

Matthew 21:1-11 Palm Sunday Shouting



Several years ago, as in 2001,
country music singer Jessica Andrew's
had a hit song called,
Who I Am—do you remember it?
(Matt play a few seconds of the chorus)
She describes herself by her family
--I am Rosemary's granddaughter
in the music video
she's strolling through the hallway
looking at pictures of her family
and then it flashes back
to pictures of her when she's younger.
...well I've got some staff pictures
from their younger years
and I want to you see if you can guess
whose picture is up here!
Ready? Okay, here's the first...



It's fun to guess who people are.

When asked who you are,
how do you answer—your name,
maybe your spouse's name
especially if you're at the office Christmas party.
If your family has all grown up in one place,
then maybe you list your family members too.
And though our family does shape us,
it isn't really who **you** are...

Google

Google Search | I'm Feeling Lucky

You could also try and Google yourself.
I admit that I have done it, but I also heard once
the FBI keeps a file on everyone
who Googles themselves
—and even though it's not true,
it is risky.
But if you dare, and go Google yourself
things like where you work
and perhaps an address
or partial address might pop up;
anytime you've been in the paper or a publication
probably a Facebook profile if you've got one
—who does the internet say that I am?



Earlier in Matthew's gospel,
since Jesus didn't charge his smart phone
and can't ask the Google,
he asks his disciples an important question,
"who do the people say the Son of Man is?"

And they answer with, “well
some of the people say John the Baptist;
and others say Elijah
and still others say Jeremiah
or one of the prophets.”
I guess no one had any early pictures of them so they just didn’t know...

But then, Jesus turns to them and says,
*you’ve spent the most time with me,
you’re my closest friends,
“who do you say that I am?”*

and Simon Peter answers,
**“You are the Messiah,
the Son of the Living God.”**

And after affirming Peter,
Matthew tells us that,
“Jesus sternly ordered them
to tell no one he was the Messiah.”

When the demons want to tell all,
Jesus shushes them too.
In Mark, Jesus goes to the synagogue
and a man with an unclean spirit cries out,
**“What have you to do with us,
Jesus of Nazareth.
I know who you are,
Holy One of God!”**
And right then and there,
Jesus says, “Be silent...”



But it is not quiet today.
Today when Jesus rides into town,
both powerful and humble;
riding on a colt like a king of Israel would,

with palms and shouting;
but also maybe riding on a donkey
like the humble servant
Israel was supposed to be;
today it's shouts of Hosannas,
and excitement that welcome
the kingly procession.
The crowd included at least two new members.
You see Jesus was headed toward Jerusalem
and had come through Jericho.
On his way two blind men were shouting,
"Lord have mercy on us, Son of David!"

And this time it was the crowd with Jesus
that sternly orders the men
to be silent.
But of course, they aren't.

So enthusiasm for Jesus swells
and there are palm branches waved
and cloaks are thrown to keep down the dust
and that's when it gets loud.
And louder.
And still louder.

It creates such a uproar
that people in the city for Passover,
people in the city because they live there,
people in the city who are curious,
people in the city who
have nothing to do with the God of Israel,
people who have everything to do
with the God of Israel

...things get so loud,
the crowd asks,
"who is this?"

That's our question too
— *who is this*—

riding into town
into the thick of the storm?
Who is this,
that told his disciples,
we go to Jerusalem
where they will kill me;
but claims he will rise on the third day?

So who is this Jesus?
Is he the same one who ordered his disciples
not to tell anyone who he was?
Because certainly now
that we've gotten to this point in the story,
Jesus isn't telling the people to quiet down
or to keep quiet about who they say he is.

Jesus isn't sternly ordering anyone to shhhh.

This time they are shouting
and praising and pleading.
You can hear all the noise,
all this shouting and praising can't you?;

"Hooray! Here comes the One
who can save us, a new king" the crowd shouts.

"Save us Lord!
Save us from the Romans,
from poverty, from oppression" the crowd pleads.

"Blessed is he, who comes in the name of the Lord,"
"you must be the son of David;
surely you will conquer and reign victorious!"

In fact, after this political and theological parade,
when he throws a holy fit in the temple,
and the children continue to sing his praises,
the priests get mad.

And Jesus says...

well I love how his response
is summed up
in Jesus Christ Superstar
when Jesus sings,
*“Why waste your breathe moaning at the crowd;
nothing can be done to stop the shouting.
If every tongue were stilled the noise would still continue,
the rocks the stones themselves would start to sing...”*

Thank you, Carol Anne.



Who **is** this?¹
Who do **you** say that I am?

In all honesty,
we know how this ends.
We know the story of the betrayal,
the denial, the horrid, violent death
and the resurrection.
So what is your answer to *who is this*;
what is your answer to *who do you say that I am*?

How we answer those questions
is more important than
whether we wave palms to start Holy Week
or say the right words in our prayers

¹ Question asked with inspiration from a sermon by Rev. Dr. Barbara K. Lundblad <http://day1.org/577-who-is-this>

or sing the right songs in worship.

Who is this,

Jesus of Nazareth in Galilee?

I suppose I can only tell you what I know.

This Jesus of Nazareth was divine
and destined from the start.

He was born to good parents,
but really the circumstances weren't ideal;

it was a pregnancy out of wedlock
—we all know how that looks to everyone else.

