



Palm Sunday

In today's reading, Mary anoints Jesus with expensive perfume. In the Old Testament, anointing turns men into kings. In addition, anointing is also a part of the funeral rites. So, Mary, by anointing Jesus, shows that she understands that Jesus's suffering and death *is* his coronation and path to glory. But, this upsets Judas who thinks that Mary has "wasted" expensive perfume. Judas, like the crowds who will shortly shout "hosanna," want to save the money to rage an armed revolt against Rome. What they don't realize is that the kingdoms of this world are passing away, and the Kingdom of Heaven comes to reign by means of the cross.

Scripture: John 12:1-18

Bottom Line: Glory is a man humbly riding a donkey to meet his death.

Discussion Questions

1. At the beginning of the passage, Mary anoints Jesus with perfume. "Anointed" in Greek is "Christos." How do you understand the significance of Jesus's anointing here? What does it mean?
2. To justify Mary's use of the expensive perfume, Jesus says that we will always have the poor with us (v. 8). How do you reconcile that with the command to "love your neighbor"?
3. Last Sunday, we saw that Jesus shows himself to be king by the way he dies and suffers. What signs of humility do you see in Jesus's entry into Jerusalem? What do you think the people thought would happen by welcoming Jesus this way? How is God's vision bigger than the people's vision of a renewed Israel?
4. The authorities wanted to kill Lazarus, who is a witness of God at work among his people. What does this say about how the world receives us, who are also witnesses of God at work today? How can we remain faithful and humble witnesses even when the world is against us?

Moving Forward

It's much easier for us to go from Palm Sunday to Pascha by skipping Jesus's suffering during Holy Week. But Jesus doesn't draw people to himself by celebrations--he does so by the cross (John 12:32). How will you pick up your cross this week and allow Jesus's suffering to be transformative for you?

Changing Your Mind

"His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him." (John 12:16 NRSV)