

# Coffee to Go | Palm Sunday | Year C

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Palm Sunday, Holy Week, Gospel of Luke, humility, service, liberation.

## SPEAKERS

Karin Peter, Blake Smith

### **Karin Peter** 00:27

Welcome to Coffee to Go where we center ourselves in the scriptures, seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition. I'm Karin Peter, here with Blake Smith, and we welcome you on the journey. Today is Palm Sunday, which begins the events that lead up to the crucifixion of Jesus on Good Friday. Palm Sunday is the beginning of Holy Week. And Holy Week are all the events that we observe between this Sunday, Palm Sunday, and Easter Sunday. So, we'll have episodes this week on Thursday called Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. So, our question, as always, is, where are we with Jesus this week? And we are spending this Palm Sunday with Luke's version of Jesus entering Jerusalem. So. Blake...

### **Blake Smith** 01:25

Alright. Well, we are in the Gospel of Luke, and we are in the 19th chapter. It is the 28th through the 40th verse.

After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, Why are you untying it? Just say this, The Lord needs it." So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, Its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" And they said, "The Lord needs it." Then they brought it to Jesus, and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. Now he, as he was approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord, Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heaven." Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." He answered them, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

So why does this matter? Well, the Westminster Study Bible calls this a piece of political pageantry. And a couple of interesting things about the passage, one of the Synoptic Gospels. Here on Palm Sunday, Luke is the only one who doesn't mention the palms. And the other thing that I think is interesting, if, if not necessary to mention, Luke is very specific here and says, you know, to go, and, Jesus tells His disciples to go and find the colt that has not been ridden. The reason I find that very

interesting and important is because, so, this is an unbroken cult. It's a donkey which, at least reputation has, is stubborn to begin with. So, but it has not been broken, so no one has ever ridden it. And not only is Jesus going to ride it for the first time, but he's going to ride it in the midst of a shouting crowd, which would most likely absolutely agitate the cult. But what's important here is that it's a sign that Jesus is in control that, and that's important because this is not something that Jesus is being forced to do. He is choosing to do this. He's in control of the situation. He's in control of his choices. And he is making this political pageantry statement, if you will. And it represents some important things. He's entering, not as a hero. Most of these disciples, all of this multitude that is gathered, have probably, not necessarily, but probably witnessed something similar in a pageant with a king arriving in town or a war hero, and it would be, in those cases, a symbol, not only of conquests in the past, but the promise of conquests in the future. And when we hear the words Hosanna in the highest, I know I would speak for myself, I used to think, you know, just think of Hallelujah. Hey, he's coming. It's but really, Hosanna is a cry for help, if you will, they're help, they're calling out help us. They are looking forward to this king, this Messiah, coming in and saving them. But he comes in not as a hero. He comes in just like a common laborer. He's on a beast of burden, a working animal, just like the poor and the working class people might have done. And of course, like I said, he's the only one that doesn't mention the branches. But we might imagine that here on this Palm Sunday, they're not throwing roses and expensive flowers, they're using what they have. These are humble surroundings. The message is one of humility and service and also solidarity with, and accessibility for the poor and the working class. [Yeah] and I think we just, we really have to pick up on that. It's, it's so relevant in our own world today. So I think it's important piece. When Luke is writing this scene, Jerusalem and the temple have already been destroyed. So, it's a fact that Luke, through his gospel, assigns blame to the failure of the people to recognize Jesus as Lord. And so, we're in a this moment of Jesus coming in, and what the people are thinking of as Jesus coming in as Lord, and what is actually happening are in a lot of ways completely different, because, again, they're asking for Jesus to save us, which he will, but not in the way that they're asking for.

**Karin Peter 07:15**

Yeah, they're looking for a physical being saved from oppression or to be saved and restored to power, or be saved out of poverty or illness or all of these other kind of specific things. When they talk about liberate us and save us, we assign it theological meaning, which is which it's actually somewhere in between those two things. It is a political statement of solidarity with the poor, but it's also a discipleship statement of modeling humility and service. Yes, there's a lot. There's a lot happening in this small scene.

