

**Scenes on the Way to the Cross
Mark 11: 1-11
Jon Frost**

Palm Sunday - it is Passover time in Jerusalem and Jesus enters the city during the most politically volatile Jewish festival of the year at a time when he is also well aware there are plots to end his life. From recent scholarship we learn that Jesus' entry into the city was not random. It was a planned demonstration critiquing the powers at the helm of another type of entry into Jerusalem, which happened every year. With hundreds of thousands of pilgrims flocking to Jerusalem for Passover, the governor, Pilate, would ride into the city from his coastal residence with soldiers for the purpose of intimidation and to squash the potential for any would be riots.

There were two processions into the city and Jesus makes explicit what has throughout the gospels been implicit. Jesus is the long awaited king, yes, but he is utterly different than the kings of this world. The tension is just about at the breaking point.

Today, we simply enter the story, dropping in on various scenes after that entry into Jerusalem, listening to Scripture as well as imagined reactions from a Pharisee, a trader in the temple, a fellow Bethany houseguest, and the disciple Judas.

Pharisee Ann

You have it coming to you!

There is a time for poking fun at what is serious in politics and religion. But there is a line between jesting and flat out bad judgment, which you obviously don't recognize.

Riding on a donkey, with your starry-eyed friends throwing their shirts off their backs in front of you, and doing this in "royal style"...

That may be quite the laugh when the streets are dark but NOT in the light of day in the most sacred week of the year.

Those who do that must be prepared for the consequences!

Jon

If they thought that was bad, Jesus was just getting started. Because of the crowds in the city, they had to spend the nights outside the city - in their case Bethany. The next day, Mark's Gospel continues,

Mark 11: 15-19

...they came to Jerusalem. And Jesus entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers."

And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching. And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

Trader – Don

You have it coming to you.

The police saw you, the priests saw you, the people saw you...and though they cheered don't be deluded.

"The temple is a house of prayer" - of course it is. Who would disagree? But if so, why make such a mess? Was looting it really necessary just to make a point?

Of course, if it's sensationalism you're after, you are going the right way about it. You might say that people are more important than sparrows. But send holy doves scurrying into the air and soon you'll discover what's really sacred.

Jon

Jesus had gone too far. His words and actions in the temple were scandalous, heretical even. He had challenged Rome and now the religious power structures at the epicenter of the Jewish faith - the temple. The path to the cross is now inevitable.

Mark 14: 3-9

While Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. But some were there who said to one another in anger, "Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they scolded her. But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."

Houseguest - Jennie

You have it coming to you.

You are taking God outside the walls of our holy building without permission.

You sit with the unemployed and pretend that God is there. You let this woman grovel all over you, being so wasteful in the process, and somehow make us feel like the ones in the wrong. Not surprising though, because all along you've smiled at all the wrong kinds of people that we all know are beyond hope, yet you maintain that God loves them.

You cannot do this to God. You cannot take him wherever you want to go. Worse still - you cannot say that he is there already...unless of course, you don't believe in the God we believe in... in which case, we have nothing to learn, but plenty to teach you.

Jon

Even as the stage of the Gospels gets bigger and bigger, we never lose sight of the intimate relationships at the core of Jesus' ministry. These relationships were put to the test, and none were more tragic than this.

Mark 14: 10-11

Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray Jesus to them. When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

Judas - Chris

You have it coming to you. And I am going to help it happen.

Three years I've watched you, listened to you, copied you and have been let down.

For at the moment when you could have triumphed, at the time when you had the crowds eating out of your hand; whenever people were ready for something big, what do you do?

You back down; away into the hills for a wander...sneak away down a side street, say, "Enough...enough...there will be another time!"

Well, the time is coming and things are now in motion. Since you will not confront the powers, whether you like it or not, they will come to you. Then all eyes will be on you. It's your chance to finally show who you are and what you can do.

Jon

This week our theme is Again and Again we draw on courage. GK Chesterton once wrote, "Christianity alone has felt that God, to be wholly God, must have been a rebel as well as a king. Alone of all creeds, Christianity has added courage to the virtues of the Creator. For the only courage worth calling courage must necessarily mean that the soul passes a breaking point - and does not break."

This Holy Week, we will once again see who Jesus really is and what he can do. Lord, Jesus, ride on, ride on, in majesty. Amen.

Resources

Chesterton, Gilbert Keith. *Orthodoxy*. Hendrickson Publishers, 2014.

Stages on the Way. Wild Goose Resource Group of the Iona Community, 1998.