

# CCLEB SERMON NOTES



SUNDAY MARCH 29, 2026  
LUKE 19:28-40

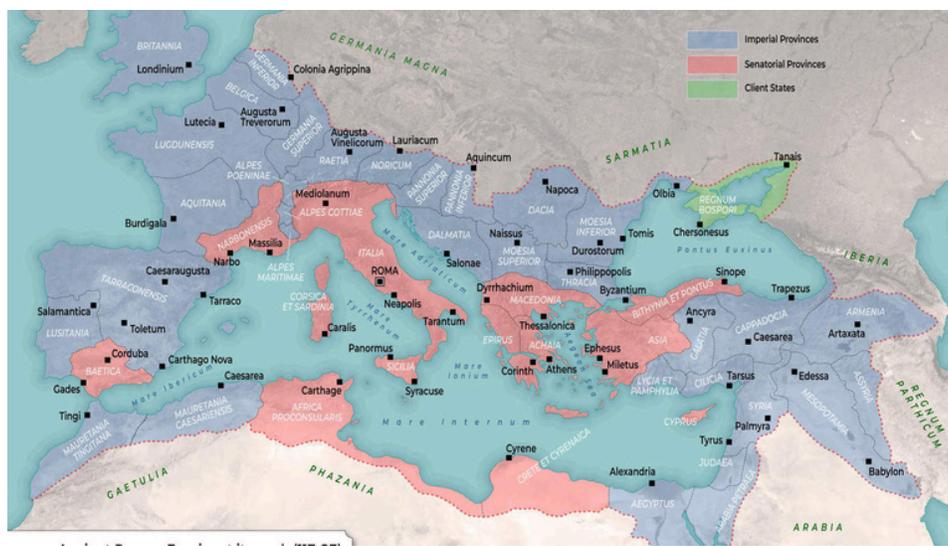
TOMMY VANVLEET

WHO IS THIS MAN?

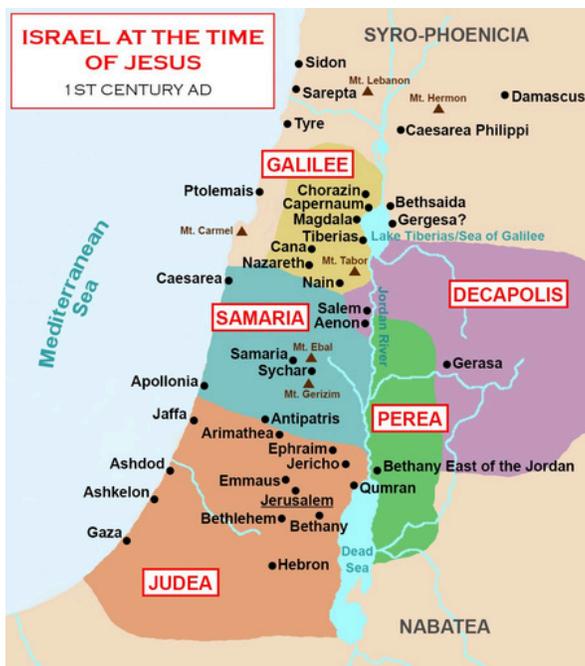


This story is very familiar to many. When I read a story in the Bible, especially if I've heard it many times before, it can start to go out of focus a little. Almost like it turns into a stained-glass version of the story. I know the characters, I know the story, but it's not grounded in reality. These stories involved real people with real emotions and real motives.

I'd like to take some time and look at the different characters in this story and what their motive is and what's motivating them. Let's start by looking at the big picture...



The Roman Empire was the current superpower in the world, with its borders stretching from Spain all the way to borders of India, covering most of Europe and the northern part of Africa. And throughout the empire, they were experiencing what is known as the “Pax Romana”, or the Roman Peace. It was a time of stability and prosperity; trade flourished, roads were safe, and large-scale wars were reduced. But that stability didn’t happen naturally—it was enforced. Rome stationed legions all across the empire—especially in volatile regions. They used public executions, especially crucifixion, to send a message: “This is what happens if you challenge Rome.” The Pax Romana was less “everyone got along” and more “no one dared step out of line.”



