

²⁸ After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹ As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ³⁰ “Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it.’”

³² Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. ³³ As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?”

³⁴ They replied, “The Lord needs it.”

³⁵ They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. ³⁶ As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

³⁷ When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”^[a]

“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

³⁹ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”

⁴⁰ “I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

⁴¹ As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it ⁴² and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. ⁴⁴ They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”

May the words of my mouth and the mediations of our hearts be acceptable to you, O Lord our strength and redeemer.

Can you imagine it, this scene? People shouting for joy, throwing their cloaks on the ground and waving palm trees? They were joyful for the long-awaited Messiah had arrived.

In thinking of this, the most impressive image of joy that I have seen, and then only in photographs and moving pictures, is VJ Day when Australia rejoiced and men and women danced in the streets. That was celebrating the end of a terrible war where our country was closely threatened.

That long ago day in Jerusalem was different. It was not the end of a war that caused the people to rejoice; it was that the Messiah so long promised had arrived. He was the one they believed would drive out their oppressors.

But wait . . .

Did no one question why the Messiah was riding on a donkey? That had been foretold but so much that had been foretold had been forgotten.

Had no one thought that the Romans who oppressed them were soldiers?

Had no one considered that the traditional way of getting rid of soldiers was with other soldiers?

Should not the Messiah have ridden a horse, symbol of military strength, not a donkey which was one of the two beasts of burden used in ancient Palestine, the other being the camel?

War would come to Palestine and Jesus made that prophecy, accurately describing the fall of Jerusalem in 70AD, and this is in the text for today.

It was a momentous day and the beginning of a momentous week. Who would have thought that the end of the week would be so different. Yet, it was – for what happened at the end of that week the reason that Jesus was born – that He would die for the people – the children of Adam/

But on the day that Jesus entered Jerusalem only He knew that. He had warned His disciples, especially the inner twelve, but no one heard what He was saying. That is, they heard the words but not the meaning. Nor did they understand what would come afterwards.

It was a scene of joy but not all rejoiced. There was disapproval. In verse 39 we read, ³⁹ *Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"* His reply, in verse 40, ⁴⁰ *"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."*

Stones do not cry out, of course. It is a statement that the truth about Jesus will not be silenced. It may be forced to be quiet by those who would deny God and Jesus but, in God's timing, it will break forth again.

We are in a time when lawmakers and loud screechers are trying to silence the Church and the truth which is preached. We see this in legislation, even passed this year in the Victorian Parliament. We see it in our universities where every effort is being made to deny the advances and benefits to humankind because God gave us the Bible. And the Bible has been a source of inspiration to so many people over the millennia. It is that inspiration that many want silenced.

There was recognition that day of who Jesus was but not His purpose in being born. Perhaps of all who beheld Jesus since His birth only one person had recognised that purpose. On the

day that Jesus was taken to the Temple to be circumcised, as all Jewish boys were, Mary and Joseph with Jesus were met by Simeon. Let St Luke tell the story in 2:25 to 35.

²⁵ And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, ²⁸ he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

*²⁹ "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,
According to Your word;*

³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation

³¹ Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,

*³² A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of Your people Israel."*

³³ ^[a] And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against ³⁵ (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

And so, now around thirty-three years later, what Simeon had hinted at was about to occur and it would happen very soon. But none of that was foreseen by those welcoming Jesus. There was joy in their hearts and minds and, again, only Jesus was aware of what was coming.

It was also fitting that Jesus rode on a donkey for it was a link with His birth for Mary rode on a donkey as Joseph brought her to Bethlehem, arriving as He was about to be born.

There was no joy in Jesus. He knew what was coming and he knew the history of Jerusalem. He wept over the future of the town. He knew that the Pharisees and the scribes would have their victory over Him. Once more a prophet would be killed.

John the Baptist had been executed on the orders of Herod. Amos, the shepherd prophet from Tekoa in Judah but who prophesied in Israel, the northern kingdom, was tortured and murdered. Micah also died violently. Zechariah was murdered near the altar in the temple.

Why? Because they prophesied against the corruption of those in authority who were in rebellion against God.

And so it would be with Jesus. He challenged those in authority – the status quo – and he revealed their iniquities. Probably nothing infuriates people more.

But Jesus was more than a prophet. He was the Son of God. He was the Messiah promised by God.

But was He praised for that truth?

No.

Those who were following Jesus, described as His disciples were, as we read in verse 37:

“the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen.”

The miracles they had seen. They were looking only at what they had seen, not the reason. The whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen but not was behind them. Of course, the miracles came from God but why was Jesus performing them?

They could see only the gift of the present – the healings and the provision of food. These were, in a sense, gifts like we give and receive at Christmas and on birthdays. They were physical gifts, not the spiritual gift of God walking among them as Jesus. That was the great miracle – that God in the person of Jesus came down to walk among the people He had created.

God is light and God is love. His grace is open to all. No one is exempt from God’s love and His forgiveness so long as there is genuine repentance. That was why God sent us Jesus. There has been sinning in this world since the Fall of Adam and Eve. God knew what would happen and so did Jesus – the Word who was with God in the beginning.

We read in John 3:16 that *“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

And how was that achieved?

Jesus, begat by the Holy Spirit, and born of woman, would be crucified and resurrected and here His death began – in a week that saw Jesus welcomed with joy then led out to die. From joy to death was six days.

We must wonder – how many of the crowd that shouted for joy, stood among the crowd that watched Jesus walk – perhaps trudge is the better word – from the presence of Pontius Pilate to Golgotha where He would die?

We should also wonder – what would Jesus find if He walked among us today?

Of course, He would know for He is seated at God’s right hand to intercede for us, as we read in Ephesians 1:20-23:

²⁰ . . . [God] raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and

appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Jesus knows what is happening in the world. And one day He will return.

Will we meet Him with joy or with fear?

That is our choice.

I will finish in prayer.

*Lord, our God,
help us to prepare
for the coming again of Christ your Son.
May he find us waiting,
eager in joyful prayer.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. AMEN*