

Mark 11: 1-11

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ²and said to them, '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. ³If anyone says to you, "Why are you doing this?" just say this, "The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately." ' ⁴They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, ⁵some of the bystanders said to them, 'What are you doing, untying the colt?' ⁶They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. ⁷Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. ⁸Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. ⁹Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,
'Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!'

11 Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Meditation: Something is not quite right, or is it? Jesus' action here clearly smacks of messianic self-consciousness. Jesus is riding into the city hailed as a Messiah-king who will usher in 'the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!' People have hopes, high hopes. Hopes that are so charged with expectation can easily turn bitter if not fulfilled. The question that has dogged Jesus' whole ministry has been: if he is, indeed, the coming messiah, what kind of messiah is he? Does he fit popular ideas about the messiah? We have already noted in earlier passages how Jesus resists his association as 'the Messiah' because he does not fit the traditional expectations for that title. Here again he does things in his own unique way. He does not ride into Jerusalem with a war horse attended by soldiers, hailed by the ruling elite. No. He comes riding on a donkey and hailed by peasants along with their children. This is hardly impressive according to popular expectations for a messiah. Yet it says a lot about who Jesus is and what he comes to reveal about God and God's way of redemption.

Jesus' way as messiah is that of a humble servant, driven by compassion rather than ambition, service rather than 'success,' self-sacrifice rather than self-satisfaction. He is seeking followers who not only respect this way, but take it on as their own way in the world.

In this time of Covid-19, it is all the more needful to reflect on our way as human beings in community with others, isolated physically, yet sharing a common struggle with an

'enemy' we have yet to fully understand and manage, let alone control and defeat. While finding a vaccine seems to be the most obvious way to win this battle, the more important journey of redemption has to do with what kind of human beings we will become in the face of this pandemic. How will we serve God's true agenda of redeeming not just our bodies, but our minds and spirits as well? And what about what is cultivated in us to share with the world? We need to be inspired and empowered in our inner being, oriented in the way of Jesus the servant in order to fight the ongoing struggle and the cross to come on our way to resurrection.

Prayer: it is not obvious, O God. The way of service for one who rules can make little sense to us. And yet it speaks of a deeper truth, a truth we know in the depths of our hearts. May you open us up to fullness in our path of humble service, O God. May we discover communion and connection, redemption and release, salvation and wholeness by degrees as we continue to live this time, O God. With you above us, beside us and within us, all things are possible; Amen.