

## A Royal Entrance

*“When he came near... the whole crowd began joyfully to praise God in loud voices... ‘Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!’”*

*-- Luke 19:37-38*

Having ‘stolen’ a passage that is normally read a few weeks later, we began our Lenten focus this past Sunday by reading this passage in an allegorical way. Lent is a season of repentance and preparation, getting ourselves ready for a deep and life-changing encounter with Jesus at Easter. In one sense it is a dynamic interplay between us drawing near to God in devotion and Him drawing near to us in mercy. And for this reason the passage we chose served us well, because it offers us a vivid picture of what it looked like when Jesus drew near to Jerusalem at the start of His dramatic final week in this world, and offers us the possibility of imagining what it might be like when Jesus draws near to us during this Lenten season.

There are at least three things that we learn about Jesus from his entrance into Jerusalem, and these three things will help us to respond to Him in His drawing near to us during Lent. *Firstly*, it was an act of tremendous courage and defiance. No man with a price on his head will enter a city where his enemies live with the sound a singing crowd. If he had to enter Jerusalem at all it would have surely made more sense to slip in unannounced and hide in a friend’s home where it was safe and his life was not in danger. But Jesus does the opposite he announces his arrival to all! Jesus applies great courage when he draws near, whether to Jerusalem all those centuries ago, or to us even today. He makes himself vulnerable to abuse and rejection all for the sake of drawing near to us and inviting us to respond to him and welcome him. Will we honour his courage by welcoming him, or will we stand with the crowds that rejected him? *Secondly*, it was an act that made an unmistakable claim. We might well ask why Jesus was so loud about his entry. There is a fine line between courage and foolishness, isn’t there? Jesus announced his entry in no uncertain terms because he was claiming to be the long-expected King. His actions were an obvious fulfilment of Zechariah’s prophecy (Zech. 9:9) and he did this so that his people would see him for who he was. When Jesus draws near to us it is not just as a temporary guest or a curious visitor; he draws near as our King. We either welcome Him as our King and Lord, or we do not welcome him at all! Lent is a time for us to re-evaluate our lives and re-commit to Jesus in the fullest sense – total surrender of our lives to our King. *Finally*, it was an act that compels a response. Jesus was courageous and his claim was unmistakable, this means that there must be a response. We cannot sit on the fence, we cannot abstain from the vote, and we cannot conveniently ‘stay out of it’. We must make a choice and respond. When the Pharisees told Jesus to quiet his disciples he said to them that if the disciples would not sing then even “the stones will cry out!” Singing there must be, a response is compelled, if not from us then from somewhere else, but the response will come.

The question is simple... Will we honour the courage Jesus shows in drawing near to us and claiming to be our King by singing with the disciples and welcoming him into our lives, or will we leave it to the rocks to do the singing and side instead with the Pharisees?