

Matthew 21

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¹And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, ²Saying unto them, “Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. ³And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, ‘The Lord hath need of them;’ and straightway he will send them.”

⁴All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

⁵“Tell ye the daughter of Sion,
Behold, thy King cometh unto thee,
meek, and sitting upon an ass,
and a colt the foal of an ass.”

⁶And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, ⁷And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. ⁸And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. ⁹And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying,

“Hosanna to the Son of David:
Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord;
Hosanna in the highest.”

¹⁰And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, “Who is this?”

¹¹And the multitude said, “This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.”

This reading for Palm Sunday, the first of our readings for Holy Week, is our 40th reading for the Lent 2025.

1. Throughout our readings for Holy Week, our first priority will be to use our imagination; to close our eyes and form a picture of what we are reading, and to consider how we feel about what we are witnessing. With that in mind, close your eyes and picture the scene of Jesus’ entrance on a donkey.
 - ? What do you see?
 - ? What does the donkey look like?
 - ? How does Jesus look on the donkey?
 - ? How do you feel about what you are seeing?
2. Matthew quotes Zechariah to say of Jesus, “Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass.”
 - ? What is the opposite of “meekness”?
 - ? What does the fact that Jesus is a “meek ruler” suggest about the manner in which Jesus will rule, govern, or operate in your life?
 - ? How does this relate to the following invitation that Jesus extends to all?

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Mt. 11.²⁸⁻²⁹).
 - ? Remembering that Jesus and Father are one, how does Jesus’ meekness as exemplified by his choice of donkey as mount impact the way you approach God in prayer?
 - ? When you pray, do you pray to a “meek” Being, or Someone closer to the opposite of “meek”?
3. Throughout his early ministry, Jesus has attempted to undo his disciples’ false, world-based view of

the nature of greatness and power, and help them understand through his words and actions the nature of true greatness and power as it is exercised in heaven and as it ought to be exercised among those who are followers of God.

- ? How would most generals, kings, rulers, Caesars, etc. enter a city in “triumphal procession”?
- ? How does Jesus’ choice of a donkey as a means of conveyance into Jerusalem contrast with such entries?
- ? How does Jesus’ choice of a donkey as a means of conveyance into Jerusalem relate to and confirm his message of what it means to be truly great and powerful?
- ? How can you conduct yourself so as to display greatness and power in a godly manner?

4. Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem was accompanied by large crowds of very happy and excited people.
 - ? What was the reason for their happiness and excitement?
 - ? Close your eyes once more. Imagine the scene. What do the crowds look like? What sounds do you hear?

One of the things we hear is the crowd’s shout, “Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.”

- ? What, do you think, did this mean to them?
- ? What did it mean to Jesus?
- ? What does it mean to you?

- ? During this year’s Holy Week, what can you do to invite Jesus’ glad entrance into and deeper presence in your life?

¹²And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, ¹³and said unto them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called the house of prayer;’ but ye have made it a den of thieves.”

¹⁴And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them. ¹⁵And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David;” they were sore displeased, ¹⁶And said unto him, “Hearest thou what these say?”

And Jesus saith unto them, “Yea; have ye never read, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?’”

This is our 41st reading for Lent 2025.

According to traditional Christian chronology, Jesus “cleansed” the temple on Monday of his final mortal week.

1. As we will do throughout Holy Week, we invite you to close your eyes and imagine the temple. Imagine the crowds. Imagine the “business” that is taking place in the temple. And, finally, imagine Jesus as he chases the businessmen from the temple.
 - ? What do you see?
 - ? What is Jesus’ mood?
 - ? What are those gathered doing? What do they look like in their activities?
 - ? How would you respond to someone “unauthorized” coming into the temple and attempting to change its organization?
2. In referring to the temple as a “den of thieves,” Jesus seems to be quoting the Hebrew prophet, Jeremiah.

“Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?” (Jer. 7.¹¹)

? What do you picture when you imagine a “den of thieves”?

A “den of thieves” is a place where the guilty and lawless can go to escape the consequences of their crimes.

- ? How was the temple being used as a means to escape just consequences?
- ? What type of attitudes and behaviors would turn a modern temple into a “den of thieves”?

Jeremiah did a brief survey of the crimes and sins being committed by those who went to the temple.

“Trust ye not in lying words, saying, ‘The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, *are* these.’

“For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; *if* ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever.

“Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye

know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, “We are delivered to do all these abominations?” (Jer. 7.⁵⁻¹⁰)

- ? How are the attitudes and behaviors that Jeremiah describes contrary to the ideals of the temple and of true worship of God?
3. Hearing Jewish leaders’ complaint about the crowd’s exuberance toward him, Jesus quotes the Psalmist (perhaps an alternative translation?) “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?” (Ps. 8.²).
- ? What does it mean to “perfect praise”?
 - ? How does Jesus’ attitude toward the “common people” contrast with that of the Jewish leaders?