Israel, especially the southern area of Judea, was one of Rome’s most volatile regions in the entire empire. The Romans weren’t just governing a normal province; they were sitting on a mix of religious zeal, national identity, and messianic expectation, which made uprisings pretty common. Judea wasn’t just “troublesome”—it was uniquely difficult for Rome because:

- Their religion was exclusive. The Roman emperor was proclaimed as a divine figure who was to be worship. The Jews refused to do this.
- They also had a strong national identity. One that is tied to land and the law.
- They expected a messiah. There was a constant expectation that the messiah, the coming king, would be arriving soon and would liberate them from Rome.

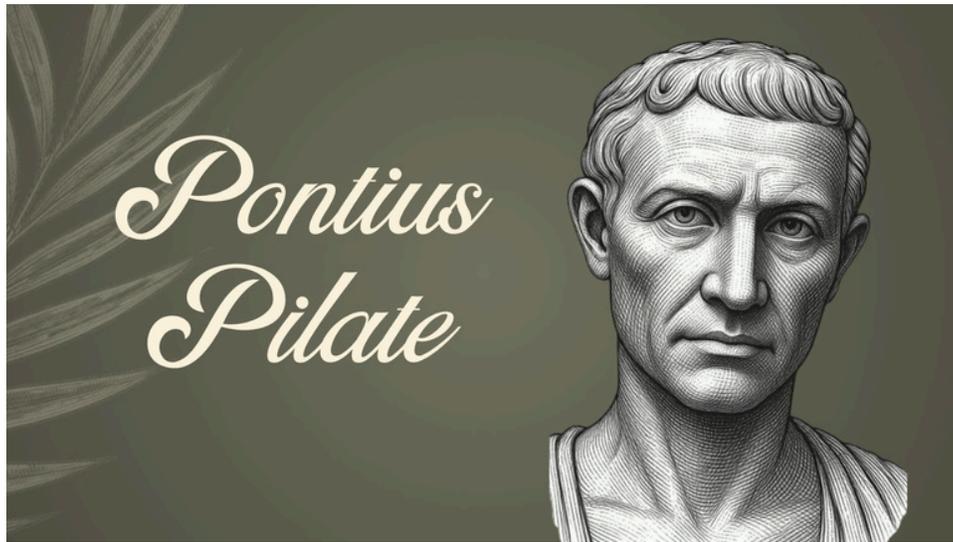
From Rome’s perspective: Judea was a province always one spark away from revolt.

Those place in charge of this region had the main objective of keeping the peace however that looked. Herod the Great, who ruled during the time of Jesus’ birth, was very good at doing just that. He did so through two main ways: first, by constructing beautiful buildings, including an elaborate expansion of the Temple (which the Jews appreciated, even if they hated the man). And second by brutal force and fear.

When he died, the rule of Israel was split between his three sons. In the absence of Herod’s strong leadership, the tension that he’d be holding back for decades was building up like a pressure cooker and threatening to blow the lid off. Archelaus, the son that was in charge of the region of Judea, tried to rule through brutality and force, but just stirred up more anger and rebellion and was removed from power and exiled by Rome after not very long.

Rome then sent in one of their own, a governor named Pontius Pilate; a harsh, stubborn man who had a knack for offending and angering the Jews.

By the time we reach our story today, Pilate had already made some bad judgement calls and was on thin ice with Rome. His objective: peace, at all costs.