When he was born,
the songs say he didn't cry or make a sound,
but we all know a good nursemaid
would have swatted
that sweet bottom of his
to make sure everything was okay,
and it was.

But his borning cry woke
up Herod the Great

in his palace miles away.

The powers that be,
the ones that seem hell-bent
on the world being hard and evil,
those powers heard that bournig cry
and felt it ripple throughout creation.

Nothing so wonderful can come into the world without notice.

So Herod and the powers

made up their minds to go after him
as soon as possible.

Thank goodness God had other plans
and Jesus was tucked away safely
until the timing was right.



Who is this

that we wave our palms for?

This is a man

who when the time came,

went down to the Jordan to be baptized.

He listened to John's preaching

and waited in line for his turn;

talking with single mothers and dead beat dads

who were waiting to be washed clean too.

And turns out

that he made the sky part

and heavens speak.

Maybe God felt

he needed a little confirmation

and wanted to make sure

those around him knew,

this is my Son, the real deal.

Pay attention to who he is

and what he does.

So with the wind of Spirit at his back,

this Jesus gathers up some disciples and followers

from all the places we think unlikely,

the back alleys

and gas station clerks

and garbage men and

Waffle House waitresses.

Who is this,

Jesus of Nazareth in Galilee?

He is prophet and a teacher like no other.

He is in the best of all relationships with God.

In fact

it is like they are so in sync with each other

it surpasses even
the prophets and David.
Something about this relationship
they share
means Jesus heals people.

And get this, he doesn't wash his hands
or use hand sanitizer.
Because instead of
disease and filth and powerlessness
being contagious, like we all think it is
—**it's Jesus that is contagious.**

When Jesus lays hands on the sick,
his goodness leaches onto them.
When someone's daughter dies,
all he has to do is reach out
and all that life in him
just spills over into her.
And then there she is,
sitting upright on her deathbed
asking for a glass of water.

Even when he moves through a crowd,
just touching his cloak could heal you;
he's that contagious.

And maybe it is the fact that he wouldn't be contained
or that there was no use in a quarantine
that the powerful start to notice
and plot against him again.

Because in addition to healing
he's a dang good preacher,
that's who he is.

He tells like it is.
He can take a story about two sons and a father
and you feel like it is a story
you've heard a thousand times before

but never paid attention
to the ending
until he told it.

He's telling the people things like
It isn't strictness to the law,
It about loyalty to God in your heart, mind and
soul.

He'll say things like,
if you just learn
to love each other,
like you love God and yourself,
well then things would operate in the world
like God intended them to.

Sometimes he says stuff
that is so crazy
and so off the wall,
like,
if you just learn
to love each other,
like you love God and yourself,
well then things would operate in the world
like God intended them to.

He calls all of that *kingdom living*.
Crazy preaching, saying that God came
to liberate sinners.
What kind of God wants to hang around sinners?



Who do we say that Jesus is?

When we continue to let politicians
make decisions that favor only some of us,
especially those of us who live comfortable lives
and drive two cars.
Yeah I'm talking to all of us.

Who do we say Jesus is,
when we let our hearts break open
on behalf of children
on the other side of the world,
who are being bombed and gassed?

Who do we say Jesus is
when we make the commitment
to show up in our relationships
even when it is hard?

Who are we declaring Jesus is,
when the going gets tough;
do we getting going
or dig in
and say Jesus take the wheel?

Who do we say Jesus is,
here in this place on this morning?
If we wave our palm to get his attention,
what is it
that we'd declare?

I can only tell you what I know.
And in Matthew it says
when Jesus rides through town,
it causes a stir,
it causes turmoil,
literally the earth shakes and trembles.²

When he entered Jerusalem,
the whole city was in a turmoil asking,
"Who is this?"
I think I'm tired of letting the rocks and the stones

² Stanley P. Saunders, http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2404

get all the credit.
Perhaps it is time we lift our voice
instead of just our palms.

This is Jesus
who rides into town
ready to overturn every power system in the world
through love.

This is Jesus
who blesses children
and alcoholics
and tax evaders
all in the same afternoon.

This is Jesus
who until the time is right
wants to go about his work
without lugging around the title and mantle
of messiah and king,
because it means something different
when he wears it.

This is Jesus
we celebrate today;
this is Christ
we watch be betrayed and denied;
this is Jesus we help crucify dead
because we are so often complicit sinners
in a fallen world;

and this is Jesus
who we watch rise...

I'd say he is The One coming into the world.
He is the one disrupting our notions of power
and of what God should do
and how God should act
and who God should love
and die for.

The one who causes a holy stir;
the one who turns everything upside down

and inside out;
because when he enters **your** life,
everything might be overthrown
in **you**.

He's the one
who causes me to question my materialism
and challenges my generosity.

He's the one who pleads with me
to stop playing favorites
and begs me to see him
in everyone I meet.

This is Jesus who says justice
is about equity in love
and this is the one
who take an ordinary life
like mine and yours
and turn it into kingdom living.

Who is this?

This is he,
who says if every tongue were still
the praise would still continue;
this is Christ
who is silent during his glorious procession into the city
and silent before powers that kill him
**but who with his very borning cry and dying breath
shook the earth loose from her bondage.**

This is Jesus,
Son of the Living God.

I think that is worthy of shout or a hosanna.