

Dear Friends,

This Sunday is Palm Sunday when we remember the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. One thing that is interesting is that Jesus planned the event quite carefully. Jesus knew what he was doing and he got it well organised beforehand. Jesus entered Jerusalem that day with his eyes open, he knew just what he was doing, he was prepared for what would happen. Jesus showed tremendous courage because he knew what lay ahead of him. Jesus knew that his enemies were waiting for him in Jerusalem, but even so he didn't turn back. There were plenty of other options available to him, he could have disappeared back up to the wilds of Galilee, he could have laid low and waited for everything to blow over. Instead he carried on, he entered Jerusalem, the stronghold of his enemies, the power base of those who wanted to see him dead.

Jesus showed great courage when he entered Jerusalem. It is often said that it is just as well we don't know what lies ahead of us, but Jesus did. He knew that the crowd couldn't be relied on, he knew that his enemies were out to get him. Jesus knew what God was calling him to do, and he was obedient to that calling, even though he knew what it would mean in the end.

Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey, not a horse, and that was significant. It meant that he came in peace, not in war, and it meant he was fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah. That prophecy is one of several that we find in the Old Testament looking forward to the coming Messiah. The Jewish nation looked forward to the arrival of this Messiah who would save them, he would intervene decisively in history on God's behalf.

Many people looked forward with longing to the day when the Messiah would appear, but there were all sorts of ideas of what he would be like. Some people thought he would be a powerful military leader, a general who would lead the people in an uprising against the Roman army of occupation. Some people thought he would be a new king, they hadn't had a king for many years. Some people thought he would be a priestly figure, a sort of superpriest. There were all sorts of ideas and theories. Different people wanted Jesus to be different things. They all had their preconceived ideas about the Messiah and they wanted Jesus to fit their particular theory.

Jesus wasn't the sort of Messiah most people hoped for, he didn't fit into their ideas or theories. Most of the hopes that were invested in Jesus were dashed, and that produced great anger and bitterness. Many people felt that Jesus had led them up the garden path, they felt that he had raised all their hopes and then he'd let them all down very badly. They felt that Jesus had let them down and we can understand why the crowd then turned on Jesus. They shouted for him to be put to death just a few days later. They couldn't cope with the idea of a suffering Messiah but by their rejection of Jesus they ensured that was what he became.

Best wishes,

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