
Meditation
on Mark 11:1–11 | “Depths of Love”
”Blessed Be the One”

::: ZERO :::

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

*“Grace to you and PEACE from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

1 Co 1:3. (NRSV)

::: Amen.

::: ONE :::

“Depths of Love”—is our current worship series.

“**BLESSED BE THE ONE**” is our theme for today.

“**BLESSED IS THE ONE** who comes in the name of the Lord”, so the crowd cheers and shouts, the ones processing in front and after Jesus, the One on the colt, a donkey which has never been ridden before.

The scene resembles the triumphant entry of a victorious general. Yet, it leaves me, maybe you too, with some questions and mysteries.

Let me ponder some of them...

::: TWO :::

Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. ³ If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.’

Mk 11:2-3

Let me ask:

If you saw a car parked outside,
and someone went up to it, opened the door,
took the key from the sun visor
(where it surely is always only stored in American movies...),
and wanted to drive off with the car...

and you asked this person,
“Why are you doing this?”, and they said,...

“The Lord needs it and will have it sent back here immediately.”,...

would you say, “Oh yes of course, ... sure, ... take it, that’s all fine”?

Would you?

I surely wouldn’t. I would rather call the owner—if I knew them—or otherwise try to call some sort of law enforcement officer to the scene.

::: THREE :::

But this scene depicted in Mark’s gospel has some kind of a double bottom.

ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ χρεῖαν ἔχει!

The Lord needs it!

Mark 11:3b

And “the Lord”, the “κύριος” may either refer to God, or the legal owner.

So, the ones asking the question “Why are you doing this?” could have understood the one or the other.

On the other hand, this might express, that Jesus, Son of God is the righteous owner and has every right to take and use the donkey. Full stop.

We might not be able to decide about the enquirers' perception. But we realize, the whole scene might not be comprehended as single tracked story.

∴ FOUR ∴

Another question:

Where do all these people come from, the many people?" And why do they suddenly proclaim Jesus as the one, who comes in the name of the Lord?

The crowd lays down cloaks in front of Jesus, just as in 2 Kings 9:9 where Jehu was anointed king over Israel.

And the king rides on a donkey—as in Zechariah 9:

*⁹ Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!*

*Lo, your king comes to you;
triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

*¹⁰ He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the war-horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and he shall command peace to the nations;
his dominion shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.*

Zechariah 9

It seems to be a huge crowd. And as they see what happens, they might understand what is really happening here:

no strange scene, no theatre play—something unprecedented, something that has not happened before, ...

For the first time, not a conqueror arrives, but a king of peace—as described in the prophet's words.

∴ FIVE ∴

But why so many? What drew them to the scene?

Let us see, what word's they use for their cheer?

“Hosanna!

BLESSED IS THE ONE

who comes in the name of the Lord!

Blessed is the coming kingdom

of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

Mark 11:9b-10

“Hosanna!” Yes, this is a formula to praise God. But it genuinely means, “Save now!”

So, the word from the crowd, governed by the Romans, can be heard just like **THE HUMAN WISH**, **OUR** wish, **OUR** longing, to be saved—from oppression, being overruled, from being held in custody—a call to be liberated.

∴ SIX ∴

Now,

“The most surprising twist in the conventional pattern lies in the aftermath of Jesus’ procession.

Here one expects the hero’s performance of some ritual act of thanksgiving.

In 11:11 Jesus visits the temple—but does nothing more than ‘look around at everything.’

It is late and he leaves, returning with his disciples to Bethany.

Far from exercising royal prerogatives, Jesus acts like a desultory tourist.

[Mark, the] Evangelist has steered readers to another climax, only to SNATCH THE CARPET OUT FROM UNDER THEM.

Such narrative subversion matches the character of the gospel that Jesus preaches. ‘Mark uses every strategy to say two things at once: yes, this is the Messiah, the greatest of miracle workers, the Son of God, but, no, that does not

mean at all what you thought it meant' (Placher 1994, 14).

*Mark has not narrated a "triumphal entry." He has lampooned it."*ⁱ

::: SEVEN :::

Now, in the words of Dr. Lisa Hancock:

"When we lift our palms and wave them on Palm Sunday morning, we declare our allegiance to the Prince of Peace, the very one the world considered a fool and did its best to destroy.

And perhaps we are fools for holding this parade, remembering this death.

But on the other hand, sometimes the fools become the foolers.

Maybe a better description is to acknowledge that the world resists being turned upside down. Or at least it won't stay that way for long.

The powers and principalities of this world come rushing back in, and order, as they understand it, is restored.

That is why Palm Sunday is not just Palm Sunday, it is more properly Palm [and] Passion Sunday. That [and] is important.

It is a reminder that there is risk involved in taking the side of the marginalized. There is danger in trying to upset the status quo.

And just when you think you've won your point and gathered your crowd, you discover you are alone again.

At least that was Jesus' experience this Holy Week. From the parade to the way of sorrows, from the King of Peace riding on a donkey to a hated criminal hanging on a cross, from "Hosanna" to "Crucify him" in a matter of days. [...]

Who's the fool now?

*Maybe it is **us**,
for clinging to hope in a hopeless world.*

*Maybe it is **us**,
for embracing life in a world obsessed with death.*

***MAYBE** it's us.*

*Maybe it's **HIM**,
proclaiming Easter joy in a Good Friday world.
Maybe so. Still, I'll wave my palm and shout my
hosannas, even though...*

*Call it foolish if you want.
I'd rather be a fool for Christ anyway.”ⁱⁱ*

::: Amen.

ⁱ Excerpt from C. CLIFTON BLACK: Mark, Abingdon New Testament Commentary.

ⁱⁱ Dr. Lisa Hancock: <https://t1p.de/bt5fb> (2024-03-23)