We are continuing to look at the last week of Jesus’ earthly ministry and today’s passage.

There is so much written in the Gospels about that week, that we cannot cover it all here. Read, compare the accounts for yourself, to get the bigger picture.

Jesus describes in one of His prayers that His hour has come - nothing that is about to happen will be a surprise to Him.

He is prepared to go through it all – for you, to enable the gulf that was opened between you and God to be closed.

**PRAY**

**SLIDE** **John 12:12-16**

**The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: “Hosanna! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ The King of Israel!” Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: “Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, Sitting on a donkey’s colt.” His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him.**

This passage is the following day after Mary anointed Jesus, so we are reading about the events that were five days before the Passover.

It is known as the triumphal entry, as Jesus entered Jerusalem in a way that He had never done before, observed by what John describes as a great multitude.

The crowd was not in Jerusalem primarily to see Jesus, they were there to celebrate the Passover. They would be from all over the country – some would have been familiar with Jesus if they came from Galilee, but to many others Jesus would have been just a name.

But whoever they were, John says they **took branches of palm trees**. To us that may seem a strange thing to do, waving a tree branch as this man rode by on a donkey.

We may look at this triumphal entry purely from a spiritual angle, but many who were present on that day would have viewed it as a patriotic parade.

Palm branches had been adopted as a symbol of Jewish nationalism since the time of the Maccabees around 200 years previously – so by taking palm branches, the crowd looked to Jesus as a political and national saviour – hoping that this man’s movement would overthrow the occupying Roman power and restore independence to the country.

Some may have also seen the spiritual side, as they also shouted, **Hosanna! “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”** These words come from **Psalm 118:25-26**.

**Hosanna** means ‘save us’ and with that cry, Jesus passed made His way through the crowds.

Yet, Jesus was in control of the events, rather than being controlled by them. He had no intention of allowing Himself to be the political leader that the people wanted.

If that had been His objective, He could have called on the Heavenly angels to impose His kingdom on earth – but that was never God’s way.

Jesus’ purpose in riding into Jerusalem was to make public His claim to be their Messiah and King of Israel in fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy.

Matthew’s gospel says that the King coming on the donkey was an exact fulfilment of **Zechariah 9:9** **Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey**.

Jesus rides into His capital city as a conquering King - He receives the worship and praise of the people that only He is worthy of – and only He remains worthy of it now.

Matthew’s gospel records that on this occasion, Jesus does not tell His disciples and followers to keep quiet about Him (**Matthew 12:16, 16:20**), rather He allows them to continue their praise.

Matthew’s account adds that the people spread their cloaks in front of Jesus, an act of homage for royalty **2 Kings 9:13**.

Zechariah’s prophecy saw Messiah as the Prince of peace.

The route that Jesus took from Bethphage towards Jerusalem, was apparently the most natural route for Galileans to take, if they were travelling to the city.

These people walking – maybe unintentionally having coordinated their arrival with Jesus approach – they knew that Jesus had done many mighty works.

They would have heard and seen His work and were possibly waiting for Jesus to proclaim Himself as the Messiah of their hopes.

In what they saw, they thought He was doing exactly that.

He was riding into the capital in a way that fulfilled the prophecy. He was showing himself to be the Messiah.

They did not stop to reflect that he was also proclaiming himself a man of peace and giving no countenance to their nationalistic fervour.

They wanted a Messiah. And now they saw one.

**There is a warning for us in this passage – we should base our expectations of God and Jesus on Scripture, not what we believe they should be doing.**

**We need to base those expectations on actual Scripture – if you think you know what the Word says, check it… Check it to see whether you are mistaken and need to adjust, or a re right and need to remain faithful.**

So, whilst they welcomed Jesus now, because they really only wanted a messiah to deliver the country from Roman occupation, for most people, their feelings and outlook on Jesus would change.

Those few days would change their Hosannas, to cries of “Crucify Him!” **Luke 23:20-21**. Those who hailed Him as a hero would soon reject and abandon Him.

That is another warning for us – don’t base your faith in God on feelings. They are not a constant and have no foundations. Base your fait on the truth that the Holy Spirit wants to put in your heart.

It is interesting that the Romans took little notice of this parade and certainly no overt action. The people shouted that Jesus was **The King of Israel** and whilst that was a capital crime to subvert Caesar, the Romans probably felt they had little to fear from a someone who had no army, or accepted symbols of power.

With all of the people who gathered at Jerusalem for the Passover, would have been literally thousands of lambs – brought to sacrifice in five days’ time, as a remembrance and celebration of the events of the first Passover in Egypt over 2,600 years previously.

