

E-Series

Palm Sunday



1 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, **2** saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. **3** If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'" **4** They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, **5** some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" **6** They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. **7** When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. **8** Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. **9** Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" **10** "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest!" **11** Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve. **—Mark 11:1-11**

Every day this week, I will be sharing with you some reflections written by my friends James Howell, pastor of Myers Park UMC in Charlotte. He will guide us through this Holy Week.

Historians have helped us understand the drama of Palm Sunday in ways we'd never imagined just sitting in Church. In their excellent book, [The Last Week](#), John Dominic Crossan and Marcus Borg tell us that not *one*, but *two* processions entered Jerusalem that day. "One was a peasant procession, the other an imperial procession. From the east, Jesus rode a donkey down the Mount of Olives. On the opposite side of the city, from the west, Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, entered Jerusalem at the head of a column of imperial cavalry. Jesus' procession proclaimed the kingdom of God; Pilate's proclaimed the power of empire."

[Pilate](#) was nervous, with two million pilgrims who despised the Romans converging on the city for Passover, so he marched his troops from his base in [Caesarea](#) to intimidate the Jews and quell any chance of revolution.

Patriotic Jews shouting "Hosanna!" wondered: Would Jesus lead a band of warriors to fight for freedom and expel the Romans? Jesus disappointed those fantasies; his strategy was much larger, and he had to be true to the heart of God. He did not ride in on a war stallion, the way Alexander the Great rode [Bucephalus](#). He rode as God always rides, humbly – on a donkey, laughable, pokey, unlikely to frighten anyone.

His was a kingdom of peace, not violent force. No one understood – and the powers of this world have never understood. Pope Pius XII once ordered Josef Stalin to remove his armies from eastern Europe; Stalin scoffed: "How many legions do you command?" But the Gospel always appears to be foolishness to this world. Jesus came not to flash military prowess, but to love, to serve, to engage in combat, not against Rome but against evil and death. The triumphant standard he would raise would be his own Cross.

James
james@mpumc.org



Time to Shine in 2009!

Pastor Michael