

SEEING JESUS IN JOHN

WEEK TWENTY-FOUR: JESUS ARRIVES IN JERUSALEM

READING

12 The next day, the news that Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem swept through the city. A large crowd of Passover visitors 13 took palm branches and went down the road to meet him. They shouted, “Praise God! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hail to the King of Israel!” 14 Jesus found a young donkey and rode on it, fulfilling the prophecy that said: 15 “Don’t be afraid, people of Jerusalem. Look, your King is coming, riding on a donkey’s colt.” 16 His disciples didn’t understand at the time that this was a fulfillment of prophecy. But after Jesus entered into his glory, they remembered what had happened and realized that these things had been written about him. 17 Many in the crowd had seen Jesus call Lazarus from the tomb, raising him from the dead, and they were telling others about it. 18 That was the reason so many went out to meet him—because they had heard about this miraculous sign. 19 Then the Pharisees said to each other, “There’s nothing we can do. Look, everyone has gone after him!” John 12 (NLT)

TEACHING

In this story, we read about Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Many churches remember and celebrate this day on Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter. The waving of the palm branches was symbolic of victory over one’s enemies; this crowd saw Jesus as the promised Messiah and hoped he would be the King of Israel. They thought Jesus had come to lead them to victory—they were right and they were wrong. Jesus was going to bring deliverance to his people, but he wasn’t the military or political leader they hoped he would be. And their first clue should have been the animal that he rode on into Jerusalem.

A powerful king trying to rise to national power would have entered on a horse, a powerful stallion. Jesus entered on the back of the humble donkey – and not even a full-grown adult donkey! The donkey speaks of humility and servanthood. Jesus’ way to gain power for his people was to lose his. Jesus’ way to bring deliverance to the world, was to give his life as a ransom for many. Jesus didn’t come to be served, but to serve.

The crowd was excited because they had heard about the story of Lazarus and they were sure Jesus was the one to bring true life to all. If he could raise someone from the dead, what else could he do?? But before this week would end, they would see Jesus lose his life. It wasn’t until later that even Jesus’ closest followers realized that Jesus brought us life by laying his down. He is the humble king.

SEEING JESUS IN JOHN

RESPONSE

OPENING QUESTION(S):

- Have you ever been near a famous person? Who was it? What were they like?

TODDLERS/PRE-K:

- In this story, who rode on a donkey into Jerusalem?
- What did the people wave in the air? What did it mean?

CHILDREN:

- How did the people respond to Jesus entering Jerusalem?
- What did the palm branches symbolize?
- How does this story show that Jesus is a humble king?

TEENAGERS:

- What did the palm branches symbolize?
- How was Jesus different than what the crowd was expecting?
- What does it mean to be a humble servant? Who in your life can you serve?

ADULTS:

- How is Jesus different than the world thinks he is?
- How can your life communicate the same type of humility and servant heart?

PRAYER

God, thank you that you entered into this world and into my life. Thank you that you came to set me free and to rule over my life, but you did it by coming to serve and to love me. Help me to have your heart. Protect me from a desire to be seen and give me a desire to serve others. Jesus, thank you for laying your life down so that I could have full life both now and forever. Thank you for being a humble king. Give me the grace to be humble in all areas of my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

NEXT LEVEL (ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL TEACHING)

You can sense the desperation of the Pharisees at the end of this text. They see Jesus as a real threat both to their status and influence as well as to the safety of the Jewish people. This escalation of attention around Jesus as the Jewish people are gathering in Jerusalem to celebrate one of their most sacred holidays must have felt like the perfect storm. I imagine them thinking and acting like a wounded animal, backed into a corner. Even their claim is one of great exaggeration, but it reveals anxiety and paranoia. It's this mindset that drives their activities during the passion week, but also remember that ultimately God is in control of all things and he is using even their hatred and fear to accomplish his purpose of rescuing you and me.