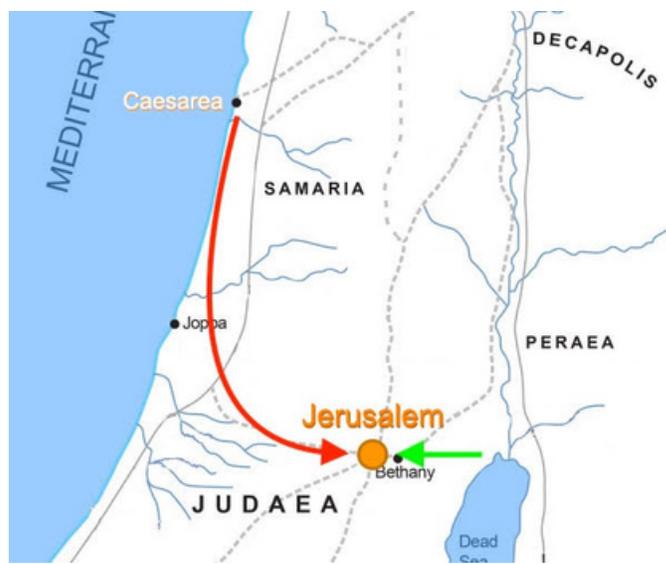


With all this in mind, he enters Jerusalem. Now Pilate didn't live in Jerusalem; he lived in Caesarea Maritime, a coastal town to the northwest of Jerusalem. But Passover was an intense time, because many pilgrims made their way to Jerusalem for the festival. It's when over a million Jews would gather, in this small city of Jerusalem, to commemorate and remember their deliverance from the superpower of the world at the time, Egypt. Rome didn't want this already contentious group of people to get all fired up during this time.



If I was a Roman official, I would be nervous about Passover where the Jews come together, and they dine together in groups. And they remember, "Hey, remember that time when the world's superpower were masters over us? And God delivered us from that?" It would be a prime time for them to get all riled up and cause issues, which they were causing a lot.

So, Pilate would put together an impressive show of force: soldiers, banners, trumpeters, himself riding on horse, the symbol of military conquest. His message he wanted to send to the Jews was clear: "Don't even think about it. Keep everything under control or Rome would crush you."



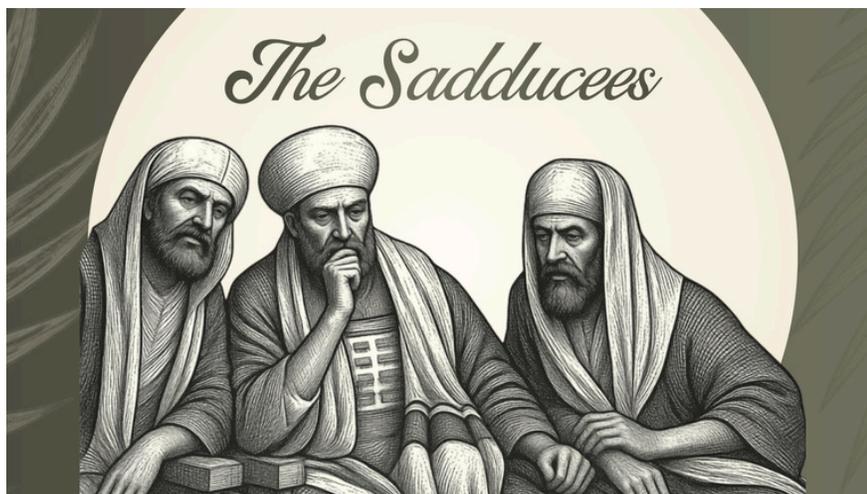
Pilate and his entourage would travel south from Caesarea, then east into Jerusalem, entering the city from the west. Meanwhile, in the same week...possibly even the same day...possibly even at the same time...a humble Jewish rabbi rides into Jerusalem from the east with his ragtag bunch of reject disciples.



Here we see a contrast between Pilate and Jesus:

- Pilate is entering with pomp and force; to put fear in the people, to squash any thoughts of rebellion. Jesus is entering with humility; to put hope in our hearts, to squash the rebellion of sin in our lives.
- Pilate is puffing out his chest, appearing to have power over everyone and be in complete control...though that wasn't true. Jesus is meek and submissive, appearing to be weak and powerless and under the control of those who wanted Him dead...though that wasn't true either.

