

Palm Sunday Paradox

Introduction

Do you remember how, as a kid, you enjoyed *Opposite Day*? On that day, everything you said was just the opposite of what you meant. It was fun for a while, but the fun wore off pretty fast. Too tiring! So, when Jesus came preaching and teaching about God's reign, much of what he said was like Opposite Day. "The first will be last..." "To be great, you must serve..." "If you lose your life, you'll find it." These are the realities of God's reign expressed in paradox. What you might expect is the opposite of what Jesus said and did. The Christian path is full of paradoxes!

Discussion Questions for Mark 11:1-10

1. Up until now, Jesus avoided being a public spectacle. As he entered Jerusalem for the Passover celebration, he made a point to be the center of attention. Why the change in his approach? What was the response of the people?
2. He rode a donkey. Really? A donkey? Why did Jesus choose that humble animal to ride in what turned into a parade? (Hint: Read Zechariah 9:9-11.)
3. At the same time Jesus entered Jerusalem from the east, Pontius Pilate entered from the west. His parade was full of pomp and circumstance, white stallions, music, soldiers marching, banners, and chariots. Pilate was there to make sure the Passover celebration didn't get out of hand, so he flexed his muscles with this show of power. What significance do you sense from the opposite ways of entering the city? If Jesus was acting out what God's reign was like, what was his message?
4. Pilate met Jesus on the following Friday. How did the collision of God's reign and Roman domination work out (a) short term; (b) long term?
5. How is the Christian path opposite from the worldly path? Do you sometimes struggle with knowing which path to travel? How does society influence your choices? How does Jesus's teaching influence your choices? What paradoxes do you see?
6. How may we pray for you this week?

Prayer

Holy Spirit, give me wisdom and discernment to travel the right paths. When temptation or confusion comes, give me clarity. When I'm tired, give me renewed focus. As I walk with Jesus, remind me that I can invite others to come alongside and walk with us. May my path give honor to the Jesus I follow. Amen.