

Sunday, March 24, 2024 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church
Bible Study
Palm / Passion Sunday
“Blessed Is the One”
Mark 11:1-11

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, have participants think of examples of when someone was extremely popular and then folks turned against them. (A winning football quarterback who throws an interception causing his team to lose to their biggest rival; an international soccer star who goes into a slump, can't seem to score a goal, and starts getting death threats; a male pop singer who starts regularly dating a woman and then the woman starts getting death threats, etc.)

Mark 11:1-11 Context. In Mark's account of Jesus' time in Jerusalem at the feast of Passover, from beginning to end the focus is on the Temple. As PHEME PERKINS writes in *The New Interpreter's Bible* (8.657), “This focus on the Temple makes it clear that the struggle between Jesus and his opponents concerns religious issues—specifically, who speaks God's word to the people.” And as the evangelist describes the details of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, he adds a number of details that subvert the view of Jesus as some kind of conquering political figure: he sends his disciples to secure an animal on which to ride – and more importantly, which he promises to return. The procession which follows is located at some distance from the city: at Bethphage and Bethany, across the valley from the Jerusalem. In addition, the evangelist wants us to understand that Jesus was not at the head of the procession: some went ahead, and others followed: Jesus was simply part of the throng of pilgrims who looked for that day when God's kingdom would be established. And when he finally arrived in the city, it was already late: everyone else had already gone home. He scouted out the Temple precincts (as though for the first time), and returned to Bethany with his disciples where they had lodging: no cleansing of the Temple, no confrontation with the religious authorities. What he thought he might do at the Temple would have to wait till the next day.

Read Mark 11:1-11

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn't make sense to you in the text?

Read Mark 11:1-11 again -

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- Today's passage is rich in connections to the Old Testament. In Mark 11:1-2, as Jesus and his disciples are approaching Jerusalem, Jesus instructs a couple of them to go ahead and find a colt that has never been ridden and bring it back to him. Look back at the prophetic Old Testament book of **Zechariah 9:9**. How does this passage relate to what is going on in Mark 11?
- Mark 11:8 indicates many people threw their cloaks on the road for Jesus (riding on the colt) to pass over. Check out **2 Kings 9:13**. According to this passage, throwing cloaks and palm branches on the road is a traditional way to welcome a new king. Do you think the Palm Sunday crowd was welcoming Jesus as a king? If so, what do you imagine were their expectations for their new king?
- According to Mark 11:9-10, those following Jesus into Jerusalem are shouting, "Hosanna" – a Hebrew word that means "save us." Why might the people have been shouting "save us" to Jesus? Do you think they wanted to be saved from their sins or saved from the Roman oppression they were living under?
- If you are familiar with the story of Jesus, you know that while "Holy Week" starts with the crowd in Jerusalem welcoming Jesus as a king, it ends with Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. Do you think the people who shouted "Hosanna" to Jesus early in the week were the same people who were shouting, "Crucify him," later in the week? If so, what caused them to change their feelings about Jesus? Or do you think these crowds might have been made up of different people? Why might different groups of people have had such different reactions to him? How has your understanding of and relationship with Jesus changed over time?
- How does our church help people grow in their understanding of and relationship to Jesus? Are there new approaches we might take to help people grow in their understanding of and relationship with Jesus?

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, end by praying the following or a similar prayer:

Lord Jesus, may we welcome you anew as king of our lives. May we continue to grow in our understanding of and commitment to you. When following you gets difficult, give us the strength to stay the course. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord's Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven
hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.