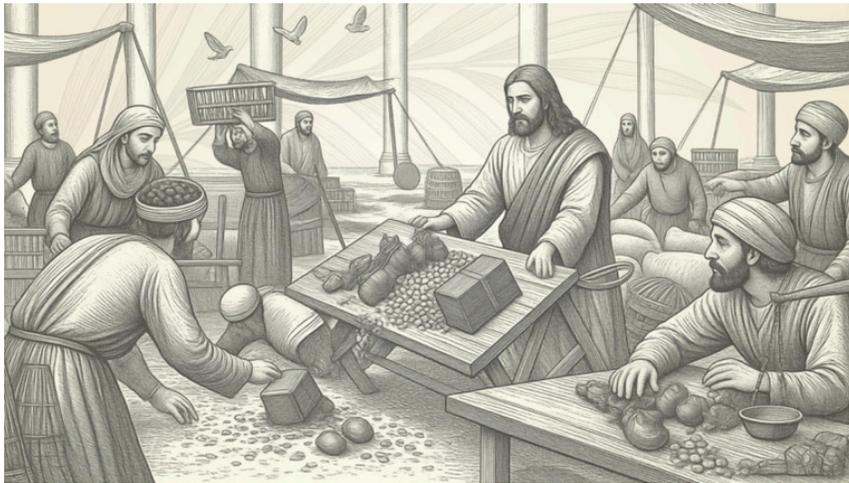
**Philippians 2:7-9**



Another group of people in this story were the Sadducees. They were a wealthy, aristocratic political party of priests that made up the ruling majority of the Jewish high council, the Sanhedrin. To keep their power, worked closely with the Romans. Because of this, they were actually not very popular amongst the Jew. They were sellouts.

They said the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, were the only inspired word of God, not any of the prophets. They believed that God didn't concern Himself with the details of their lives and it was up to each person to do what they thought right. They didn't believe in and afterlife, no heaven or hell. No reward or punishment. Doesn't that just put God in a box? What's the purpose of following Him after that? But they had no problem using God's laws for their benefit.

The Sadducees made up the of the order of priests, the only people who could perform sacrifices. Meaning they controlled the Temple; they controlled the sacrifices.



Later in this story, Jesus goes into the Temple, into what's called the Court of the Gentiles, and finds that they had turned it into a corrupt marketplace. All the Jews were required to bring a lamb as sacrifice for Passover. But the priests...these Sadducees...were the ones who had to inspect the sacrifice and approve it. And if the one you brought wasn't approved, well, they just happened to have their own lambs you could purchase. But you couldn't use your Roman money, you had to use the Temple shekel. Didn't have any? You could exchange it with the money changers. For a fee, of course. The Sadducees were using God's commandments and their positions as priests to squeeze money out of their fellow Jews.

This area with the money changers was in the Court of the Gentiles, the only portion of the Temple were Gentiles—those who weren't Jews but were interested in God and wanted to honor Him—could enter. The Jews were supposed to be representatives of God, but any outsiders who were curious, the first thing they saw was this corrupt market in the Temple. The Sadducees were throwing dirt on God's Name. Jesus couldn't stand for and chased out the moneychangers.

This, and Jesus' overall popularity, cause the Sadducees to hate Him and want Him dead. He threatened them, He threatened to disturb the peace—they were motivated to keep the peace too, because their power and wealth depended on keeping Rome happy. Their wealth and power were the most important things to them.



And here we see a contrast between the Sadducees and Jesus:

- The Sadducees sought after wealth, power and control, using God and His commandments as a means get what they wanted...and hold on to it. Jesus rejected wealth, power and control, placing God and His commandments as the most important thing in His life...and continually gave control to God.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. 6 Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.”

