

The Liturgy of the Palms

- [Luke 19:28-40](#)
- [Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29](#)
- [Isaiah 50:4-9a](#)
- [Philippians 2:5-11](#)

Jesus has begun his final approach into Jerusalem. It can't be stopped now.

This procession, this type of rebellion against the empire, could only lead to one thing. Death would be certain if Jesus kept acting the way he did. It was set in motion a long time ago though- from before Jesus was born during the times when prophets prophesied and then when God became incarnate in Jesus. When Jesus was born, the world changed forever. And his life has led him here- overlooking the holy city of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives- riding on a colt to his eventual execution. This moment loomed long before his conception. The Angel Gabriel announced to Mary that the baby she would carry would be given the throne and that his kingdom would have no end. When Jesus came into the world, the shepherds were called to greet him as the angels proclaimed, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace.'

Today, we hear that line in a new light as Jesus is placed on a colt, lifted up as a new type of king, only to be lifted up on a cross in a few days. "Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" the multitude of disciples sing joyfully, praising God. Hope abounds in entering Jerusalem. A new kingdom is finally being ushered in- the powerful will be pulled down from their thrones, the lowly lifted up, mercy shown to everyone, the hungry fed with good things, and the rich sent away. There would be great despair though, too- utter darkness that the Passion Reading will tell us about. Endless hope and overwhelming despair, we have now entered into the week where we will encounter the full spectrum of what it means to be human.

As we end our service with that Passion Reading, it's hard to not hear "Blessed" without the echoes of "Crucify." But we're getting ahead of ourselves if we jump to that moment- we aren't at the overwhelming despair yet. We are invited right now to glory in the hope with the disciples and the crowds who witnessed Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Can we imagine Jesus being swept up in the fun and the ceremony? Laughing and praising God with his friends? We all know something horrible is about to happen, like

Jesus knew, just as he tried to tell his disciples. But what if we could stay present in this moment- with Jesus riding on the colt, journeying into Jerusalem, his followers surrounding him with a wall of joy that's unlike anything that's ever been seen. The call to justice, the deep desire for peace and healing from the pain we carry- that has arrived in the mission of Jesus. Peace and Justice personified, a speck of a person in the middle of a chaotic, large crowd, arriving to the gates of a city bursting at the seams for Passover. Just this once are we able to stay present where we are, finding peace and joy without worrying about what is to come?

This week is surely about the last week of Jesus' life. But it's also about us. Of wondering what it means for us to not only be observers of this story, but to be aware we are all a part of the story. If we enter into this week thinking we know everything, all the readings, all the rituals, the ending, we miss a chance to look at it with fresh eyes. To engage with Holy Week by humbling ourselves, opening our hearts and minds to experience the coming days in a new way. I wonder about the owners of the colt; it is clear they were confused. And I would be too. Here are these strangers, coming to your home,

and just untying and taking your animal. The Divine sneaks up on us like that sometimes. When we are in relationship with God, we don't know what to expect all the time. Wherever you find yourself today, whether it's your first Holy Week or 80th, what does God have in store for you this Holy Week? Sit with that question, hold it lightly as you move through Jesus' final days. You don't have to know the answer because today, we're only just beginning.