

Entry into the City of Jerusalem Luke 19. 28-48

thought for the week

This well known story of Jesus entering into Jerusalem towards the end of his life is full of contradictions: violence and peace, dark and light, joy and betrayal. Jesus reaches his goal, his destination - the city of Jerusalem. He is entering the 'lion's den', some would say playing into the hands of his enemies (the religious leaders and Temple priests) as he had a price on his head. They were determined to do away with him one way or another.

Jesus enters on a donkey, a symbol of peace not of war, the people cheer, the leaders plot, he weeps over the city, he turns over the traders' tables in the outer court of the Temple because of their dishonesty. Not the way to please the religious leaders, the action moves swiftly.

verse for the week

Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest

Luke 19 verse 38

prayer for the week

True and humble King, hailed by the crowd as Messiah: grant us the faith to know you and to love you, that we may be found beside you on the way of the cross, which is the path of glory.

Amen.

*Common Worship, Additional Collects ©
Archbishops Council*

image for the week



reflection for each day

day one:

The crowds praised God for all the great things they had seen.

Reflect on the blessings of your life, what do you want to praise/thank God for today? At the end of the day look back and give thanks for all that has happened and count your blessings.

day two:

*If they kept silence even the stones
would cry out.*

For many people the natural world speaks of the divine, whether it is stunning vistas, sunsets, seascapes or delicate spider's webs, or the intricate working of cells visible under a microscope. What in creation stirs your heart?

day three:

*When he came in sight of the city
he wept over it.*

'If only' is a terrible phrase indicating regret and lost opportunity, Jesus' heart is broken because he can see that the city had turned away from the way of peace, it was destined to suffer as a result. There is much to lament today in our world, what are you lamenting over as you look around at the world?

day four:

*If you, even you, had only known on
this day what would bring you
peace*

Peace in hearts and homes and between peoples can be so difficult to build and so easy to destroy. Where do you need peace today? How can you become a peace maker in the context in which you live?

day five:

You did not recognize God's work.

God is at work both within and without, in the expected and unexpected, in every person in one way or another. It is not always possible to see God in some people, others will not always find it easy to see God in us! Reflect today on how and where God might be at work.

day six:

He drove out the traders.

Jesus was passionate about justice and stood against all exploitation of the poor, the traders charged way over the odds to the pilgrims who had travelled to the Temple. Jesus was angry, how dare they do this in the Temple, the place of prayer. His anger led to action. How might your anger at injustice lead to action?

day seven:

*The people hung on his every
word.*

There was something about Jesus which drew people to him, his words carried weight, they struck home, people were spellbound by what he said. When were you last spellbound? By whom and why?

for the group

as you gather...

- What needs cleansing in today's church or society?
- Where do we see injustice and turn a blind eye to it?
- Where might Christ's anger be kindled today?
- Are we still spellbound by the words and actions of Jesus? If so, then how? If not, what needs to be re-kindled?
- Weeping over the world, do we lament? What place does lament have in our lives and the lives of our communities?

prayer for the group

*Lord Jesus,
you were unafraid to speak out and acted
without fear in naming all that is unjust.
As we weep and lament over our world,
inspire us and give us the courage to speak
the truth in love wherever it is needed.*

Amen.



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Apprentice

conflict

Luke 20 v1-47

thought for the week

Jesus is in Jerusalem following his triumphal entry. After all the crowd acclamation and having rattled the religious hierarchy by overthrowing the traders' tables we find him in the Temple teaching day by day. On this particular day, often known as the 'day of questions', Jesus is permitting himself to be challenged and questioned by the religious authorities and leaders. There are persistent attempts to catch him out and trap him on matters of the Jewish Law.

The Religious hierarchy (Pharisees, Scribes, Temple Priests, Sadducees etc..) were not all of the same mind about some matters, and Jesus is clever enough to exploit their differences. In dealing with their questions he uses various ways of disarming them: direct questioning, teaching, parable and challenge to bat their questions back and cause consternation amongst them. Jesus shows courage and confidence, and appears un-rattled.

verse for the week

God is not God of the dead but of the living; in his sight all are alive

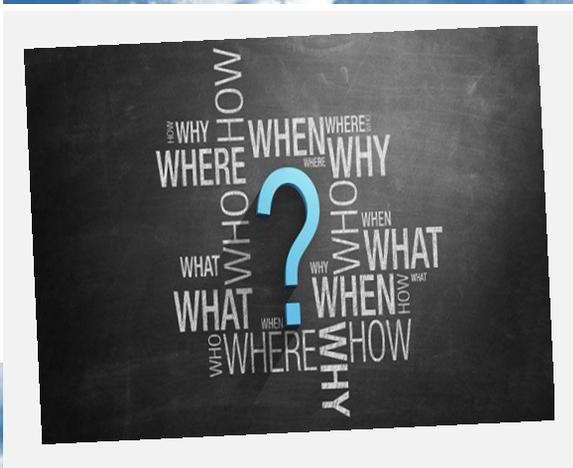
Luke 20 verse 38

prayer for the week

Eternal God, you are mysterious and there is so much that we do not understand, so give us the courage to be willing to ask questions about our faith, so that our faith might deepen and grow.

