

Palm Sunday 2021

Mark 11: 1-11

This week's Day of Reflection gave us the opportunity to think back over the year gone by from the beginning of lockdown in March 2020. So many have lost loved ones both to Covid 19 and other conditions. The lockdown made it much harder to grieve and join with others to remember those lost.

We could also reflect on the hard work and dedication of some many different groups of people who have helped and supported us throughout the year. It gave a moment to recognise the skill of scientists and researchers working to produce the vaccines that will help us to combat this disease. A year ago, we had no idea of the journey we would be on together. We couldn't see "our enemy"; we could tell the path we were on or where we would end up.

In contrast, the journey that Jesus made into Jerusalem at the beginning of the first Holy Week was one he would have made many times in his life. Moving with the rhythm of the seasons, Jesus would travel to the temple for the great festivals and family occasions. He knew the road from Galilee to Jerusalem and where he could rest and sleep. The final stage for today's bible story is the stretch up from Jericho to Bethany and Bethphage on the hill of the Mount of Olives. Here he would see his first glimpse of the Temple and all that it meant. He knew where he was going, the route he had to take and the final destination.

Collecting a donkey on the way for the journey down the Mount to the Kidron Valley floor and then up to the Temple itself was a fulfilment of a prophecy about the coming of the future King of Israel. Jesus arrives at the foot of the Temple Mount opposite the Golden Gate through which the Messiah would enter and reclaim the Temple. But that route wasn't yet open to him. There is too much to experience and endure before that victor's crown could be his.

Those who followed him into the city would have know of the wonders and miracles that Jesus performed, especially in Bethany. They would rejoice to welcome him back and journey with him to the high festival of Passover. But they wouldn't have

realised what that particular Passover would come to mean for them. How quickly, though the shouts of welcome from the villagers and his followers would turn to cries of "Crucify!"

This week we have the opportunity to journey with Jesus through his final week. To experience through scripture the events leading up to Good Friday and the Cross, the desolation of Holy Saturday and the joy of Resurrection Day. But we must remember that we can't skip to Easter Day without the agony and pain. We have to make that journey for the Resurrection to make sense. We too, like the followers of Jesus in the Gospels have to be willing to "take up our cross and follow him." There are no half measures. It is not a recorded video – there are no adverts to fast-forward – it is a wholly lived experience.

May we journey with Jesus for this last week of Lent. We know how the story goes, but we know the victory at the end. The journey is worthwhile for us to embark upon each year as a reminder of what Jesus has done for us today – for each and every one of us throughout all time who put their trust in him. May we make that journey afresh this year in trust and in hope of the Resurrection and the joy of Easter.