24-30 March 2024 What kind of king is Jesus?

Mark 11: 1-11

**11**As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, **2**saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. **3**If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’”

**4**They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, **5**some people standing there asked, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” **6**They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. **7**When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. **8**Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. **9**Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

“Hosanna![[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+11%3A1-11&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24650a)]”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+11%3A1-11&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24650b)]

**10**“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!”

“Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

**11**Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

**Bible notes**

In their waiting for the fulfilment of the new covenant, and their anticipation of a new leader from God who will set them free in the way they experienced freedom at the Exodus, God’s people have particular ideas about their expected Messiah. Mark writes for a Jewish audience who will be aware of the weight of expectation; he doesn’t explain this but sets out clearly the kind of Messiah he perceives Jesus to be:

* An animal that is designated to be ridden by a king should not be ridden by anyone else, hence the note that the colt has never been ridden. A military leader would ride a horse, but Jesus rides a colt, a young donkey, as spoken of by Zephaniah, demonstrating that his leadership will not be overthrowing the ruling forces with an army.
* The spreading of cloaks on the ground was the way in which the people would declare their new king and their allegiance to him and, by inference, a vote of no confidence in the existing ruler.
* The waving of palm branches was used in the celebration of victory, and to honour royalty.
* The shouting of ‘hosanna’ – ‘save!’ – was an expression of both deliverance and praise. The verse from Psalm 118 reinforces this.

Jesus appears in control of this event; he has made the necessary plans and makes this public entry into Jerusalem with the minimum of fuss and in a non-threatening manner. He looks at the Temple, and then leaves without event or challenge. It is the response of the people that raises the stakes here, and this gives us some sense of the volatile situation in Jerusalem ahead of the imminent celebration of the Passover, the ultimate freedom festival recalling the exodus from Egypt.

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

What would you do if the king was coming to your local town? How would you prepare? Where would you roll out the red carpet? What would you do to ensure his security, to manage the crowds, to facilitate a welcome? Jesus didn’t engage with any of these things. His entrance was planned to be both low-key and make a statement; his welcome was spontaneous. Where would you have been in this?

**Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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**Questions**

* What point do you think the cartoonist is making here?
* What different kind of king might Jesus have been?
* What kind of welcome might Jesus get in today’s world?

**Prayer**

Adapt to your local context.

Almighty God, we praise you for calling disciples to follow Jesus, for their lives and their witness, for their successes and failures. We praise you for the way you reveal yourself to us through people and events, through noise and silence, through light and dark. We praise you for revealing yourself to us through Gospel stories, the writings of the prophets and the letters written by your early followers. We praise you for revealing yourself to us in the ordinary events of life and the extraordinary events and encounters that amaze and startle us. For all of this and so much more we praise you, O God; in the name of Jesus, King of kings.
**Amen.**

## **A prayer to end the Bible study**

As the crowds gathered to welcome and celebrate the coming kingdom of freedom, peace and justice, so we lay ourselves before our donkey-riding King, Jesus Christ our Lord.
Let his vision be our vision, his Kingdom be our kingdom, his call be our call, his journey be our journey, and his life, death and resurrection be our salvation.
Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
**Amen.**

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