### Proverbs 3:5-6

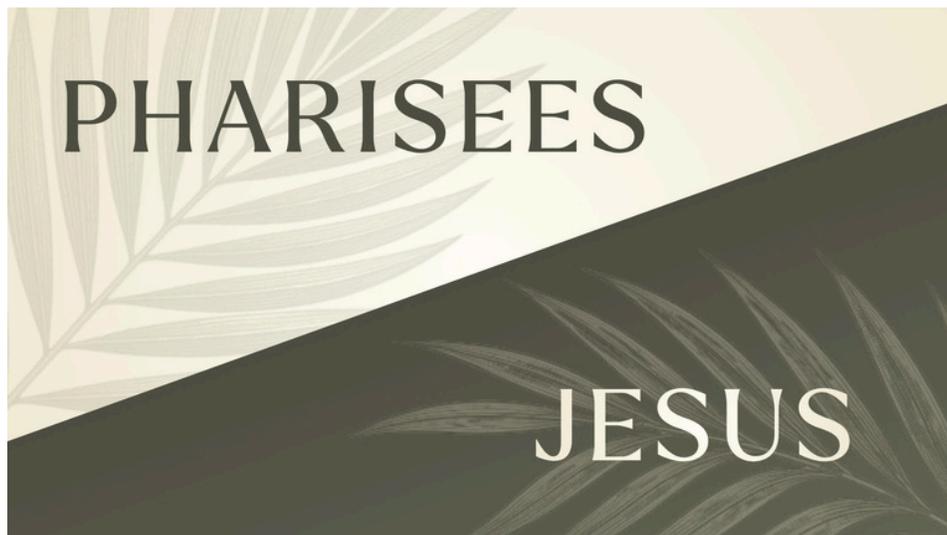
- The Sadducees fought to protect their own names. Jesus fought to protect God's name.



The Sadducees were political rivals with another group in this story called the Pharisees. Unlike the Sadducees, the Pharisees were very popular with the Jewish people. They were experts of the law. They were constantly adding to the oral law, which added thousands of specific rules for every situation, and striving to follow every rule, demanding that everyone else did as well. They looked incredibly spiritual on the outside, but their hearts didn't match. Outwardly they would display public prayers, strict rule-following, and many public displays of their holiness. But inwardly they were filled with pride and self-righteousness. Jesus called them “White-washed tombs”—clean on the outside, but dead on the inside.

They reduced faith to rules instead of relationship with God. They created extra rules (oral law) that made life heavier. Jesus said they crush people with unbearable demands, but didn't help people carry them. They made ordinary people feel like they could never measure up.

Jesus spoke out against the Pharisees constantly, and they hated Him for it.



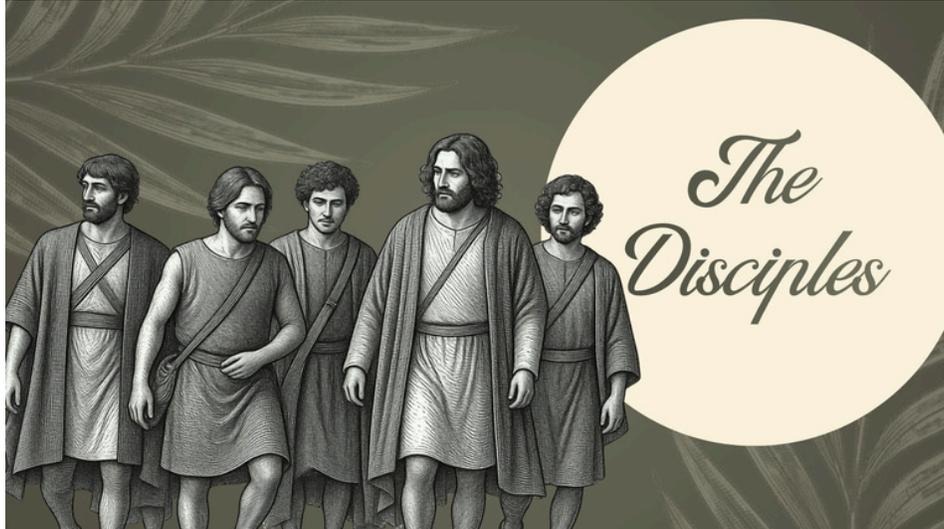
And here we see a contrast between the Pharisees and Jesus:

- The Pharisees were obsessed with following every rule, teaching that it will make you holy and right with God, but leaving the inside dead. Jesus showed we can never follow the law, we will always fall short, but He came to give us a way change what's on the inside.

