

# Discussion Guide

WEEK OF 7.21.24

Series: Gospel of Mark

Text: Mark 11:1-11

**How to use this guide:** This discussion guide is designed to help you facilitate a conversation around the Bible text. Begin your discussion with prayer. Then, read this week's passage. Next, work through some of the questions together. The goal is not to ask every question, but to have a good, free-flowing discussion. Do your best to ask at least one question from each section (introduction, understanding, and application), but beyond that, let the Holy Spirit guide your conversation. Also, if you heard some point from the sermon that you'd like to discuss, feel free to add that to your group's discussion.

## QUESTIONS FOR INTRODUCTION

1. Who do you think is the most well-known person to ever come out of our community? What would it be like if that person showed up in the community one day?
2. How does Jesus compare in power, fame, and prestige to any celebrity or hero we could think of today?

Today we're going to look at Jesus' famous entry into Jerusalem on the Sunday before His crucifixion. By the very nature of Jesus' entry—choosing to arrive on a humble donkey, rather than a powerful war horse—Jesus revealed the nature of His mission. He had come to save—not by usurping power and bringing with Him a military coup, but by surrendering power and embracing His own death. Jesus' unmatched power triumphed through weakness, and ours will do the same when we take up our cross and follow Him. As we humble ourselves, repent and admit our need for a Savior, we embrace the humility needed to identify with Christ, share in His sufferings and follow Him with our very lives.

Read Mark 11:1-7

3. Do you think these unnamed disciples considered Jesus' instructions odd? Why or why not? Do you think these disciples doubted anything that Jesus told them to expect?
4. What might the fact that the young donkey had not yet been ridden imply about how the young donkey would be used? Read Zechariah 9:9 to help explore this question.

Read Mark 11:8-11

5. Why do you think Jesus chose a donkey for His triumphal entry to Jerusalem? Does that seem appropriate for someone perceived as a king by His people? Why do you think people spread palm branches on the road?
6. What does the phrase "Hosanna" mean? What did it communicate about the crowd's expectations of Jesus?
7. What were the people expecting Jesus to do when He reached Jerusalem (Luke 19:11 and Zech. 9:9)? What was unexpected about the way Jesus entered Jerusalem?
8. When have your expectations about God been different from the way He has revealed Himself to you?
9. What was Jesus observing in the temple when He went into the temple at the end of the day? What is the significance of including this verse in the gospel? What does this passage tell you?
10. What do you find most significant about the triumphal entry into Jerusalem?

## QUESTIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING

## QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

11. What did the people indicate about their view of and response to Jesus by laying down their coats and waving palms or branches along His path? What can we do in our own lives to "prepare the way for the Lord" (Is. 40:3)?
12. What evidence is there of the fruit of God's Spirit in you: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? In what areas do you think you've seen growth? Are there areas where there's work to do? What can this group help you grow in these areas?

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## COMMENTARY

### MARK 11:1-11

**11:1.** This verse introduces a new section in Jesus' ministry as he entered Jerusalem. This introduces what is typically called the passion week, beginning with his triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and ending with his resurrection on Easter Sunday. Six of Mark's sixteen chapters deal with this last week. This shows the importance of these events in Jesus' life. Jesus went through the village Bethany on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, two miles east of Jerusalem. Bethphage is less well-known but near Bethany.

**11:2–3.** Most interpreters think the city Jesus sent the disciples to was Bethphage because it was closer to Jerusalem. Some commentators take this verse as evidence of Jesus' omniscience. Others believe that Jesus had prearranged receiving the colt on one of his other trips to Jerusalem. The text does not indicate which view is correct, but neither does damage to the text or to the character of Jesus.

Jesus' words and actions happened just as He described them, suggesting at a minimum that Jesus had prearranged His special transportation for Jerusalem, but more likely affirming His divine foreknowledge. Jesus choosing to use His disciples in this process demonstrates His desire to build their faith and trust in Him by showing them His glory. That the young donkey had never been ridden implies a kind of purity about the animal—that it had been specially set apart for the task at hand. NOTE: the donkey has long connection to the coming Messiah (Gen. 49:8-12, Zech. 9:9, 1 Kings 1; Mark 10:47-48). By laying hold of the colt, Jesus fulfilled an important messianic prophecy and reenacted the coronation of Solomon, the son of David, just as blind Bartimaeus forswore.

Jesus gave instructions that if anyone asked what they were doing, the disciples were to reply that the Lord needs it. The word "Lord" (Gr. *kyrios*) could mean "Lord" or simply "master." It is the first time in Mark's Gospel that Jesus referred to himself as Lord. While he could have meant simply "master" or "sir," he probably meant Lord in our fullest interpretation of the word. The messianic secret which is so prevalent in Mark's Gospel is slowly being revealed. Jesus has spoken to his disciples of his messiahship, identity, death, and resurrection. It would not be out of keeping with this gradual revelation for him to further reveal himself here.

