

Palm Sunday - Jesus comes as king

Matthew 21:1-11 (CEV)

When Jesus and his disciples came near Jerusalem, he went to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives and sent two of them on ahead. ² He told them, "Go into the next village, where you will at once find a donkey and her colt. Untie the two donkeys and bring them to me. ³ If anyone asks why you are doing that, just say, 'The Lord needs them.' Right away he will let you have the donkeys."

⁴ So God's promise came true, just as the prophet had said,

⁵ "Announce to the people of Jerusalem: 'Your king is coming to you! He is humble and rides on a donkey. He comes on the colt of a donkey.'"

⁶ The disciples left and did what Jesus had told them to do. ⁷ They brought the donkey and its colt and laid some clothes on their backs. Then Jesus got on.

⁸ Many people spread clothes in the road, while others put down branches which they had cut from trees. ⁹ Some people walked ahead of Jesus and others followed behind. They were all shouting,

"Hooray for the Son of David! God bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hooray for God in heaven above!"

¹⁰ When Jesus came to Jerusalem, everyone in the city was excited and asked, "Who can this be?"

¹¹ The crowd answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus rode into Jerusalem to deal with a coronavirus pandemic.

Jesus rides a donkey into Jerusalem. Jesus comes as king. He's surrounded by a crowd of noisy supporters, singing and waving branches and the whole city wonders what's going on.

Who is this one who comes? What is he going to do? Matthew tells us Jerusalem was shaken, this is a seismic event.

How can this be? How can a mild and gentle 'visitor', who comes on a donkey surrounded by ordinary unarmed people shake Jerusalem at its foundations?

Is this a joke? I wonder whether some thought Jesus looked like a joke.

But this is no joke! Although Jesus comes gentle and vulnerable, with the appearance of weakness, he comes with the power and backing of universal love. With that power he'll unseat all the powers competing for a share of what belongs to God alone.

'Turn back to God' is the message of John the baptiser and Jesus, because people had turned their backs on God and gone their own way. We've turned away - we've gone our own way.

Jesus was such a threat to the controlling powers they used all the power they had to eliminate him - but in the end their power was useless against the power of love, against the power of life. But now we're dealing with the meaning of Easter.

Back to Palm Sunday - Jesus rode into Jerusalem to deal with a coronavirus pandemic - not COVID-19 which is our current problem, but ADAM-1 which is a chronic problem infecting us all.

Both, COVID-19 and ADAM-1, it seems, began with eating.

Both are highly contagious, although ADAM-1 makes COVID-19 look rather amateur.

Both have turned the world upside down.

But unlike the COVID-19 pandemic the ADAM-1 pandemic infects every single human - bar one. The only one not infected with the virus rides a donkey into Jerusalem. No wonder Jerusalem is shaking - this is a seismic event. This event not only shakes Jerusalem but the whole world.

The story of the origin of the ADAM-1 virus is told in Genesis chapter 3.

Adam and Eve chose to leave God's way and go their own way.

Adam and Eve decided to take the crown of God and wear it themselves. They attempted to take into their own hands the authority and power belonging to God alone. They went their own way. Lured by the promise of 'more' they got much more than they bargained for.

ADAM-1 - we'd normally call this virus 'sin'. At its heart, its DNA, we find selfishness. I want to be number one. I want to do it my way. I want to be my own god. Let me wear the crown.

That's why I've called it coronavirus - ADAM-1, because the Latin word for crown is 'corona'. Let me be god, let me wear the crown - coronavirus ADAM-1.

As soon as Adam and Eve caught the virus we find them hiding from each other and hiding from God. The blame game, we're so very aware of, begins. Adam blames both Eve and God. Eve blames the snake, and according to the old joke, the snake didn't have a leg to stand on.

It's not long and blame leads to violence. Cain, in jealous anger, kills his brother Abel. The crown they're wearing is losing its shine.

The ADAM-1 virus meant they were doing it their way instead of God's way. They'd turned their backs on God. It wasn't pretty.

Have you seen any evidence of ADAM-1 recently? Can you think of any recent examples of selfishness? Does toilet paper come to mind? I wonder what Freud would say about that? Or Winnie the Pooh? Or Jesus? It isn't pretty.

Which virus creates more fear, COVID-19 or ADAM-1? Jesus has something to say about that. He said don't be afraid of anyone that can kill your body, and that could include anything. In Matthew 10:28-30 Jesus says;

Don't be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Aren't two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. ³⁰ And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don't be afraid; you're worth more than many sparrows. ADAM-1 has eternal consequences.

Jesus rode into Jerusalem. People wanted him to use his power to oust the enemy, the Romans. Today we'd like Jesus to smash the coronavirus COVID-19.

But Jesus comes to deal with ADAM-1. Jesus comes to take the crown back and look what it's become - an ugly, painful crown of thorns. Jesus wears that crown because he loves us. He comes to wear the crown for you and me. To put an end to the blame game. To put an end to violence. To shake the world with the universal power of love, the love and power of God for us. He takes the blame and the violence to put an end to both.

Don't be afraid. The worst COVID-19 can do is kill us. But because Jesus has won the battle over the ADAM-1 virus he promises us life and love in the presence of God for eternity.

This is the beginning of the week we call Holy Week. A week to focus on Jesus, God's gift of love. Jesus loves you and makes you holy in God's sight. It's his gift to you. Jesus is with you and will bless your holy week.

And the peace of God which passes all human understanding keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus. Amen.