

# Palm Sunday

## Two Processions. Which will you follow?

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*Matthew 21:1-11*

“Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem.”

If Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem was triumphal on Palm Sunday, what went wrong less than 5 days later? Why did the crowds who adored him on Sunday, turn on him by Friday of that same week? And what choice does Palm Sunday present to us today?

A day of two processions?

Pilate, as governor of the region which included not only Judea, but Samaria, and Idumea, knew it was standard practice for the Roman governor of a foreign territory to be in its capital for religious celebrations.

Rebellion of Judas of Galilee

Rome put down the rebellion and then the Romans marched on Jerusalem. They crucified over 2,000 Jews who were accused of being part of the rebellion.

If Pilate’s procession was meant as a show of military might and strength, Jesus’ procession was meant to show the opposite.

*Zechariah 9:9*

*Zechariah 9:8-10*

*“God will deliver the nation from the oppressor”*

The two processions could not be more different in the messages they convey. Pilate, leading Roman centurions, asserts the power and might of the empire of Rome which crushes all who oppose it.

King Jesus comes to them humbly, not on a steed of war, but on a slow-moving donkey, the symbol of a king who comes in peace, according to Zechariah.

Those who watch that day would have to make a choice. They will either serve the god of this world, “a false god of might and power” or they will choose to serve the king of a very different kind of kingdom, the kingdom of God, a kingdom of humility, peace, love, including enemy love, real power.

Those who watch that day would have to make a choice. They will either serve the god of this world, a false god of might and power or they will choose to serve the king of a very different kind of kingdom, a kingdom of peace, love, including enemy love, which is the real power.

They were placing their faith in Jesus that he would restore the glory of the nation to its splendor when David and his son, Solomon, both ruled a united kingdom.

Jesus had disappointed and alienated powerful people, and he did it knowing it would cost him.

A contrast between kings and kingdoms was on display that day in Rome. And, although many of the people thought they sided with Jesus, they did so for the same reasons the Pharisees and others sided with Rome. They thought Jesus could do for them what Rome had done for their rulers—make their lives better, deliver them from the oppressive system under which they lived and worked, and turn the tables on the Romans. But when they realized that was not going to be the case, they turned on him. When it was not going to work the way they thought it should, they turned on the very King that came to free them.

*Isaiah 53:3-6*

When Jesus is accused, when he is brought by Pilate before the angry mobs, they want to be rid of him because they confused the power of this world, with the true power of God. The power and wisdom of God is not found in military might, and government power but in suffering with others in solidarity with the people he loves, to the point of forgiving their sin and our sin, by dying so that we might be set free.

But for one moment, ask yourself, “If I had been in Jerusalem that day, and had seen both processions passing by, which would I have chosen to follow?” As the week went on, ask yourself would I have turned on Jesus?

I wonder if that is the choice we make on a daily basis. Choosing power and might over love and humble service. Choosing the way of the world, “the way things are done” over “the way God intends them to be.”

Two processions, two theologies, and ultimately two choices.

- Which would you choose? What kind of king do you expect?
- What kind of King are you looking for? What kind of King are you hoping for?

“If we strive to establish God’s rule through self-assertion, power and might over neighborly care, pragmatism over kingdom principles, and malice over love, then whatever else we accomplish, we are no longer following in the way of Jesus. God chose meekness, integrity, and love to gather his people. That is the message of Palm Sunday. For all the shouts of acclamation, Jesus never lost sight of the cross.” Esau McCaulley, NT Professor Wheaton College