According to Zechariah 9:9, the King would come to Jerusalem riding on a colt. Jesus would not simply enter Jerusalem. He would come as the messianic King. However, He would not come as a Warrior-King as the people expected, riding a war horse. Matthew 21:2 states that this was a donkey, specifically fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy and emphasizing the peaceful, gentle nature of the Messiah.

**11:4–6.** The fact that a great number of details are given here may point to Peter as one of the two disciples sent on this errand. The situation happened as Jesus warned them, and they repeated Jesus' words to the questioners. While a few interpreters think the words had a powerful effect on the listeners—enough for them to relinquish their possession of the colt—the text does not support this. It seems more likely that the owners would have heard of Jesus. Perhaps they knew him personally and they realized he was an honest man, if not a prophet. They could be sure of having the colt returned.

**11:7–8.** Cloaks were laid on the colt to serve as a rough saddle. The cloaks thrown on the ground along with the branches served as recognition of royalty. There was lavishness in their love, even though their love had not reached full potential. At this moment, they did love him with all their hearts and desired to honor him as king.

**11:9–10.** These two verses make clear what the crowds were expecting. "Hosanna" means literally "save now." It was an acclamation of praise to one who had the power to save. The same word is used in Psalm 118:25, where it is translated, "O Lord, save us." This psalm is a thanksgiving psalm. Interpretations vary as to what it referred to. It may have referred to deliverance from Egypt, or it could have celebrated release from captivity and the rebuilt temple. In either case, it celebrated deliverance from captivity. It was an appropriate psalm for Jesus, who came to deliver humanity from captivity to sin and death.

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey was the deliberate display of Israel's king coming with God's offer of peace. He was the Son of David chosen to sit on David's throne. He was the One of whom the prophet Zechariah had spoken (Zech. 9:9).

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Yet it was no small irony that the people, by using palm branches in their celebration, were heralding Jesus as a political king, not the humble shepherd-king He was portraying Himself as. The palm branch was a significant symbol of military victory for the Jews, which means the people displayed them expecting Jesus to be their political or militaristic king. In chanting “Hosanna” (“save now”) along with other phrases from Psalm 118, the Jews were using a common patriotic or nationalistic cheer, another affirmation that the Jews looked to Jesus as their political savior. The Greek *osanna* transliterates the Hebrew *hoshia’na* (literally, “Save, please!”). Quoted from Ps. 118:25-26, *hoshia’na* is a prayer addressed to the Messiah. The implication is that the crowds recognized and honored Jesus as the Messiah, wanting him to deliver them from the Roman overlords, when they shouted, “Blessed is he who comes in the name [the power and authority] of Adonai!”

The reference to David’s kingdom is a clear messianic title. The crowds were acknowledging that Jesus was heir to David’s throne. “He who comes” was another euphemism for the Messiah. The crowds expected Jesus to establish his kingdom immediately.

Despite the joy and praise of the disciples, Jerusalem did not receive its king. Many people interpreted the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah to be about a national leader who would make Israel into a powerful nation again. The more evident it became that Jesus hadn’t come to lead as their earthly king and political hero, the more people turned their backs on Him.

In Jesus, the kingdom is both present and future. God is to be praise because He blessed His people by coming into the world. Jesus fulfilled the promises to David not by reestablishing a political rule in Jerusalem but by serving God’s people and bringing God’s kingdom near. Some interpreters look for fulfillment of the political promises at the Second Coming.

**11:11.** True to Mark’s Gospel, the triumphant entry into Jerusalem is a bit more somber here than that recorded in Matthew. The Gospel of Matthew states that the city was stirred, and Luke says that the crowd was singing joyfully. But Mark records that when these events were finished, he went to the temple, had a look around, and then went back to Bethany, most likely to the home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. This verse shows Jesus as thoughtful and deliberate. This thoughtful pause and the actions that follow remind us of a prophecy of judgment in Daniel: “You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting” (5:27). The guilty verdict was in; the sentence would be carried out the next day.

The temple mount consumed more than a quarter of Jerusalem and constituted the focal point of activity for the festal pilgrims, from early morning until late afternoon. (The temple’s “evening offering” was about 3:00 p.m.) Jesus “looked around at everything” in the temple area, not as a pilgrim but as the sovereign Lord who “will suddenly come to his temple” (Mal. 3:1). He looks around the center of Jewish religious life to see if it is fulfilling its purpose of leading people to true worship of God.