

[Available as an audio download](#)

*Let us pray,  
May the words of my mouth, the meditations of our hearts,  
be acceptable in your sight, O Lord our rock and our redeemer. Amen.*

**Holy Week**

We are going to experience a very quiet Holy Week and Easter because of the COVID-19 situation. We do not get to run our celebrations, our grand processions, dramatic readings and all the other special touches that go with this time that is usually the highlight of the Christian year.

Instead, we sit quietly, and look at these readings,  
having time to bring our questions and our wonderings.  
Let me take you through some:

First, did this event 'have' to happen?  
Was Jesus' triumphal entry key to the events that follow?  
Is this event noteworthy because it *did* happen?  
And was it the catalyst for what followed?  
Were these events scripted by God,  
or did the events simply happen but were inhabited by God?

The whole Palm Sunday procession has the sense of being staged  
with Jesus as the stage director as well as the starring role.  
(That is pretty usual these days as movie stars, without giving up their acting job,  
move also into directing).

It is noted that this action of Jesus fulfilled what had been spoken,  
well a few words anyway, by the prophet Zechariah:  
*Tell the daughter of Zion, look, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey ...*

Maybe Jesus knew the text, and it meant something to him and so he decided to dramatise it;  
or perhaps his followers later found this Scripture and applied it to the event,  
but either way, we get the message.  
Or do we?

**'Hosanna' = save us!**  
Jesus rides in as a humble king.  
The crowds cry *hosanna!*  
What does hosanna mean? (*praise the Lord? Hip hip hooray?*)  
It means: *save us!*

Hosanna is the English pronunciation of a Greek word,  
which in turn is a Greek pronunciation of a Hebrew word!

It is found in Psalm 118:25 *Save us, we beseech you, O LORD!*  
*O LORD, we beseech you, give us success!*

The people were calling on Jesus to enact the salvation of Israel, and to do so now.  
*Blessed be the one who comes in the name of the Lord* is like saying,  
*thank goodness, our deliverer has come!*

They called him the Son of David, a messianic title.  
There was undoubtedly excitement, perhaps a fever of anticipation.  
As Jesus was known for showing signs that he was filled with the spirit of God,  
expectations were high.  
Others in the city who were disturbed by the commotion, asked who this incomer was  
and were told that he was the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.

### ***Zechariah 9***

If you go and read chapter 9 of Zechariah,  
you find there is a jumble of images within the one chapter,  
let alone the whole book.

What Matthew quotes is a single verse, emphasising the humility of the king.  
Yes, the Lord is coming to you, but in a humble guise.

But as the chapter in Zechariah continues,  
this humble king will cut off the chariot from Ephraim  
and the warhorse from Jerusalem ... he shall command peace to the nations...  
This king is not inciting revolution at all,  
but rather a disarmament of both his own nation and all others.

But then, or is it in the meantime of this wonderful vision,  
there is war as Judah is bent as the Lord's bow  
and Ephraim (the northern kingdom) as its arrow, is aimed at Greece.  
Slaughter follows, and on that day, the Lord saves them,  
*for they are the flock of his people; for like the jewels of a crown they shall shine on his land.*

We might wonder how well people then knew the Scriptures.  
Did that one verse quoted, allude to the whole chapter?  
Is Matthew trying to say that Jesus selected only the first part about humility,  
and possibly disarmament?

### ***Jesus' temple tantrum***

Well, it is interesting to see what Jesus does next in this gospel.  
He goes into the Temple and overturns it, disrupting the sacrificial system.  
And then he allows the blind and lame entry into the Temple where he cures them.

This little detail is easily unnoticed, and it is only found in Matthew's gospel.  
It relates to a story told in 2 Samuel 5,  
of King David's invasion and capture of Jerusalem:

*The king and his men marched to Jerusalem against the Jebusites,  
the inhabitants of the land, who said to David,  
'You will not come in here, even the blind and the lame will turn you back'—thinking, 'David cannot  
come in here.'*  
*Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion,  
which is now the city of David.  
David had said on that day,  
'Whoever wishes to strike down the Jebusites,  
let him get up the water shaft to attack the lame and the blind,  
those whom David hates.'*  
*Therefore it is said, 'The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.'*

Not a nice story.  
It does not reflect on King David very well.

Now, the one called the Son of David,  
like he has done on the road and wherever he went,  
so too in the Temple he welcomes in people who were scorned and shunned.  
This is what the Temple was for,  
a place for people to draw near to God and for healing.  
King Solomon spoke about this at the original Temple's inauguration.  
It is a house of prayer, Jesus says as he quotes from Isaiah 56:7.

This, and the children continuing to call out Hosanna (save us!) to the Son of David  
raised the ire of the chief priests and scribes.  
As did Jesus' direct words of indictment.  
The phrase *den of robbers*, against the Temple is taken from Jeremiah 7.  
There in Jeremiah the meaning refers to the rulers of Jerusalem,  
the monarchy and those of the Temple, who practiced injustice,  
who oppressed the vulnerable, who shed innocent blood,  
and yet hold their privileged and secure place within the Temple.

All in all, Jesus ended up drawing a lot of attention to himself.  
Over the next number of days, he kept returning to the Temple,  
openly teaching there.  
It is as if he set up camp there.  
In a sense, he threw down the challenge, the gauntlet, to the religious leaders.  
I start to understand how it came about that he was crucified.

### *A city in turmoil*

There seems to be a conflict of interests and of emotions in this passage.  
As Matthew says, the whole city was in turmoil.

Historical scholarship tells us that Jesus' procession was not the only happening  
at that time.  
On the other side of the city Pilate and the Roman troops were also marching in  
to 'keep the peace' for this major Jewish festival.

The cries of hosanna to the ears of the Romans would have been just Jewish jabbering,  
but to the chief priests and scribes it was a dangerous call, a call for revolution.  
To hear this call not only at the gates of Jerusalem, but also within the Temple,  
meant that they could no longer ignore the potential threat  
the followers of Jesus were becoming.

Although the events of this whole Holy Week are thought of as a divine plan,  
I'm not sure it all did go to plan.  
I think there were variables.  
The disciples got the wrong idea and later flee as their dreams turn to dust.  
The crowd who call out to Jesus to save them,  
is replaced by a mob who demands his execution.  
In a sense, it all sounds terribly human: the confusion, the chaos, the politics,  
high emotions of despair, anger and fear.

And Jesus?  
From the humble ride through the gates to the angry protest in the Temple,

do we really know this man?

And the chief priests and scribes?  
Were they just not wanting to keep the peace?  
Their peace?

Whose peace do we long for?  
The Roman peace, or the peace of Christ?

The events of Holy Week come again before us.  
May we recognise the turmoil of these events as we journey with Jesus.  
Will we make it to the cross?

*Let us pray,*

*Jesus, when you rode into Jerusalem  
the people waved palms  
with shouts of acclamation.  
Grant that when the shouting dies  
we may still walk beside you even to a cross;  
for the glory of your holy name.  
Amen.*