

These comments present one interpretation of today's readings; other interpretations may be possible. Comments are best read with the readings.

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Luke 19:28-40

NRSV

In Luke, Jesus' journey to Jerusalem begins in Galilee. In 9:51, we read "When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem". Jesus has gone "through one town and village after another, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem" (13:22). This journey nears its end.

Now Jesus approaches Jerusalem from the east. "Bethphage and Bethany" (v. 29) are villages on the slope of "the Mount of Olives" opposite the Temple Mount. It is likely that the colt is owned by followers of Jesus. That he is able to ride a colt that has "never been ridden" (v. 30) suggests that even the animal realizes that Jesus comes in peace. In Zechariah 9:9 we find the prophecy that the ideal, future king, "triumphant and victorious" will come "humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt". (Normally triumphant kings rode war-horses.)

Perhaps poor people spread "their cloaks on the road" (v. 36) being their most valuable possession, and/or this recalls the acknowledgement given Jehu when he was anointed King of Israel, for he restored worship of God to the nation (see 2 Kings 9:12-13). V. 38a is a quotation from Psalm 118:26, a psalm of praise sung on major festivals. V. 38b is like the song the angels sing at Jesus' birth (2:14). "The stones would shout out" (v. 40) is a quotation from Habakkuk 2:11, a book that tries to understand why godly people suffer injustice. Or perhaps Jesus speaks of the destruction of the city. The events described in vv. 43-44 did occur when the Romans razed the city in 70 AD. They did so in the midst of a civil war.

Psalms 118:1-2,19-29

NRSV

Vv. 1-2 are a call to thanksgiving: God's mercy, his "steadfast love", is everlasting. May "Israel" (v. 2) (and) "those who fear the Lord" (v. 4) proclaim this! Vv. 5-13 say that, when the psalmist (possibly the king) was in distress, he "called on the LORD", who heard him. With God on his side, there is nothing to fear; trusting in God is better than trusting in humans. Surrounded by his enemies, "in the name of the LORD I cut them off" (v. 11), with God's help. V. 15 recalls Exodus 15:2a, part of Israel's classic victory song sung by Moses and the Israelites after crossing the Reed (Red) Sea. The "glad songs" are heard in the Temple, the community of the faithful. The psalmist expects to live to old age (v. 17); he will proclaim God's acts of power. He has suffered greatly at God's hands, as a discipline, but God has preserved his life. He seeks entrance to the Temple ("gates of righteousness", v. 19) to give thanks; only the godly may enter therein (v. 20). V. 22, possibly based on an ancient proverb, may speak of the king's rise to power or of his victory. On this day (v. 24) God has either saved his people or punished the ungodly – or both. This is a time for rejoicing. In v. 26, all proclaim he who was "rejected" (v. 22), but is now God's chosen ruler. Note the progression in vv. 26-29: "festal proces-

sion", "extol" (raise up), everlasting love.