

## From Matthew 21, 26 and 27

March 29, 2026

### PALM SUNDAY STORY

*With the entry into Jerusalem, we enter with the disciples into the drama of Holy Week. There is a mixture of joy, fear, sorrow, grief, pain, confusion, and hope within the Palm and Passion stories - just as there is in each of our lives. We have turned a corner, and are now on a tumultuous journey.*

It is the season of Passover, the season where every man, woman and child of Israel remembers the escape from bondage, oppression and death; where every man, woman and child dreams of a new Moses and a new promised land. Along with the hundreds of Hebrews who make their way to the Holy City for the festival, there comes a man whose reputation precedes him. There comes a man about whom there are many stories, about whose miracles and wonders there is much speculation. For many, the stories are all they have of him. And then there's a growing commotion. It is said that he will come among them, that they will get to see him for themselves. Could he be – he who heals the sick and raises the dead and talks about forgiving sins and about heaven – could he be the promised Messiah?

Finally they spot him, a speck on the horizon. As he draws nearer, perhaps there were some who wondered. He didn't really look like a Messiah. What's he doing riding a donkey? What's he doing talking about suffering and dying? What's he doing weeping over the holy city?

What should a Messiah look like? That day, Jesus must have looked into the eyes of each person along the route. Being able to read people as he could, Jesus must have known for what/whom they are looking. And despite the fact that they had, in many important ways, gotten it wrong, Jesus accepts them. He receives their shouts of acclamation and praise. As he had done all his life, he loves each one, longs for them to get what his life was all about – finally. And he forgives them for not getting it. He accepts them and pours out his love for them.

In many ways, the people who met Jesus wanted a Messiah who would fix their lives, who would carry the loads they bore. They wanted a military strength, a conquering hero, a political genius. They wanted him to relieve them of the burden of poverty, hard times, future uncertainties.

And Jesus offered them salvation, gave his life to remove the burden of sin and hopelessness, of human suffering and defeat from their lives and from the life of humanity forever. Jesus offered them a way back to the Creator – to a restored relationship with the Creator.

“If she expects to be treated like a queen, she should dress like a queen!” If Jesus wants us to know that he's the Messiah, what's he doing riding a donkey? What's he doing talking about suffering and dying? What's he doing weeping over the holy city?

“Of his own free will, he gave up all he had, and took the nature of a servant. ... he was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death – his death on the cross.” [from Phil. 2:7,8]

That Palm Sunday morning, Jesus travelled the road that led to Jerusalem, and from there, to Gethsemane and Golgotha and Calvary; a road that would bring salvation to sinners; the only road the servant of God could travel.

## MAUNDY THURSDAY STORY

Still today, in Jewish homes, the Passover meal begins with a child asking the question, “Why is this night different from all other nights?” As the meal progresses, the food, ripe with symbolism, is shared, and the story is told in answer to the child’s enquiry - “Why is this night different from all other nights?”

It is explained that the unleavened bread is a reminder that when our ancestors left the slavery of Egypt, they had no time to bake bread, no time to allow the yeast to rise. They had to be ready to leave in an instant. And the bitter herbs are a reminder of how bitter our ancestors’ lives were as slaves in Egypt. The salt water, into which the parsley is dipped symbolize the tears of our ancestors. And so the story unfolds in Jewish households, with the lamb and an egg as the final symbols. The lamb is a reminder of the lambs that were sacrificed and of the blood placed on the doorposts so that the angel of death would pass over their ancestors’ homes. The egg is a symbol of new life and is brought as a free-will offering to the temple on all festivals.

At the end of the Passover meal, the child who has repeatedly asked the question “Why is this night different from all other nights?”, responds with humble certitude, “This night truly is different from other nights!”

Jesus gathers with the disciples to remember, to celebrate the Passover and to partake of a meal with them. This night, Jesus remembers. And when the supper ended, they sang a hymn and went out, coming eventually to a garden, called Gethsemane. In the garden, Jesus comes to his Father in prayer. “My Father, if it is possible ... My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it ... My Father, if this cup ...” Each time, Jesus returns to his friends for support. Each time, they are asleep. They don’t understand what is happening. Each time, Jesus returns to ask again, “If it be possible...” Each time, he bows to the Father’s will - “yet not what I want but what you want.” And, “your will be done.”

## GOOD FRIDAY STORY

All has been accomplished in Jesus’ death. He has provided the bridge to close the chasm between the Creator and the created. In his life, Jesus embodies our God who loves us and longs for our joy, our wholeness, our salvation ... who longs for intimacy and relationship with us. In his death, Jesus finishes the work of reconciliation, of bringing us to the Father who waits to host a party in our honour, who waits with ring and shoes, banquet and fine robes, who waits with love and forgiveness.

Jesus’ final act in death was to place his whole being into God’s hands. His work, finished; his triumph complete, he dies as he has lived, trusting in God absolutely, finding his strength and his comfort in his

Father.

