

Mark has no palms but rather “leafy branches”. So if we only had the gospel of Mark this would be “leafy branch” Sunday. And if we relied on Luke we could have “Clothes and Garment Sunday” as that is the gospel where the crowd lay garments before the arriving Lord.

John it is who gives us the palms. So that indicates to me the things that were waved and strewn are not the focus but the one who comes and the method of arrival.

Mark does not give all that many verses to the Triumphant Entry on Palm Sunday. A relatively paltry eleven verses and Mark spends *more than half* of those eleven verses detailing the odd procurement of Jesus’ donkey. By contrast Mark devotes 115 verses to the Tuesday of Jesus’ last week.

Anyone familiar with the book of Zechariah would immediately recognize why Mark spent so many precious verses on the simple act of getting the donkey. Zechariah 9:9 says,

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Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, *humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey*. He will *cut off the chariot* from Ephraim *and the war horse* from Jerusalem; and the *battle bow shall be cut off*, and he shall *command peace* to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River [Euphrates] to the ends of the earth.

Many commentators have speculated that Mark emphasizes the details of retrieving the donkey to give his readers time to have “ears to hear” the allusion to Zechariah’s prophecy: the one who comes riding on a donkey will nonviolently bring peace.

Because the Roman state always made a show of force during the Jewish Passover when pilgrims thronged to Jerusalem to celebrate their political liberation from Egypt centuries earlier two political processions entering Jerusalem that Friday morning in the spring of AD 30. In a bold parody of imperial politics, king Jesus descended the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem from the east in fulfillment of Zechariah's ancient prophecy: "Look, your king is coming to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Matthew 21:5 = Zechariah 9:9). From the west, the Roman governor Pilate entered Jerusalem with all the pomp of state power. Pilate's brigades showcased Rome's military might, power and glory. Jesus's triumphal entry, by stark contrast, was an anti-imperial and anti-triumphal "counter-procession" of peasants

that proclaimed an alternate and subversive community that for three years he had called "the kingdom of God."

Show slides of heads of state/celebrities arriving in cities

Maybe the correct way to understand it as satire, parody, a piece of highly orchestrated tree theatre/protest by Jesus.

The next day, Jesus continued the trajectory that had begun with his unusual entry to Jerusalem when he overturned the tables in the Temple to interrupt, if only briefly, business as usual. As indicated by the odd symbolism of the fig tree, Jesus' issue was that the current religious and political establishment, like the troublesome fig tree, was not bearing fruit.

Suddenly, we find Jesus making broad, increasingly public and controversial demonstrations in the big city of Jerusalem in the middle of Passover (the height of the pilgrimage season) in contrast to merely making controversial teachings in the small towns and villages around Galilee. I do not think that Jesus wanted to die, but his passion for justice and his anger at injustice — a passion and anger he inherited from the Hebrew prophets before him — led him to take increasingly large risks to show the contrast between the *status quo* (where Herod was king) and the *kingdom* of God. These risky acts of nonviolent activism led directly to Jesus' tragic martyrdom.

Funny how we always think we will be glad to see Justice come and be made manifest on this earth. Let me put it this way if we could get a score for how well off we are on a global scale right now and then Justice and equality came to reign on the earth do you think your score would go up or down?

This Holy Week, may Mark's story of Jesus continues to haunt us, to challenge us, and to inspire us as we discern how God is calling us — today, in our time and place — to follow the Jesus' risky way of nonviolent activism, loving-kindness, and gracious compassion.