

## Focus on Mark 1:1–11; 15:1–39

### WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” James D. Ernest

Mark’s “many” (11:8) are not simply blessing Jesus in the name of the Lord, nor are they baldly calling Jesus himself Lord; they are blessing him as “the one who comes in the name of the Lord,” which leaves his identity ambiguous. Their blessing of the coming kingdom of David suggests that Jesus is being greeted as heir to David’s throne. Passersby at the crucifixion reiterate the idea that Jesus would replace the temple (15:29), along with the titles Messiah and king of Israel (15:32). These participants in his execution speak the truth, but they understand it no more than those who hailed him on his entry to Jerusalem.

### WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Margaret A. Farley

The shadow of Good Friday transforms the light of Palm Sunday, for only with them both together do we learn that dignity is sustained with integrity; that the forces of false judgment and suspicion, servile fear and violence, are indeed to be named for what they are and to be resisted, even unto death. But they are not to be resisted by adopting the patterns of evil they represent. Through the death of Jesus, all death is overwhelmed; through the humiliations of Jesus, all humiliation can be transformed.

### SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Michael Battle

Palm Sunday shows us how often we misinterpret God’s love, as well as our love for God. The true measure of our love must comprise the capacity to extend ourselves in real acts of compassion toward the afflicted, forcing us to come out of ourselves. So Jesus gets on a jackass and parades among palms toward Jerusalem. This act requires the greatest love. Jesus entering Jerusalem, riding humbly on a donkey, is the miracle of God’s complete attention. In Jesus, the world recognizes how different its kind of love is from God’s kind of love, and in this recognition—in Jesus—we are transformed from fighting God tooth and nail into creatures who actually love God.

### NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,”

Charles L. Campbell

Jesus hardly appears to be a king at all, and many of the references to him as king are spoken in mockery. But they are profoundly true; they contain a deep, hidden meaning, which is the character of irony. Here the king is the one who eschews domination and violence—and suffers the horrible consequences of that commitment. And here is a kingdom of peace, which, unlike the *Pax Romana* (Peace of Rome), is not coerced and enforced by military power and occupation. Jesus comes to define King or Messiah, rather than traditional understandings of these titles identifying him. This radical reversal is central to the development of Jesus’ identity in the passion narrative.