Amen.

image for the week



reflection for each day

day one:

Who gave you this authority?

The Religious leaders decided who did what in the Temple and they interpreted the law. They confront Jesus about who has given him permission (i.e. authority) to preach in the Temple. Jesus responds with a question. People often claim to speak with God's authority, how do we know when it is authentic?

day two:

He went on to tell the people this parable

Jesus often used stories (parables) from everyday life to explain his teaching. Jesus here is pointedly getting at the leaders, this is what they will do to him. He lets them come to that conclusion themselves.

day three:

The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone

A cornerstone is vital to the strength of a building, it is usually very carefully chosen by the builders. Jesus speaks here of the cornerstone being the stone which has been rejected. He will be rejected, cast aside and killed by the leaders, but he is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. What is our faith built upon?

day four:

We know that you speak and teach what is right

The leaders try to flatter Jesus by asking his advice. It's trick question about taxes to get him to either denounce Caesar or deny God's supremacy. A calm response with a visual aid flummoxes them. Where might a duty to both God and the state conflict?

day five:

in the resurrection... the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage

Jesus reminds his questioners that as heaven is so different from life on earth that their question about marriage after death is irrelevant. What do you think about heaven?

day six:

They can no longer die

One the questions grieving people often ask is "Will I see my loved one again?" It is impossible to answer as such, but the promise is that God is with us through time and space, whether we are alive or dead, somehow we will know and be known for no seed of love is ever lost.

day seven:

Beware of the teachers of the law

Jesus now turns to address his disciples He is warning them about the hypocrisy of the religious leaders who like to be seen for appearance sake in all the right places and in the street. How might this warning apply to us?

for the group

as you gather...

- How do discern God's voice?
- How might we test whether someone is speaking with God's authority?
- Can we ever speak authoritatively on God's behalf?
- Look again at the parable of the vineyard, how might it speak to us today?

prayer for the group

*Dear God,
may we be humble as we seek to follow you,
careful when we claim to speak in your name,
and guard us from hypocrisy so that our words
and deeds are consistent.*

Amen.



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a widow and prophecy

Luke 21.1-38

thought for the week

This is a tricky section! Jesus is still in the Temple, this time talking to people who ask real questions and he is noticing what goes on around him. The Temple treasury was in the outer area of the Temple precincts where anyone was allowed to go. Other areas were restricted to Jews or the Temple Priests. Jesus is sitting near the collecting boxes in the outer area, everyone was expected to make a donation.

Jesus gives a warning that living out the gospel values is not easy, but that there is no need to be afraid, his followers will come through the tribulations. Jesus mentions 'the Kingdom of God' several times, it is not a geographical kingdom, but it is acknowledging God as ruler. Being part of this kingdom means living in a certain way. It is a kingdom without social divisions and is a kingdom of forgiveness, love and justice.

verse for the week

*Heaven and earth will pass away but
my words will never pass away*

Luke 21 verse 33

prayer for the week

*God did not say 'You will not have a
difficult time; you will not be
burdened; you will not be
distressed', but God said, 'You will
not be overcome'.*

(Julian of Norwich: Revelations of Divine
Love: Chapter 68)

image for the week



reflection for each day

day one:

He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins

The widow's mite is a story about generosity of heart, it is not the amount which counts. A widow had no income of her own and from this precarious financial position this one gives all that she had. The gospel encourages us to be generous and to give our all.

day two:

His disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones

People are admiring the beauty of the temple, and it would have been amazing given its size and adornment. Jesus tells them that the building will not last for ever. There is a thin line between admiration and idolatry, are we building that which will last (goodness, justice, peace) or is our priority bricks and mortar?

day five:

When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies

The Temple was destroyed in AD70 and the early church struggling under persecution needed to understand that Jesus had foreseen and foretold it. The bricks and mortar might have gone, but God was still with them in their troubles.

day three:

Watch out that you are not deceived

At the time of Jesus and ever since people have come claiming to be what they are not in terms of spiritual power. We need to distinguish between true and false prophets

day six:

You know that the Kingdom of God is near

The Kingdom of God is not some far off distant promise, it is here and now. Just as the hearers knew when a fig tree was about to bear fruit by looking at it, so it is with the Kingdom of God. We see signs of it - love, mercy and justice around us, if we look.

day four:

By standing firm you will save yourselves

When trouble comes as it will to each of us in some way or another, we are to stand firm with Christ. God's promise is to be with us through difficult situations. With God we can face the struggle head on.

day seven:

Be always on the watch

Luke stresses the importance of keeping alert, persevering in prayer and keeping steadfast in hope. It is easy to get distracted by worldly cares. The gospel is counter cultural.

for the group

as you gather...

