to the Temple itself and disturbs the tranquillity.

Jesus enters to the acclamation of the people. Then he drives out the money changers from the temple: 'It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer': but you make it a den of robbers'.² He tells the people the parable of the marriage feast where those who have been invited fail to accept the invitation: they have other, more important things to do. He silences the Sadducees when he proclaims the resurrection of the dead. He calls the Pharisees and scribes hypocrites because they praise God without helping God's people. He foretells the destruction of the Temple and of future persecutions. He tells his listeners to watch and pray, and to be prepared for judgement.

¹ Matthew 21

² Matt 21:13

And then betrayal. God made Flesh is seen as a threat to those in authority. Those who days before had done him great reverence and worship now allow him to be despoiled. Worse still, they do not stand by powerless, instead they pick up the blood-curdling call: '*crucify him, crucify him*.' They would rather set Barabbas, a robber, free than be confronted by holiness. The mob has spoken. Pontius Pilot cowers. The leopards are let free to despoil the living temple of the Holy Spirit. The good mock him: "*Wait, let us see whether Eli'jah will come to save him*."³

This is the one who loves us. Love does not seize, it sacrifices. '*Take this and eat of it, this is my body which is given up for you*.' Now is the time to re-consecrate ourselves to Christ; that our country may resound once again with pealing bells of liberty and not groaning slavery to sin; that we may hail our Lord and not reject him. May we accept salvation and live in the Resurrection.

³ Matt 45:49