**Blake Smith 07:58**

There really is. And at the core of this, this idea of saving is liberation, and liberation, and it begs the question, so these people are asking for a particular kind of liberation, as you said, we might talk about a the lot, a theological type of liberation. So a question that we might ask ourselves this week on Palm Sunday is from what do I seek liberation? [Yeah] and that can be anywhere along the spectrum, so, but we need to think about that for ourselves. Another question we might ask is, do I recognize the ministry and message of Jesus as important in my life? And, do I seek praise and approval at the expense of ethical or responsible choices?

**Karin Peter** 08:56

Ouch, that's a hard way to look at humility.

**Blake Smith** 09:00

Yeah. I mean, Jesus was, I mean, he had everything going for him. He these people were giving him all the praise and approval he could expect, but he wasn't making the choices that they were expecting. [Yeah] So we need to think about the choices that we make. Finally, I think this idea of humility is so important. I think a question we should ask is, How do I model humility and service in my own life?

**Karin Peter** 09:30

Yeah, that is a phrase that stays with us all through Holy Week, doesn't it? Yeah, humility and service. So maybe this week, even though Luke doesn't mention the palms, what I do like is that when you read all of the gospel kind of stories together and get this image in your mind and becomes a tradition of palms, the reality is it was palms because of where they lived. It wasn't palms because they were palms. So, we have to remember that it's like where I live, it would be fur branches or cedar branches, right, that we break off and use where you where you live, it would be this time of year, probably fizzes or pussy willows or something like that that hasn't yet, or that are early blooming branches. If you live in the tropics, it might be those big fat tropical leaves you see little frogs sitting on in the documentaries on Discovery Channel, whatever it is they were grabbing what they had at hand. And so let's do the same. If it's autumn where you are, then then pick some lovely autumn branches. If it's still winter and spring hasn't reared its hopeful head, then pick some bare branches, but put them in a vase and put it somewhere where you can see it to remind you about this modeling humility and service to community as we go through Holy Week.

**Blake Smith** 11:00

Alright? Well, our blessing today is a little different than some of the blessings that we've had before. It's a blessing of humility and solidarity. It's by Brian, Doyle, and Doyle, I'm sorry, and it's from a book of uncommon prayer. I want you to take just a second and think about the unusual names, the old names, when you think about back in your family tree, your family history, what are some of those names? I think about Bernard and Myrtle and Dora and Ethel, and some of those, so

**Karin Peter** 11:34

Henrietta and [Henrietta, yeah] in mine.

**Blake Smith** 11:40

So just as you think of those, you'll hear you'll hear some others in this blessing, but allow yourself to connect with that.

This is "Prayer for Women Named Ethel and Men Named Elmer." For we will not see their likes again. Also, Edna and Edith and Eustace and cool, hoary names like that, that reek of American character and dignity and hard work and lace doilies on Sunday before the roast. For all the brave, tough, quiet, generous, unassuming souls who came before us and built this country, and built our cities, and farmed the generous land, and raised their children, and never asked for much except a chance to breathe free and love wildly. For all those who bore names that we would grin at today, but they didn't think were

funny. For their rough, worn hands and there seemed leathery faces that endured a lot of weather and war and pain and loss, but they kept working and loving anyway. For those who came to this country with names in other languages and forged new lives but never lost their love for the lands they left behind. For those who bear the names of their brave, wild, sweet ancestors with pride. For those who name their children for extraordinary souls, in the fervent hope something of the sanctity and courage of the named will shower their beloved new babies. For names which were mere sounds and handles which mean so much to so many. And so, Amen.

Well, thanks for joining us here today, on this Palm Sunday for Coffee to Go, we invite you to join us throughout this week of Holy Week for some special editions and anytime for Coffee to Go, and the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.