

The Rev. Dr. David K. McIntosh  
March 29, 2026- Palm/Passion Sunday A  
Given at Christ Church Quaker Farms, Oxford, CT

**Matthew 21:1-11; & Matthew 26:14-27:54**

**“Hosanna to the Son of David!” †**

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The story of Jesus’ Passion we just heard from The Gospel of Matthew is powerful enough to move us into prayer and contemplation throughout this coming Holy Week... So, this morning I’m going to reflect a bit more on the first Gospel passage I read, about Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem on a road laid with palms.

In the story from Matthew, the author’s description of the triumphal reception by the people, plays on the Greco-Roman tradition of the age. It’s an entry via a procession, reserved for very important people, those who have accomplished some great victory. It’s a tribute given to great ruling figures. In this version, the scene is set by using a common Roman practice, known as *angareia*. This was the common requisition of labor and animals, and the seizure of someone else’s property, in order to display one’s power. It was a practice loathed by the poor Jewish population living under Roman rule! And yet this story has Jesus sending out staff (apostles) to find and take someone else’s donkey and colt, because ‘the Lord needs them.’ That part would have stuck out to those listening for sure! This Gospel also works hard to emphasize that Jesus is the one foretold by the prophets Zechariah (9.9) and Isaiah (62.11) using two quotes: “Look your king is coming to you...” and “Hosanna Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!”

At the same time, the author of Matthew adds some very atypical aspects to this triumphant procession. He emphasizes the presence of children and the child-like quality of crowd and emphasizes the humility of the King. “Look your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey.” Here the description of Jesus, as Messiah King, is one of meekness and humility. This idea comes from Jesus’ own self-description: “Come to me all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Mt 11: 28-30). Jesus highlights “gentleness” and more accurately “meekness” (the Greek here is *praus* πραῦς), as the proper attitude for one who is holy.

This Gospel of Matthew was written for a specific community of Christians, held together in their common belief that Jesus, as the promised Messiah, was humble and faithful to God and they modeled their lives around his attitude and teaching. The example of their humble/meek Messiah/King cultivates a proper relationship with others and serves as the model of faithfulness. His specific actions and mention that his “yoke is easy” expresses solidarity with the oppressed... in direct contrast to the uncertain and heavy yoke of Pharisaic legalism and brutal force of Roman occupation.

After his entry into Jerusalem but before his trial and Passion—somewhere between the cheering crowds and the jeering crowds— Jesus rejects the hypocrisy of the age, declaring, “All

who exalt themselves will be humbled and all who humble themselves will be exalted” (Mt 23.12). Isn’t that a message our world should embrace right now?!

Indeed, the whole story of Jesus’ Palm Sunday entrance into the Holy City emphasizes the difference between what society expects and the reality with which God moves. Our mighty ruler and King did not come dressed in armor and riding upon a war stallion... but rode humbly, in the robes of a meek, lowly shepherd upon a donkey/colt. It's this same meek and peaceful King who will remain calm and display noble humility under persecution by the Chief priests and Elders (Mt 26:52) and the Roman Governor (Mt 26.64).

The ultimate salvation of humanity is the result of our humble Messiah’s obedience and meekness in accepting suffering and death on a cross. Jesus takes up the ultimate aspect our human condition, through his death, and it was then that divinity and humanity were united! So, for all who have tasted the bitterness of feeling alone, and for all who have suffered or are suffering pain, God is present. As the one who humbled himself, Jesus still provides us an example today of calm and steady movement through this tumultuous world. †