Some of those people would have recognised Jesus for who He was – their Saviour, even though they didn’t yet understand that his blood would be physically spilt for them in the next few days.

**SLIDE John 12:17-19**

**Therefore the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness. For this reason the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, “You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!”**

If you compare Matthew and John’s account of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, it is possible that those who were travelling with Jesus met with another group who came out of Jerusalem.

There was a great number of people giving praise, as they believed that the raising of Lazarus from the dead proved that Jesus could be the conquering Messiah they longed for.

There reasoning as one commentator put it, was that, ‘someone who could summon a dead man back to life would certainly be able to deliver the holy city from the grip of Caesar.’ (Bruce)

But it was that very trust in Jesus and His popularity that drove the Pharisees to hate Him. They said, **Look, the world has gone after Him.**

The popularity of Jesus was and still is, offensive to His enemies. It made them feel frustrated that they were **accomplishing nothing**.

People over the centuries have realised that following Jesus brings a genuine depth and purpose to their lives. It has meant they no longer serve the accepted worldly ways and that creates both jealousy and frustration.

Giving your life to God and Jesus, will make you different in the eyes of the world – and often, being different scares people. **They don't like you, they don't dislike you. They're afraid of you. You're different. Sooner or later, being different scares people.**

The Pharisees said the whole world had gone after Jesus – that was an exaggeration, but as Jerusalem may have been filled with up to 3m people for the Passover, this procession of praise may have given the Pharisees that impression.

In reality, only a handful of people were being influenced. But their words express John’s conviction that He was conquering the world.

John’s words are of course prophetic. The whole world now knows of Jesus and one day He will return as a conquering King.

At that time, the whole world will acknowledge Jesus as King, albeit some will do it grudgingly, but there will come a time when the Pharisees will be right - the whole world will go after Him, knowing Him to be their God and Saviour.

**CONCLUSION**

The triumphal entry is one of contrasts, which have relevance for us as believers today.

These events are of a King who came:

* as a lowly servant on a donkey, not a war horse.
* not in royal robes, but in the clothes of the poor and humble.
* not to conquer by force as earthly kings – rather by love, grace, mercy and His own sacrifice for His people.
* without an army, but He has power to capture hearts and minds.
* to deliver peace with God, not earthly peace.

If Jesus has made a triumphal entry into our hearts, He reigns there in peace and love.

As His followers, we should exhibit those same qualities and the world sees the true King living and reigning in triumph in us.

**OFFER / PRAY**

**READINGS**

**John 12:1-2, 9-11, 12-19**

**Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany… 2Here a dinner was given in Jesus’ honour.**

**9 …a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. 10So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, 11for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him.**

**12The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. 13They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting,**

**‘Hosanna!’ ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’**

**‘Blessed is the king of Israel!’**

**14Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written:**

**15‘Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.’**

**16At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realise that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.**

**17Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. 18Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. 19So the Pharisees said to one another, ‘See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!’**

### **Psalm 118**

**1Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures for ever. 2Let Israel say: ‘His love endures for ever.’ 3Let the house of Aaron say: ‘His love endures for ever.’ 4Let those who fear the Lord say: ‘His love endures for ever.’ 5When hard pressed, I cried to the Lord; he brought me into a spacious place.**

 **6The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me? 7The Lord is with me; he is my helper. I look in triumph on my enemies. 8It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in humans. 9It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes.**

**10All the nations surrounded me, but in the name of the Lord I cut them down. 11They surrounded me on every side, but in the name of the Lord I cut them down.**

 **12They swarmed around me like bees, but they were consumed as quickly as burning thorns; in the name of the Lord I cut them down.
13I was pushed back and about to fall, but the Lord helped me.**

 **14The Lord is my strength and my defence; he has become my salvation. 15Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: ‘The Lord’s right hand has done mighty things!**

 **16    The Lord’s right hand is lifted high; the Lord’s right hand has done mighty things!’ 17I will not die but live and will proclaim what the Lord has done.**

 **18The Lord has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death. 19Open for me the gates of the righteous; I will enter and give thanks to the Lord. 20This is the gate of the Lord through which the righteous may enter. 21I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.**

**22The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; 23the Lord has done this and it is marvellous in our eyes. 24The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad. 25Lord, save us! Lord, grant us success!**

**26Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord we bless you. 27The Lord is God he has made his light shine on us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.**

**28You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, and I will exalt you. 29Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures for ever.**