

## *Where Do We See Ourselves in this Story?*

Luke 19:28-40 (April 10, 2022)

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<sup>28</sup>After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. <sup>29</sup>When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, <sup>30</sup>saying, “Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>31</sup>If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it.’” <sup>32</sup>So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. <sup>33</sup>As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” <sup>34</sup>They said, “The Lord needs it.” <sup>35</sup>Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. <sup>36</sup>As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. <sup>37</sup>As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, <sup>38</sup>saying, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!” <sup>39</sup>Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” <sup>40</sup>He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.”

### *Historical Context*

There is no mention of waving palms in Luke’s account, perhaps because that detail wouldn’t have meant much to Luke’s Gentile audience. Along with symbolizing victory and peace, the palms were part of the Festival of Sukkot (Booths), when the Jewish people remembered the time God protected and provided for them while wandering in the desert. Hence, some of its symbolism wouldn’t have the same value for listeners of non-Jewish heritage.

### *Theme: Where Do We See Ourselves in this Story?*

Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem is royal, triumphant, but we know how the people will turn against Jesus. We know that many in the crowds who hail Jesus as king on this Sunday will be crying out for his crucifixion by Friday. Perhaps they expected a mighty warrior-king who would drive out the Romans. Seeing Jesus held by Roman soldiers, weak and vulnerable, they will decide that he is not the king they want after all. In fact, supporting him could be downright dangerous.

“Where do we see ourselves in this story?” We have the advantage of 2000 years of hindsight, and it is easy to judge the characters in the story from a distance. But are we really so very different from them? How quickly does our faith falter when God does not deliver what we are expecting? How quickly does our discipleship falter when we realize the great cost and risks of following Jesus? How often do our self-serving instincts lead us to deny Jesus and his claim on our lives?

Luke’s passion story records a variety of human responses to Jesus — from faith and jubilant praise to mockery, hostility and violence. Yet throughout this story of vacillating human responses, of human blindness, weakness, and hardness of heart, one thing remains constant: God’s will to show mercy and to save. Without jumping ahead to the end of the story just yet, we can affirm that even in the midst of this human tragedy, God is at work for good.