

Matthew 21:1-11 Palm Sunday 29th March 2026

Prayer:

Who is this? ask the people of Jerusalem as Jesus rides in on a colt of a donkey to much fanfare and adulation. The people of the city were stirred...something special was going on here.

Those who had been praising Jesus with Hosanna's and lining the road with cloaks and palm branches respond to the question with his correct name...*this is Jesus* they say. They know his name but even though they had been shouting out the words from psalm 118 – Hosanna to the Son of David, indicating that they thought he might be the Messiah, it seems they didn't really know him, and after saying his name is Jesus, they describe him merely as a prophet from Nazareth. Others we've been reflecting on recently like the Samaritan woman and the man born blind, moved from referring to Jesus as a Prophet to acknowledging him as the Messiah, the Son of God. The crowds in Jerusalem, however, did not seem to come the same realization.

If we were asked who is this man who rode into Jerusalem and a few days later was crucified, and then rose from the dead; would we be able to describe who he is by more than just knowing his name? Many people know of Jesus' name, but so many do not know who he really is. To some he is a person of fiction, to some he was a historical figure who lived a good life, was a good teacher and example. For some the name Jesus is just a swear word. Some, like the people of that day, say he was a prophet.

Who do you say Jesus is?

Jesus was so much more than a prophet; he came to *fulfil* prophecies. This was not the first time he had been to Jerusalem. His first trip to Jerusalem was as a baby to be presented in the temple. Luke's gospel tells us that there were two people who greeted Jesus that day who knew who he was.

Do you remember Simeon and Anna? Simeon had been waiting to see the Lord's Messiah, we read in Luke chapter 2. He takes Jesus in his arms and praising God says,

*"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss^{at} your servant in peace.*

³⁰For my eyes have seen your salvation,
³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.”

³³The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him.³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, ³⁵so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

How prophetic were Simeon’s words? He knew that Jesus was the promised Messiah, bringing salvation and he knew that Mary’s soul would be pierced...indicating even then of Jesus’ suffering and early death. Now that Simeon had seen Jesus, the promised Messiah, he was at peace and ready to die. Then the prophetess Anna comes up and declares to all around that this child was related to the redemption of Jerusalem.

And now some 30 years on Jesus arrives in Jerusalem again, this time there are no prophets declaring who he is, however Jesus himself is acting out a scene from the prophet Zechariah that we heard read from chapter 9. Jesus was declaring himself to be the Messiah. The righteous gentle King, riding on a colt of a donkey.

The people in the procession were rejoicing, calling out ‘hosanna’ – meaning ‘save us’ ...but they didn’t quite get who Jesus was. He might have fulfilled the prophecy, but he didn’t fulfil the people’s desires. They wanted a victorious King, a saviour to overthrow the Romans. But this was not Jesus’ mission. They should have realized that when they saw him on the colt of a donkey and not on a white stallion! They were disappointed.

Others perhaps wanted Jesus to continue to be a miracle worker, they had perhaps seen him heal people, drive out demons and feed thousands, some had perhaps heard of his raising of Lazarus from the dead. But while those things pointed to his Messiahship...in that he could save people from all sorts of things...that was not why he had come either. Those people were disappointed too.

Then we come to the people from the city – who were stirred when Jesus arrived. This Jesus came and disturbed the peace. He challenged the Pharisees and teachers of the law...if we read on in Mathew the next thing Jesus does is go into the temple and turn over the tables of the money changers. This Jesus threatened the status quo. He upset their systems. He disturbed their conscience.

This Jesus was not going to be the kind of King and Messiah the people wanted and so not long after hailing him as the Son of David, they were shouting *crucify him!*

This Jesus was the suffering servant, a servant King... he was the one to fulfill the words from the prophet Isaiah, words from chapter 53 we will read on Good Friday.

Jesus came to earth from heaven to suffer, to be pierced for our transgressions, to take on our punishment that we might have peace with God.

He was Messiah King, but he was not fully recognized as such by the people that day, and sadly he is not recognized by many today either.

The Jews didn't recognize their need for a messiah who could save and heal them from their sin and reconcile them to God. But that is precisely what this Jesus came to do and the only way to do that was to die in their place. To die in our place. He came to be the one and only perfect sacrifice, doing away with the complex sacrificial system. He was the spotless lamb.

So, who is this Jesus? The Son of God, sent to die for us, willingly and humbly, so that those who believe in him will not perish, but have everlasting life.

His procession into Jerusalem, while seemingly celebratory, is tinged with sadness, for it is where he is going to suffer and die, but it is also triumphal because in his death he defeats death and sin once and for all and then God raises him triumphantly as we celebrate on Easter morning.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem the people did appear to acknowledge him as Lord, bowing before him, spreading their cloaks and palms on the road. And

yet they hadn't fully recognized him, they didn't follow him as their Lord. Even Jesus' disciples were to abandon him in the coming days.

So many today have abandoned the faith or have never acknowledged Jesus as Lord. Many would mock those of us who do follow him, for they fail to see their need for a saviour, or maybe they haven't even heard of this Jesus. So, we have a massive task ahead of us, for one day every knee will bow before him and we don't want it to be too late for them to call out *Hosanna* -Lord save us.

If you know Jesus and follow him as your King, if you have experienced his amazing grace, will you share with others the meaning of Easter?

Do you think you could invite a neighbour, a friend or family member to come and celebrate Easter with you at a Church service? (Service time flyers)

Let's be praying for opportunities and boldness to introduce others to Jesus in our community, and invite them to come and worship him, and make him their Lord and Saviour.

Let's pray: We honour and praise you Jesus, Messiah and King. We pray that you will stir hearts in our community, our family members, neighbours and friends that they will come to seek you this Easter. We pray for revival in this place Lord. Fill us with your spirit and use us to spread the good news of your love and saving grace for all. In Jesus name, the name that is above every name, we pray. Amen