

Small group notes for Palm Sunday 02/04/23

Matthew 21:1-11

We must first look to Jesus to see the overflow of the church values (Encounter, Family, Generosity and Transformation).

Looking at the overarching narrative of Matthew's gospel, until now Jesus has been revealed as many things – teacher, miracle-worker... *are there any particular stories of Jesus' ministry before his crucifixion that speak to you and why? Who is Jesus revealed to be in these examples?*

Just before today's passage we see Jesus heal two blind men. The crowd tells them to be quiet but Jesus has compassion on them and heals them. He doesn't care for convention or etiquette, but he cares for the individual. *Do any moments come to mind where you have felt seen and cared for as an individual by Jesus? Do share these testimonies as encouragements to each other if you feel comfortable.*

The prophecy quoted in this passage is from Zechariah 9. Do read verses 9-10 (or further if you want to!) together to look at the breadth of what is foretold.

Jesus entered meekly, with gentleness. See the descriptors that have gone with him throughout his life, the echoes back to descriptions of his birth.

The crowd cries Hosanna (which means Save) and call him blessed. He is acknowledged as Saviour, but they sought a saviour who would overthrow the Romans. They put this agenda on him, clearly without fully understanding his teaching that preceded this point. How easy it is to look at our own context and desires first and filter Scripture through that sieve rather than looking to Jesus first. *Are there any areas where you are struggling to see clearly what the Lord is saying because you feel blinded by your surroundings, the opinions of others or your own context? We need one another as support in these times. Do hold these things in prayer together.*

The city quaked with the question: "Who is this?" The crowds cannot answer with the full truth. *What was Jesus' mission on earth? Discuss the new covenant, why it is significant. Perhaps also reflect on Malcolm's painting.*

A few days later a crowd gathered not to shout praises, but instead to shout "Crucify him". Whoever they thought this man was, they decided he wasn't even worthy of life. Only when Jesus died, does a Roman centurion (who had just overseen the killing of Jesus) finally proclaim Jesus' identity as the Son of God. Look together at Matthew 27: 50-54. *What reflections, emotions or revelations does this passage have for you?*

For us now, we can see the whole picture. We can read the next chapter of the story of Jesus' resurrection, ascension back to heaven and the birth and growth of the church. Jesus was and is the son of God, holding our salvation in his hands. *To us, today, who is Jesus? Is he worthy of our cloaks, what we can offer him to be laid down for him? Is he worthy of our hearts, our lives? What does that look like for you today?*