

Message: Who is Jesus?

“Do you hear it?”

Mark’s gospel is brief and to the point. It asks us a question:

“Who is Jesus?”

Prior to his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, we could say many things about **Jesus as a person**. Jesus is a good man, humble, gentle, steadfast, loving, peaceful, kind and faithful. He loves his family. Jesus helps others and he surrounds himself with disciples who do the same.

Jesus was a leader. Based on the things people saw him do and the letters they wrote, Jesus was known as a healer, teacher, counselor, a leader who “walked the talk”, a person who served others, and a person who always saw the best in other people, no matter how difficult their circumstance might be. Regardless of their faith, nationality, position, status, gender, age or ethnicity, Jesus helped people.

Jesus was a miracle worker. He demonstrated authority over the spiritual and the physical worlds by casting out demons, calming storms with a word, walking on water, healing with a touch and at a distance, and raising people from the dead.

All this, and more, is what we could say about Jesus when he rode on the back of the donkey into Jerusalem on the Sunday before Passover, the day we now know as Palm or Passion Sunday.

Given what we know about Jesus from the Gospel, can you answer the question: “Who is Jesus?”

It’s a question Mark wants each of us to answer. It’s a question filled with mystery and drama. I believe Mark wrote as simply as he did because the eye witness testimony tells us a powerful message.

And yet, the story is incomplete.

Without the full narrative of Jesus’ last week, the story is a good one, but it falls short. There’s something about Jesus’ last night with the apostles, the false trial, his public humiliation and rejection by the very people who were singing his praises at the parade three days earlier, his crucifixion and burial, that speaks to us in a profound way.

Do you hear it? Do you hear Jesus’ passion? Do you hear the proclamation: Jesus is the Christ?

Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. Hosanna! Save us!

Pilate sees Jesus as the King of the Jews. The Roman soldiers mock, beat and flog him, an innocent man, condemned unjustly. The religious leaders see Jesus as a danger to their position and authority. To him, he is a criminal, guilty of violating their laws, when he was transforming the Law in ways they couldn’t, and wouldn’t, see or understand.

Passion is born in our heart. Passion is what fuels the fire in those things that are most dear and true to us. Whatever gets you up in the morning and gives you energy and excitement for the day – that’s your passion. It’s the one thing we love more than all else.

The passion of Christ is seen in the passionate love of Jesus for all people. Mark’s gospel shows us Jesus’ passion in the

- ***Humility of Christ*** – one final lesson when he washed the feet of his disciples, even the feet of the one who would betray him!
- ***Faithfulness of Christ*** – praying in Gethsemane for God’s will to be done, even when his human nature was troubled by what was to come, rejection by his Father in heaven.
- ***Love of Christ*** – who suffered, his body broken and nailed on a cross to public shame and humiliation to do the Father’s will so God’s promise of salvation would be fulfilled for you and me.

Jesus’ sacrifice is a powerful act of divine grace. We are invited to share in that grace and to live the passion of Christ this week and every week of our lives. Without the grace of God, Jesus is a political figure, who died on a tree. That’s not the message I hear or one I believe you hear. With the grace and power of God, I hear a different message, a powerful message, one inviting us to experience and share Jesus’ passion. **Do you?**

The words of the centurion answer the question “Who is Jesus?”:
“Truly this man was God’s Son!”

I pray you will join us this week as we share Jesus’ passion. Your spirit will be fed as you embrace the mystery that lies before us:

Jesus on the cross.

Prayers and Confession

Preparation, Praise and Confession

Respond: “Your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him”

Pause to praise the Lord for the joy God gives to your life. Then confess whatever the Lord brings to mind that need God’s cleansing forgiveness.

Thanksgiving, Silence and Intercession

Respond: “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer”

Thank God for God’s constant faithfulness and allow the Lord to help you picture yourself and others filled with God’s joy.

Supplication, Guidance and Commitment

Respond: “For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you.”

Ask God to guide you in all you do and say. Live knowing Christ lives in us.

Nicene Creed #880

Mark 11:1-11 (NRSV)

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.’” They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, “Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Psalms 31:9-16 (NRSV)

Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eye wastes away from grief, my soul and body also. For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my misery, and my bones waste away. I am the scorn of all my adversaries, a horror to my neighbors, an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me. I have passed out of mind like one who is dead; I have become like a broken vessel. For I hear the whispering of many - terror all around! - as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life. But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, “You are my God.” My times are in your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors. Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love.

Passion of Christ: selected readings from Mark 14 & 15