- Reflect on the subject of generosity; what does it mean to you? Try and think about more than money, e.g. giving of self, being generous to others not just in deeds.
- How do you understand persevering in prayer?
- What signs of God's Kingdom do you see around you?
- What worldly cares are likely to distract you?

prayer for the group

Generous God,
everything comes from you.
Give us grateful hearts and help us to be more
generous in all that we do, say and think.
Give us eyes to see your daily blessings
and signs of your Kingdom,
protect us from all that would distract us from
following you.
Amen.



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the beginning of the end

Luke 22. 1-38

thought for the week

The last week of Jesus' earthly life is heading towards the final confrontation with the religious leaders. There is no more teaching of the people: no more discussion with the authorities: the action closes in on Jesus and his disciples. The religious leaders have had enough, their plotting deepens. They are desperately trying to get rid of Jesus, but are afraid of the crowds. Jerusalem was especially busy due to people coming to the Passover festival. The Roman soldiers were patrolling to quell any trouble: the disciples are confused, anxious and afraid.

The Passover was one of three great Jewish festivals which faithful Jews would celebrate in Jerusalem. Jesus is keen to celebrated this festival with his disciples. In this meal which became known as the Last Supper, he gave his command to those disciples to continue to meet and break bread and share wine in memory of him. This has been the central act of worship of the Christian church for 2000 years.

verse for the week

The Son of Man is going his appointed way

Luke 22 verse 22

image for the week



prayer for the week

Lord Jesus, you ask us to take bread and wine and to remember you: to remember how you cared for the poor, how you fearlessly confronted injustice, how you spent time with God in prayer, how you are with us minute by minute. Help us to remember. Amen.

reflection for each day

day one:

Judas went to the chief priests... and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus

All kinds of suggestions have been put forward for Judas' motive in betraying Jesus to the Temple authorities, but Luke attributes the action to Satan. We do not actually know his motive and **all of us** are capable of betraying friends and families.

day two:

“Go and make preparations”

Jesus celebrates the Passover meal with his disciples, as together they recalled God's saving work in bringing their ancestors out of slavery in Egypt. Recalling God's action is an important part of faith, when, where and how has God been active in your life?

day three:

I will not eat it again until it finds fulfilment in the Kingdom of God

In the context of the Passover meal, Jesus changes the traditional wording and tells the disciples that the bread represents his body and the cup his blood. He is forewarning them of his impending death and he commands that bread and wine are to be taken by his followers in the future to remember him.

day four:

And he took bread

Different church traditions have very different views as to what Jesus meant when he said 'This is my body', 'This is my blood'. The important thing to remember is that Jesus gave us himself and in this action, he is mysteriously present with us today.

day five:

But I am among you as one who serves

In a world where status and power are so often idolized, Jesus reminds his followers that in the Kingdom of God, service to others is more important than status. He came to serve and to give his life. Give thanks for all who serve us in our daily living.

day six:

Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death

Peter was devoted to Jesus despite his failings and here in typical fashion he engages mouth before engaging brain. It is easy like Peter to speak without thinking and to promise more than we can deliver. Consciously think, before speaking or acting today!

day seven:

What is written about me is reaching its fulfilment

At the end of supper Jesus prepares his disciples for the full horror of what is to come, it will be a time of violence and stress. He alludes to the writings of Isaiah (Old Testament prophet), Jesus is the 'suffering servant' and God's will is to be fulfilled in him.

for the group

as you gather...

- Communion: how does your church fellowship understand the words of Jesus 'This is my Body, this is my Blood'
- Betrayal: think about and pray for all those who have been betrayed or under pressure to betray others
- How do we exercise a ministry as a servant both as individuals and as churches? Think of where your service might be most needed.
- Denial is not just related to other people, we so often deny God's free gift of compassion, mercy and forgiveness in ourselves. Ponder what you deny in your life.

prayer for the group

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the
world.

Teresa of Avila 1515-1582



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