

Palm Sunday
Ps. 118:1–2, 19–29
Luke 19:28–40

Passion Sunday
Isa. 50:4–9a
Ps. 31:9–16
Phil. 2:5–11
Luke 22:14–23:56 or
Luke 23:1–49

What Sort of King?

Goal for the Session

Adults will consider the meaning of Jesus as Lord and King and commit to examining their own expectations of Jesus during Holy Week.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Luke 19:28–40; 23:1–49

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Jae Won Lee

Would turning around the way empires and their collaborators serve mammon rather than God be a reason to praise God and hail Jesus as a king who makes for peace? The acclamation of peace in heaven and glory in the highest should not be read only in terms of eschatology, especially for people who pray for God’s kingdom to come, as in Luke 11:2. Rather, inasmuch as Jerusalem is the point of contact between heaven and earth, affirming peace in heaven should anticipate pouring out peace on earth.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” George W. Stroup

In some forms of contemporary theology, Jesus serves as an example, perhaps even *the* example, of what we already believe about freedom and peace. When this happens, it is our prior notions of freedom and peace that tell us who Jesus is, and Jesus becomes captive to our ideologies. In the Gospels, however, Jesus stands in judgment of all our ideologies. His kingdom is not simply a verification of what we think God’s kingdom should be, as Peter discovered in Mark 8:31–33. It is Jesus, as he is given to us in the Gospels, who shows us what freedom truly is (Gal. 5:1) and what, or who, peace really is (Eph. 2:17–22).

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” William G. Carter

Halfway down the Mount of Olives, there is a small chapel in the shape of a teardrop. It is called Dominus Flevit (Latin for “the Lord weeps”). It is the traditional location where Jesus wept over the city. Pilgrims gather there to share the Eucharist as they move toward Jerusalem. As they view a city still divided, with people of different faiths squabbling over the same real estate, they pass the bread to the words, “This is my body, broken for you.” Then they share the cup of wine, saying, “This is the new covenant in my blood, shed for the forgiveness of sins.” It is a moment to recall the great cost of reconciliation, as God sent Jesus into the world to bring all back to God’s powerful love.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” H. Stephen Shoemaker

We have Jesus driving the money changers from the temple and saying, “It is written, ‘My house shall be a house of prayer’; but you have made it a den of robbers.” Jesus’ quotation from Jeremiah makes clear his challenge to the nation’s leadership: a call for righteousness and justice. A pondering of Jeremiah 7:3–11 is essential. Every day, as Jesus taught in the temple, religious leaders kept trying to find a way to kill him, but the people who heard him were “spellbound” (v. 48). The crowds that sang and waved palms and laid their garments are still with him, still part of the kingdom movement Jesus brought. Even us.

April 10, 2022
What Sort of King?

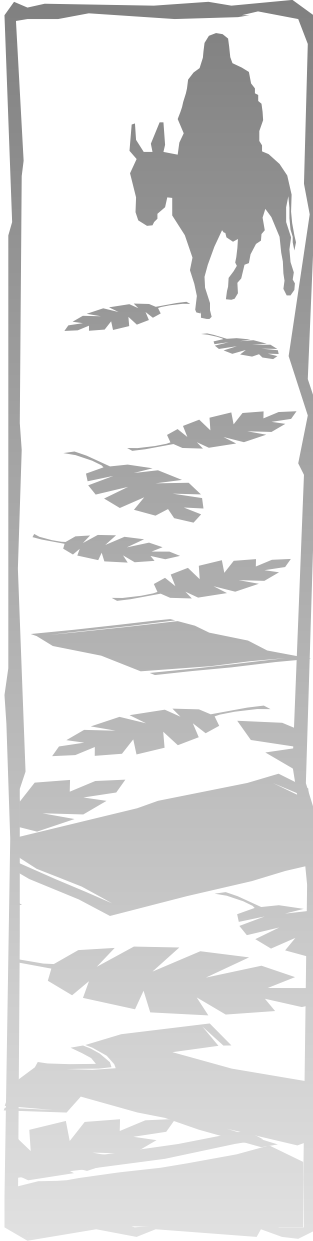
Teaching the Revised Common Lectionary

FEASTING on the WORD

CURRICULUM

Adult
Resource Sheet 2

What Sort of King?



The story of Jesus entering Jerusalem echoes Old Testament stories and prophecies about God's anointed king. The title *Messiah* means "anointed one." Jesus begins his journey to Jerusalem (King David's center of royal power) from the Mount of Olives, where the Lord God will become king over all the earth (Zechariah 14:4–9). Just as David's son Solomon rode upon a mule to his throne (1 Kings 1:32–48), Jesus rides on a colt while the people rejoice, in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9—"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you, triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey!" and "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Psalm 118:26). They spread their cloaks on the road, as people spread their garments before King Jehu (2 Kings 9:11–13).

With these deliberate reenactments of how an anointed king should enter Jerusalem, Jesus proclaims that he is the Messiah, the King of the Jews. The Pharisees try to silence the crowds for fear that the Roman soldiers will violently subdue them, because the triumphant parade resembles an insurrection (Luke 19:39; 23:5). The irony is that Jesus was not that sort of king. He was not riding on a warhorse. He had refused Satan's offer of absolute dominion (Luke 4:5–8). He did not come to overthrow the Roman Empire's rule by military might but to announce good news to the poor, release to the captives, and the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18–19), in fulfillment of Isaiah 58:6 and 61:1–2. Jesus did not come to dominate but to subvert the social and economic structures of the empire. In another irony, the Romans freed the murderer Barabbas (whose name means "son of the father"), a man who really was an insurrectionist (23:18–19), and they crucified Jesus, the Son of the Father, instead. The "daughters of Jerusalem," who once rejoiced, now mourn (23:28). Things certainly did not turn out as people expected.

The Gospel of Luke uses imperial words such as *basilea* (kingdom), *thronos* (throne), and *exousia* (power, authority) to describe God's reign. But these words have new meaning. As Mary proclaimed in the Magnificat, the poor and lowly will have status, while the rich and powerful are brought down (Luke 1:47–55).

Jesus was not the Messiah-King that people expected. Jesus confronted the empire, like Moses confronted Pharaoh (Exodus 5–11), but without freeing the people from its rule. He was the Son of David, but he did not restore Israel as a nation. He was a martyr, but he did not defend his actions or make heroic speeches (2 Maccabees 6–7; 4 Maccabees 5–14; Acts 7:1–53). Instead, Jesus came as a "suffering servant" (Isaiah 52:13–53:12), who was afflicted but did not open his mouth, and who was led like a lamb to the slaughter (Isaiah 53:7).