### **Galatians 2:16**

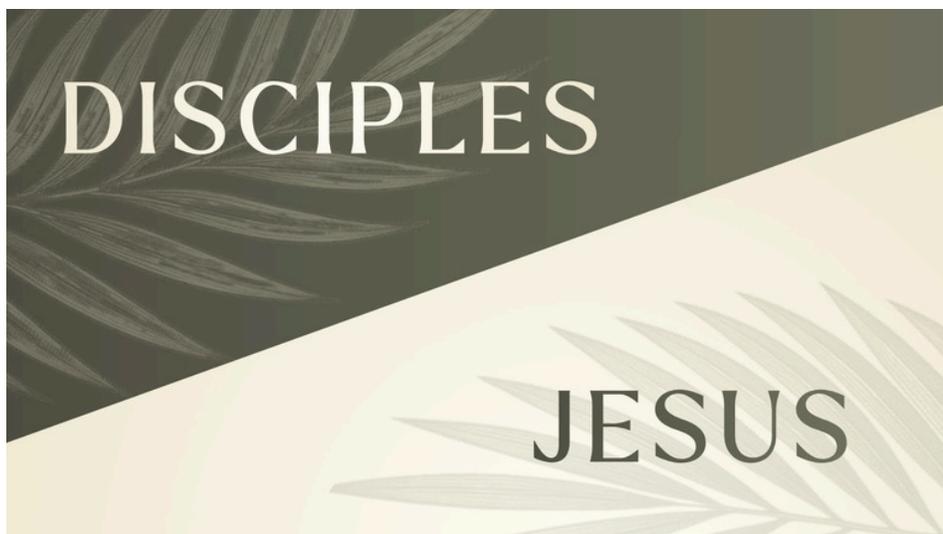
- The Pharisees teachings were always throwing more and more burdens on the people, but never giving them any help to carry them. Jesus came to carry that burden for us.

### **Matthew 11:28-30**



Jesus enters Jerusalem with his group of disciples. I wonder what was going on in their heads that day. They've been following Jesus for three years. They believe in Him and in the cause, though they didn't understand what Jesus' real cause was. They believed He was the messiah and that He was going to establish a kingdom here on earth; and they were going to be a part of it. They'd given up so much in following Jesus. They had given up their security: they'd left their jobs to follow Jesus. They had given up their comfort: They were gone from their homes and traveling all the time. They were giving up their safety: The Sadducees and Pharisees all hated Jesus. All these powerful men have their sights aimed at Jesus, and if you're standing behind Him, they're aimed at you too. Even in this story, they'd given up their coats for Jesus to sit on.

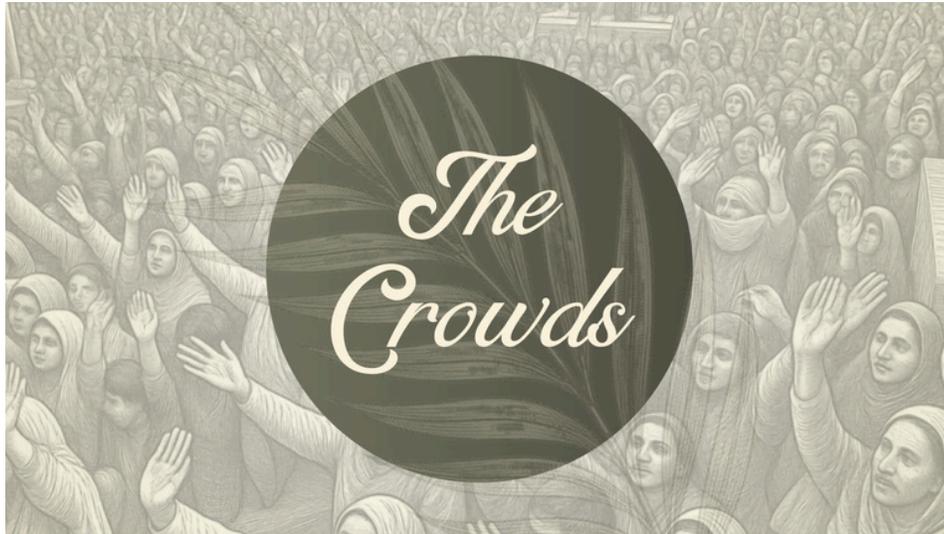
They'd given up so much in the belief that they would part of God's new kingdom here on earth, but Jesus had a different objective. And His purpose required not just giving up a lot, but giving up everything.



