

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, **2**saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. **3**If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."

4This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

5"Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'

6The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. **7**They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. **8**A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. **9**The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

"Hosanna to the Son of David!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

10When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"

11The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

Coming to a City Near You - by Carol Penner

Jesus comes to Jerusalem, the city nearest you.

Jesus comes to the gate, to the synagogue,
to houses prepared for wedding parties,
to the pools where people wait to be healed,
to the temple where lambs are sold,
to gardens, beautiful in the moonlight.

He comes to the governor's palace.

Jesus comes to Jerusalem, the city nearest you,
to new subdivisions and trailer parks,
to penthouses and basement apartments,
to the factory, the hospital and the Cineplex,
to the big box outlet centre and to churches,
with the same old same old message,

unchanged from the beginning of time.
Jesus comes to Jerusalem, the city nearest you
with his Good News and...
Hope erupts! Joy springs forth!
The very stones cry out,
“Hosanna in the highest,
blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”
The crowds jostle and push,
they can’t get close enough!
People running alongside flinging down their coats before him!
Jesus, the parade marshal, waving, smiling.
The paparazzi elbow for room,
looking for that perfect picture for the headline,
“The Man Who Would Be King”.
Jesus comes to Jerusalem, the city nearest you
and gets the red carpet treatment.
Children waving real palm branches from the florist,
silk palm branches from Wal-mart,
palms made from green construction paper.
Hosannas ringing in churches, chapels, cathedrals,
in monasteries, basilicas and tent-meetings.
King Jesus, honored in a thousand hymns
in Canada, Cameroon, Calcutta and Canberra.
We LOVE this great big powerful capital K King Jesus
coming in glory and splendor and majesty
and awe and power and might.
Jesus comes to Jerusalem, the city nearest you.
Kingly, he takes a towel and washes feet.
With majesty, he serves bread and wine.
With honour, he prays all night.
With power, he puts on chains.
Jesus, King of all creation, appears in state
in the eyes of the prisoner, the AIDS orphan, the crack addict,
asking for one cup of cold water,
one coat shared with someone who has none,
one heart, yours,
and a second mile.

Jesus comes to Jerusalem, the city nearest you.
Can you see him?

[Pray]

What a day! Palm Sunday is the equivalent of Inauguration Day in the US or Coronation Day in the UK. This is a big deal, complete with parades, marching bands, and everyone sporting regalia reserved for such auspicious occasions!

Excitement is in the air! Passover is here, which means that the population of Jerusalem triples with pilgrims. There is no room at the Holiday Inn, no vacancy. Sold out.

Jesus (and the disciples) have been staying in Bethany, likely with Mary and Martha, Jesus, having recently raised their brother Lazarus from the dead. No doubt, word about that has spread quickly without the use of Twitter or Instagram.

Jesus gives very specific instructions, sending two disciples on an errand to acquire a donkey. What's up with that? A donkey??

If "the medium is the message", what is Jesus trying to communicate by riding a donkey?

The message is this: Zechariah 9:9-10

9Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. **10**I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the warhorses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. **He will proclaim peace to the nations.**

Jesus does *not* ride in a royal horse drawn carriage, nor in a flag draped limousine. Riding in on a donkey is more like the equivalent of riding into town in an old Volkswagon bus with peace signs emblazoned on the sides.

A humble donkey provides sharp contrast with the Romans, who were known for their military parades, featuring chariots drawn by stately stallions, and followed

by battalions of soldiers. Such parades were designed as a show of force in order to intimidate, to suppress any notion of overthrow or revolution, to ensure allegiance to the Roman Emperor, also called “the son of God”. Jesus is NOT the conquering hero. Jesus is the Prince of Peace, who comes to establish an entirely different kind of kingdom.

Jesus will please some and disappoint others. God’s people have been praying for centuries, yearning for the Messiah, the coming king. The Old Testament prophets have promised such a one who would appear from the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4), who would be a great deliverer.

The expectations are high—Will this Messiah bring revolution and overthrow the oppressors? When and how will the coming King establish his Kingdom?

The crowds cover the dirt road with their cloaks, wave palm branches like pompoms, as they greet Jesus, shouting from an ancient Passover song:

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Hosanna”! “Save us!”

