

Palm Sunday

- *(With the kids...)*
- What would it have been like being in the crowd on the first palm Sunday?
 - what feel, smell, taste, hear, see?
 - what emotions, fears, expectations?

Conclude:

- Maybe mixture of experiences for the disciples at the time:
 - we'll be thinking today about how we assess/respond to what happened that first Palm Sunday...

Introduction: Passover

- Significance of the feast
 - national identity - formation of the nation, defining early event
 - God's salvation - coming through substitutionary sacrifice
 - divine identity - this is the kind of God the Jews knew and worshipped
 - significance for people of coming up to Jerusalem for the feast - to celebrate all of this, to identify themselves with this
 - Scotland fans going to Murrayfield or Hampden - they've watched games on TV before, but nothing is the same as being there in person...

Psalms of Ascent

- As they approached they would traditionally have sung some of the Psalms of Ascent (120-134)
 - more than just marching songs, though
 - shaping their expectations of meeting God
 - and of their hopes for how God would deal with them in the future
 - (we'll be looking at Psalm 123 this evening...)
- For instance, Psalm 132:
 - *The LORD swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke: "One of your own descendants I will place on your throne - if your sons keep my covenant and the statutes I teach them, then their sons will sit on your throne for ever and ever."* (v. 11, 12)
 - *"Here I will make a horn grow for David and set up a lamp for my anointed one. I will clothe his enemies with shame, but the crown on his head will be resplendent."* (v. 17, 18)
 - expectation of a Saviour... Messiah
 - came to Jerusalem with yearning... and with excitement at what God might do "this year in Jerusalem"

Expectations Met

- Its into this that Jesus comes
 - hope, yearning, faith, and celebration of who they are and what they are about - **celebration of God's faithfulness**
 - folk have been "tracking" Jesus' progress too...
 - and their hopes and excitement come together, peaking on the road into the city
 - "is this it?" "this is it!"
- Result is exuberant, excited celebration:
 - celebration of God's goodness, of his work unfolding...
 - more than merely throwing off the Roman oppression, even going beyond the religious "stuck-up"ishness of the Pharisees
 - Jesus has come to meet their deepest needs, their need for a Saviour, to be restored to relationship with God, to be recreated in his likeness, to become all they were created to be...
 - though the people praised him, their reasons were still limited - they praised the right person, not yet for all the right reasons!
- There is a right place and time for exuberant praise:
 - eg David welcoming Ark of Covenant into Jerusalem...
 - and this was it! (whole stones thing)

Proud to be associated with Jesus

- **BUT:** Pharisees ashamed to be associated with Jesus
 - crowd proud - at least for now
 - for Pharisees, Jesus challenges and disrupts their lives
- We have so many more reasons to shout praise to Jesus than the crowds:
 - enumerate... salvation, cross, resurrection...

- Are we proud to be associated with Jesus?
 - if not, why is that?
 - is it because of something Jesus has done?
 - is it because of some way in which he has let us down?
- I suspect it is not - its not Jesus himself we are embarrassed about

Two questions:

- is our **identity** shaped by our encounter with Jesus? - like Jews with Passover, do we know ourselves as Jesus' followers, forgiven...
- are we ready to be **identified** with Jesus? Stand out for him?