**And here we see the contrast between the disciples and Jesus:**

- Though the disciples had given up so much already—looking for that reward for their efforts —when they came face to face with those opposing them, they backed down. But though Jesus had given up so much already, when He came face to face with those opposing Him, He stood His ground.
- When the disciples had to put their own lives on the line, they couldn't do it. They ran. When it came down to Jesus laying down His life, He did it without hesitation. Not for the reward at the end. But because He loved us so much.

### John 10:11



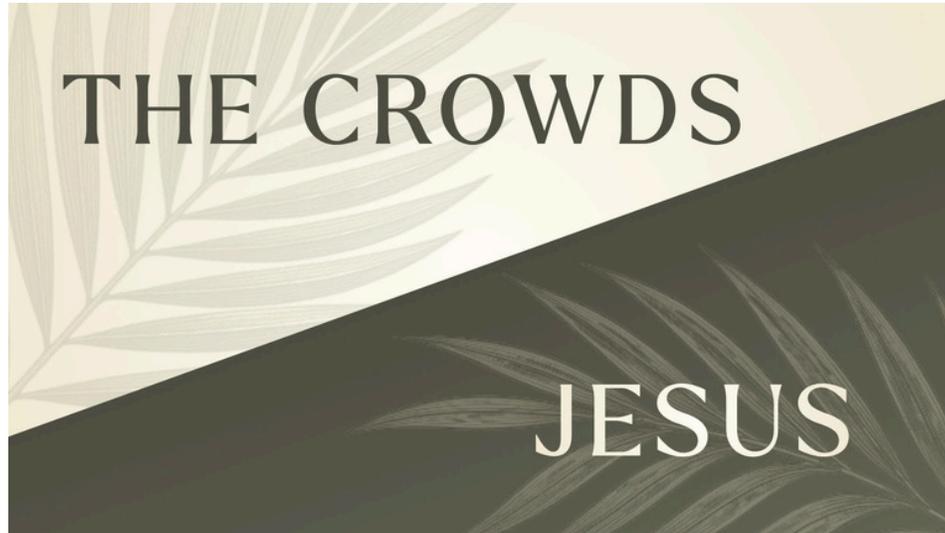
As Jesus enters Jerusalem, He is surrounded by crowds of people. Thousands of Jews who have come from all over for the Passover festival. They see Jesus entering Jerusalem, riding on a donkey. This fulfills the prophecy from **Zechariah 9:9**.



They make the connection, because it starts working them into a frenzy. They start picking palm branches and waving them. They start laying their coats on the ground for Jesus to ride over. They start shouting, “Hosanna!” which means, “Save us, please!” They start yelling, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” This is the moment they’ve been waiting for. The messiah has finally come! The conquering king that was promised is entering Jerusalem and will conquer their enemies. He will free them from the Romans and be their king.

Jesus was the Messiah. And He had come to conquer and deliver, but not in the way they thought. They’re all on His side right now, but when things change, when things don’t go the way they expected, the crowds flip. In less than a week, these crowds will go from shouting, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord,” to shouting, “Crucify him!” They’ll go from shouting, “Hosanna! Save us now,” to shouting, “Save Yourself,” at Jesus when He’s hanging on the cross. When they didn’t get the king they wanted, they turned on Him.

How often do we get upset when God isn't what we think He should be? I say I want the kingdom of God, but I'm not sure I'm willing to pay the price. I say that I love forgiveness, but there are far too many days where I find myself on the side of the road, clutching a palm branch, and shouting for a revolution that comes with my kind of power and my kind of might.