“Save us” –from what or from whom?

Caught up in the contagion of the crowd, hopes and expectations rise.

However then, as now, the celebrity in the headlines today is quickly forgotten tomorrow, abandoned to history in a heartbeat.

People are unpredictable. Tides turn. This is a temporary triumph. Some in the crowd who hail him as King now, will shout “Crucify Him” by Friday.

Jesus is in the moment. He does not silence the crowd. He acts deliberately and lives into the prophecy of Zechariah. Secure in his identity, and confident in his purpose, Jesus does not hesitate or waver.

Matthew writes “the whole city was stirred”. Something has been lost here, in translation. The word translated “stirred” is the word from which we derive the English word “seismic”.

In other words—“Shaken, not stirred”—is not only the way Agent 007 likes his martinis, but this is what the entire city of Jerusalem, will experience—an earth-shake or an earth-quake!

In the last 72 hours, a military council has taken control of Sudan, and arrested its longtime president, Omar al-Bashir. Protesters have been gaining momentum, demanding that he leave office. Sudan’s defense minister announced al-Bashir’s arrest and announced that a transitional military council will rule the country for two years before any democratic elections will take place. In an interesting parallel with Palm Sunday, news of this announcement sent thousands of people flooding into the streets.

“There has been so much anticipation for this moment, NPR’s Halima Gikandi reports, that “some people were cheering but not really knowing what they were cheering for, and what was going to happen.” In one sign of change, activists said many of their colleagues had been release from state prisons.

Media reports say the current swell of protesters is largely peaceful. The military council said it advocates a peaceful “approach to revolution and change.” NPR website, 4-21-19

This Jesus—this King—who comes in Peace is going to “shake things up” in a major way. We are talking, a seismic shift! Things will never be the same again. We’re talking “regime change”—lives will come under entirely new management! Once *this* King takes the throne, a new way of life begins!

The Psalmist asks: “Who is this King of Glory?” (Psalm 24:8,10)

In Matthew’s Gospel, “...the whole city asked: **Who is this?**” (21:10)

How one answer this question—will shake things up!

Who is this?

As in, really? Isn’t this the carpenter’s son from Nazareth?

He’s the Messiah? Highly unlikely! Nah...couldn’t be. (the Jewish Religious Leaders)

Who is *this*?

As in, who does this guy think he is? This is dismissive. King of the Jews?! Right. He's no match for the empire. Caesar has no rivals! We worship Caesar, no other. This guy is nothing to worry about, a nobody. If he makes trouble, he can be quickly dispatched. Executed. No problem. (the Romans)

Who is this?

As in, Wow, this guy is different...I am really curious. He is the renegade rabbi, he's unlike any of the others. He teaches with chutzpah, authority, unlike the others who toe the party line. (the sincere questioner)

I can guarantee you, those looking to honestly answer this question will experience a seismic shift.

How will you answer that question? Who is Jesus for you?

Is Jesus simply an historic figure who lived long ago, but has no impact on your daily life?

Is Jesus a great moral teacher who set unrealistic standards for living?

Jesus desires to make another "grand entrance"...not through city gates, but into every human heart.

Will you welcome him? Listen. He's speaking to you:

"Look! I stand at the door and knock." Do you hear him knocking?

If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in,

AH, here's where that seismic shift takes place...Jesus wants to shake up your life, your priorities, your allegiances. He also wants to free you up from regret, guilt, and sin. Trust me, if you allow your life to come under Jesus' management, he'll shake things up—in a good way.

He promises that if you open the door, he will come in to ***"... will share a meal together as friends."*** (Revelation 3:20, NLT)

Jesus is a gentleman; he will not use force, but knocks politely, waiting patiently for you (and me) to respond.

It's as easy as A_B_C:

A--Admit that we are a hot mess when it comes to managing our own lives—we are sinners—imperfect people, in need of a perfect Savior.

B--Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, place our trust in Him, which means surrendering our control and coming under new management.

C—Confess or acknowledge Christ as your Lord and Savior...Jesus himself said:

³²“Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; ³³but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven. (Matthew 10:32-33)

¹⁵Jesus said to them (the disciples), “But who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15)

How will you respond? Who *is* this man?

Let us pray.