

April 5, 2020

Franklin United Methodist Church
82 W. Central Street, Franklin



ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

Matthew 21:1-17 (18-46), *Common English Bible*

When they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus gave two disciples a task. ² He said to them, “Go into the village over there. As soon as you enter, you will find a donkey tied up and a colt with it. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, say that their master needs them.” He sent them off right away. ⁴ Now this happened to fulfill what the prophet said, ⁵ *Say to Daughter Zion, “Look, your king is coming to you, humble and riding on a donkey, and on a colt the donkey’s offspring.”* ⁶ The disciples went and did just as Jesus had ordered them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and laid their clothes on them. Then he sat on them.

⁸ Now a large crowd spread their clothes on the road. Others cut palm branches off the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ The crowds in front of him and behind him shouted, “*Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!*” ¹⁰ And when Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up. “Who is this?” they asked. ¹¹ The crowds answered, “It’s the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”

¹² Then Jesus went into the temple and threw out all those who were selling and buying there. He pushed over the tables used for currency exchange and the chairs of those who sold doves. ¹³ He said to them, “It’s written, *My house will be called a house of prayer.* But you’ve made it a hideout for crooks.”

¹⁴ People who were blind and lame came to Jesus in the temple, and he healed them. ¹⁵ But when the chief priests and legal experts saw the amazing things he was doing and the children shouting in the temple, “*Hosanna to the Son of David!*” they were angry. ¹⁶ They said to Jesus, “Do you hear what these children are saying?”

“Yes,” he answered. “Haven’t you ever read, *From the mouths of babies and infants you’ve arranged praise for yourself?*” ¹⁷ Then he left them and went out of the city to Bethany and spent the night there.

DISCUSSION STARTER:

Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem to the waving of palm branches and shouts of *hosanna* (Save us!) is attested to in each of the four gospels.

When you think about Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem, what comes to mind? What images do you think of?

On Palm Sunday, what traditions do you typically look forward to?

Matthew’s telling of Jesus’ “Triumphal Entry” into Jerusalem is unique in at least two ways. These adaptations (some might even claim contradictions with the other gospels) in Matthew’s story continue to move Matthew’s argument forward: Jesus is the long awaited Messiah. Just as Matthew’s telling of Jesus’ birth is laced with prophecy, so is his entrance into Jerusalem.

On what does Jesus ride into Jerusalem? Unlike kings and soldiers, Jesus rides on a donkey in Jerusalem. Or was it a colt? Or was it both? In Matthew, Jesus rides on both a donkey and a colt. While the logistics of this are hard for me to wrap my head around, Matthew’s Jesus rides both a donkey and her colt (or foal) into Jerusalem in fulfillment of the scriptures (see Zechariah 9:9).

His arrival “stirred up the city” (21:10). The people were “hootin’ and hollerin’” around him, cutting down palm branches and laying them before Jesus. The crowds caused such a raucous that people began to ask, “Who is this?”

In what ways do you celebrate (make a raucous about) the arrival of Jesus into your life? Does your celebrating lead people to ask what or who you are celebrating?

Upon arriving in the city, Jesus entered the temple. And, in a fit of furry (reminiscent of the prophets of old—Isaiah and Jeremiah), Jesus overturns tables, disrupts the commerce going on, and proclaims, “It’s written, *My house will be called a house of prayer.* But you’ve made it a hideout for crooks” (21:13). This too aligns with the scriptures (see Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11). With commerce stopped, Jesus welcomes the blind and lame into the temple (from which they were normally barred from entering) and he heals them. So often we think of Jesus cleansing the temple as being about commerce. It might be better understood as a removal of barriers to worship. By cleansing the temple, Jesus makes God’s house that which it is supposed to be. God, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, declares: “My house will be known as a house of prayer for all peoples says the Lord God, who gather’s Israel’s outcasts. I will gather still others to those I have already gathered” (Isaiah 56:7d-8).

Is there anything we do that keeps people from participating in God’s house? How can we help make God’s house, a house of prayer for all?