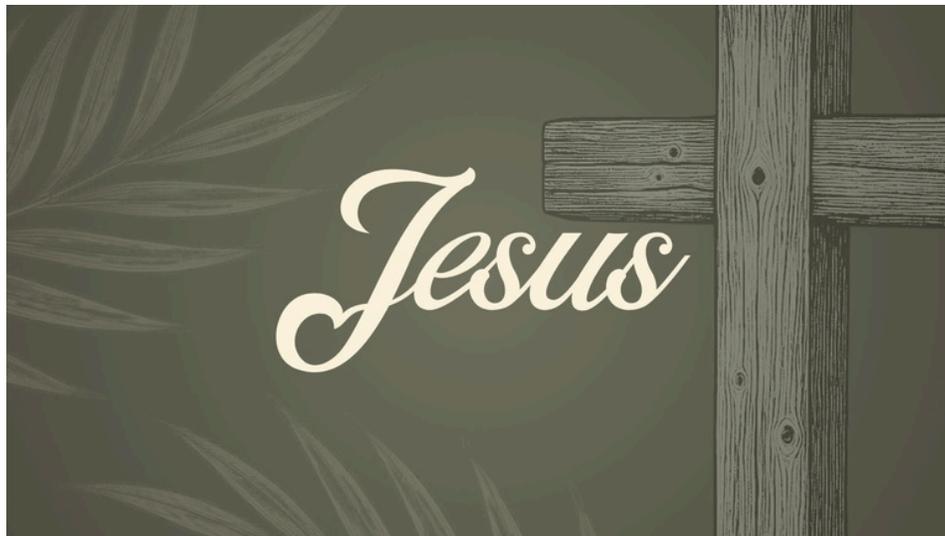
And here we see a contrast between the crowds and Jesus:

- The crowds were crying out, "Save us, please!" wanting a physical regime change; someone to tear down and defeat the rulers of Rome who oppressed them. Jesus did come to save them bringing a spiritual regime change; to tear down and defeat the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world who oppressed them; and to defeat sin...and even death itself.

#### **Ephesians 6:12**

- The crowds wanted a conquering king who would free them from the captivity of that day. Jesus came as a humble servant who would free them from captivity forever.

#### **John 8:36**



And last, but certainly not least, we have Jesus. The book of Matthew tells a story where Jesus and His disciples crossing the Sea of Galilee when they were struck by a fierce storm. Jesus is sleeping right through the storm and the disciples are freaking out. They wake Jesus, screaming about how they're going to die, but Jesus stands up, commands the storm to stop... and it does. The disciples then ask this question: **Matthew 8:27**



“Who is this man?” That’s the questions everyone in this story is asking. And they’re all coming up with different answers: a liability, a threat, an enemy, a messiah, a king...but no one fully understood who He was.

In the midst of all the chaos and politics, all the hate and anger, all expectations and agendas, Jesus is walking a path no one knew or expected. All the characters of this story have an agenda, and all assumed they knew Jesus’ agenda. But what was His real agenda?

It was you. It was them. It was every person.

#### **John 3:16**

This story—the one we tell every year at this time—never gets old. Because it’s the story of how Jesus left His perfect throne in heaven, came down to this cursed world, full of pain and hardship, and suffered an agonizing death just because of you. Because He loves you so much. And He was willing to give everything up just to save you.

Jesus wants to give you life. And not just life, but a life filled with peace.

#### **Romans 8:6**

In the midst of this story, as Jesus is riding through the crowds on His way to Jerusalem, we get this snippet: **Luke 19:41-42**

The people are surrounding Him, calling for a king; a king who will strike down their enemies.

#### **Zechariah 9:9-10**

He talks about peace. He talks about taking away the weapons and war horses and chariots. Taking away the violence. And they want violence. That’s what they knew. The Peace of Rome was accomplished through force and violence...that’s the peace of the world. Jesus is bringing a new way.

He wants to change each person on the inside: me...and you. He wants to give us new life, and life filled with peace.

#### **Philippians 4:6-7**

Peace that exceeds anything we can understand. Isn't it amazing? Have you ever felt that? Like when Jesus calmed the storm...when the storm was raging, Jesus was asleep in the boat. Peace in the middle of the storm. One of my favorite verses comes at the end of Hebrews 12:

#### **Hebrews 12:26-28**

That's what Jesus died for. To give you a kingdom that will never be shaken. So even if life is smothering you...even if everything around you is falling apart...even if the world is in turmoil... you are standing on that solid rock. You're tethered to that immovable point, that is Jesus

**John 16:31-33**