

Mark 11:1-11 (NRSV)

11 When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ² and 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. 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.’ ” ⁴ They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, ⁵ some of the bystanders said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” ⁶ They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. ⁷ Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. ⁹ Then 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.

This is it my friends, Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. This is the beginning of Holy Week -- today is Palm Sunday. A day of great emotion ... and day of celebration. For today is that day when crowds of Jerusalem greet their Saviour... when the very rocks themselves would call out ... when creation herself would raise her voice and join in this celebration ... this triumph. Today Palm Sunday the first day of Christ's passion.

Passion! A word which evokes strong emotion. Yet strong emotion is something we rarely see in Jesus. Certainly with a little imagination we can read between the lines and discern the emotion that lay beneath. Surely Jesus was not immune to emotion as he instructed his beloved friend to retrieve the colt -- that colt that would carry him into the city of his death?

Was that emotion – fear, regret, hesitation? Or was he focused only on love? On love for his father that was expressed in his unquestioning unfaltering obedience. Or love for these disciples who had followed him... not quite comprehending what he was teaching but nonetheless faithful, devoted and loving friend. Did he perhaps watch fondly as they walked with him knowing that it would be their time later to suffer for his sake? Or was he focused on his love for humanity -- those crowds who shouted and cheered as he rode into the city. Those people who leave

their cloaks and laid branches in his path as a testament of their love for him. It was for these people that he was to suffer. What did he think as he was looking down from that colt?

And finally what about those who were not supporting him? Not making his way easy? Not showering him with love? But plotting against him. Those who were to condemn him taunt him and nail him a cross. What was he thinking of these others as he entered Jerusalem? Was he regretting their obstinate, their arrogance, and their unbelief -- thinking to himself that this was their last chance? Their last chance to accept him as son of God, to turn from their sinful ways and step into the light that he provided.

Or what he's blaming himself that he had not said enough... done enough ... loved enough to call all humanity to him. Or did he pity them? Seeing them for the role they had been cast to play in God's divine plan -- the role of villain. Pitying them that they were bound to follow through this drama just as he was.

The Gospel's seldom give us glimpses into Christ's heart and the emotions which must have dwelt there. But this does not mean we ought not to contemplate Christ emotion. We know that he is the embodiment of love -- the noblest of emotion!

So why would we ever shrink from attributing to him strong feeling? We call this week Christ's passion. Let us and contemplate throughout this week that passion - - that love -- that brought him to the cross for all of us. And all those emotions which must have been playing in his mind and in his heart as he has set his feet irrevocably down that path.

Did his disciples for those people are looking at him, did any of them wonder what he was thinking. They were jubilant. Were they too caught up in the moment to think about what was going through his mind? Then again, they did not understand that he had entered Jerusalem to meet his fate on the cross. All they saw was the fulfillment of ancient prophecies. The Prophet Zechariah had about 500 years earlier predicted the triumphant entry of the Messiah into Jerusalem. Those who saw Jesus knew what Zechariah had said,

Rejoice greatly, old daughter Zion!

Shout aloud, old daughter in Jerusalem!

Low, your team comes to you;

Triumphant and victorious is he,

Humble and riding on a donkey,

On a colt, the foal of a donkey.

They saw Jesus riding a colt entering the city of Jerusalem. They knew their Messiah had come. Yet their Messiah was a man of power, one of the House of David, who would return Israel to her former might. Jesus was the Anointed One, he was of the House of David, and he would, if only they would listen, he would raise Israel to even higher height -- life everlasting in the Kingdom of God.

As these people, they didn't get it. They did not really understand the spectacle they were witnessing. Even Christ disciples didn't quite clue in. Jesus had warned them that he must die and be raised -- but they probably didn't really understand -- perhaps they didn't really want to understand. Instead they saw their master exulted by the people of Jerusalem. They witnessed him fulfill the ancient prophecy of the Messiah's triumph. They were probably moved to joy and jubilation -- it would all turn out right after all! Jesus would be accepted as the Messiah and govern the repentant nation of Israel. That would be there happily ever after ending. Forget for a moment Christ dire warnings; forget for a moment all that talk of death and being raised from the dead. This was a moment of triumph -- a moment to be savoured. This was a moment of their passion -- their love for Jesus, their whole for the future, and their faith could never have seemed brighter.

But all this would fade in the next few days --

Fade as Judas betrays Jesus,

Fade as Peter denies Christ three times,

Fade as Thomas doubts the risen Lord.

So what of us? We do not know Christ's heart at this time -- although we may guess. We don't know for sure the hearts and minds of the disciples or of the crowds but again we may guess. The only thing that we do know with absolute certainty is our own heart in our own mind. No one else's -- not our friend, our spouses, our children, our parent -- we only you know ourselves.

What emotional state are we and on the Passion Sunday? Has Christ made a triumphant entry into your life... your soul? Are you willing to see through the eyes of Christ -- those eyes that know and see only love? Are you able to look squarely at all the things that are wrong -- all the suffering -- all the hardship and still know in your heart that there is a living and loving God and that he is calling you to obedience. Are you able to walk with confidence that path that he has shown you -- that path that leads to love and to grace -- even though it may not be the path most often traveled?

If you can answer yes to these questions then you are well on your way to loving God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. And this, this love of God, love of Christ, and love of humanity, this will be your great passion