

## Living the Way of Jesus Week 15

### 'Jesus in Jerusalem'

#### Bible Passage: Mark 11

The first part of this chapter, often referred to as 'the triumphal entry', or 'Jesus comes to Jerusalem as King', is traditionally the gateway into Holy Week. Chapter 11 then goes on to unfold what happens in the next couple of days.

Since January, we have been discovering more of who Jesus is, and what he has come to do, and now we find the story reaching its climax in the events of Holy Week and Easter.

For a reminder of the overall structure of Mark, and the significance of chapter 11 onwards, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGHqu9-DtXk>

The triumphal entry takes place at the end of the pilgrim road that runs from Jericho to the Mount of Olives. In 164 BC Judas Maccabeus freed the Jews from their Syrian oppressors, and claimed back the Temple, coming into Jerusalem in great triumph. Historical documents record that 'The people, carrying green palm branches and sticks, decorated with ivy, paraded around, singing grateful praises to him.' Against this background, the Jewish people in Jerusalem saw Jesus as a conquering hero who could save them from Roman oppression. (See Zechariah 9:9-10) This is the background to 'Palm Sunday'.

#### Read Mark 11:1-11

'Hosanna!' is a Hebrew word that means 'praise' and 'save us'. (See Psalm 118:20-29 which is one of the pilgrim psalms.)

- Given that, within the week, the crowd are shouting out for Jesus to be crucified, (Mark 15:12-14), what can we learn about human nature from these events?
- Why does Jesus choose to enter the city on a 'colt'? What does that imply for us today?
- Apart from royalty, people in the Middle East didn't lay down their cloaks in the road. (See for instance 2 Kings 9:12-13) How does Jesus' kingship call us to put our property at his disposal?
- Why is King David mentioned in (11:10)? See Mark 12:35-37.
- Jesus comes to Jerusalem at Passover time for a final showdown with the authorities. Why is this significant? (Exodus 12:12-23; 1 Peter 1:18-21)
- Why do you think that Mark ends this section of chapter 11 with what appears to be an anti-climax in (11:11)?

## Read Mark 11:12-21

The cursing of the fig tree surrounds the incident in the Temple.

- Why do you think Jesus is so angry about the Temple system?
- Do we have enough righteous anger today? Or are we too tolerant?
- How might we be more proactive today in speaking up on behalf of the poor and the outsider? (11:15-16)
- How far do you think that churches today are places of prayer, or could we do better? (11:17)
- Jesus' behaviour in the Temple is the first of a number of incidents in which he forces a confrontation with the religious authorities. Why do you think he does this now? (You can follow this through in Mark's gospel by looking ahead at 11:18; 11:28; 12:12; 12:38-40; 14:1-2, 10-11)
- In Jewish thought, the fig tree is a symbol of blessing and human flourishing. (See Exodus 3:8, and Numbers 16:14) Why have things gone so badly wrong for the Children of Israel? (See Isaiah 3:13-14; Jeremiah 8:12-14)
- In the book of Hosea we find that God's love is a passionate love that goes very deep. 'When I found Israel, it was like finding grapes in the desert; when I saw your ancestors, it was like seeing the early fruit on the fig-tree.' (Hosea 9:9-10) In Mark 11 Jesus curses the fig tree. Why has his patience run out? How does this fit in with the cleansing of the Temple?
- Do you think that God might lose patience with people today? What are the implications for us in our witness today?
- The story of the fig tree is an enacted parable. There had been so much potential in the Jewish people, but they had rejected God's ways, and so they denied themselves God's blessing. What were the consequences for the fig tree, and also, by implication, for the Jewish religious authorities? See also, (12:9-12)
- What implications are there for us if we fail to bear fruit? (Galatians 5:19-26)
- What new Kingdom was Jesus planning to put in place by his death and resurrection? See especially (11:22-25) See also Psalm 118:22-24; Zechariah 4:6-7.

## For Prayer and Discussion

- What have you learned from today's study? What one thing can you take away that will make a difference in your life?
- What special things have you planned for Holy Week and Easter? How are you going to prioritise the time that God has given you this week?