

Palm Sunday (B) or Passion Sunday (B)

Isaiah 50

Psalm 118

Philippians 2

Mark 11a

- choose Palm or Passion
- triumphal entry + song of victory
- on other hand Suffering Servant song
 - o faithful obedience of Jesus
 - o includes death + exaltation
 - o "connection is obvious"
- maybe not so far apart
- Palm 118, Mark 11
 - o praise + worship
 - o hint of trouble
 - o entry in light of threefold prediction
- Isaiah 50, Philippians 2
 - o liturgical
 - o poetry
 - o Philippians = creed or hymn cited by Paul
 - concludes with confession + praise
- all four texts -> confidence in divine mercy of God

Mark 11

- major turning point
- introduces events leading up to Jesus' death + resurrection
- now Jerusalem
- Jesus predicts immediate future
- fulfillment of predictions reinforces his reliability
- Jesus enters public arena in radically new way
- continues threads that anticipate crucifixion
 - o (elements of entry appear again later)
 - o teems with irony
 - o conflict between entry + impending arrest
 - o especially role of the crowds

- soon crowds demand release + death
- “didactic + homiletic significance of irony... makes way into sermons”
- Jesus as center of irony
 - guest receives gracious, generous welcome
 - several prophetic passages
 - not clear they were already connected with messianic expectations
 - Mark interprets Jesus in light of them
 - Jesus as pilgrim of special standing and messenger of God
 - surely arrival will bring blessings
- however...
 - when Jesus enters he disrupts
 - Jesus as testy visitor
 - should we sympathize with crowds + authorities
- the Jesus they welcome is not the Jesus they get
 - they are not prepared for his kingdom
- contradiction runs through Markan narrative
 - misunderstanding by Peter, disciples, many in Jerusalem
 - we welcome but do not understand
 - turns to rejection, betrayal, arrest, crucifixion

Mark 11, Pheme Perkins

- (Bartimaeus as important transitional story)
- Jesus as healer -> but only teacher in Jerusalem
 - popularity + plot to execute
 - temple = symbolic center
 - many challenges at temple
 - predicts its destruction
 - predictions from opposite temple (on Mount of Olives)
 - struggle is about religious issues
 - who speaks God’s word to the people
 - Jesus did not come to liberate from foreign domination
 - temple + custodians have lost authority to mediate presence of God
 - a new temple will emerge
- 3 episodes of entry =
 - (1) obtaining colt

- (2) acclamation of crowd
- (3) visit to temple
- signs identify something desires
- but Jesus will return what he borrows
- Mark does not mention Zechariah 9:9 like Matthew
- here emphasizes Jesus with crowd of pilgrim
- not treated as messianic figure
- finding of cold independent of entry
 - outer garments link vv 7 + 8
 - spreading cloaks and Jehu's ascension (2 Kings 9:13)
 - crowd both goes ahead + follows
- Mark does not describe palms
 - from John 12:13 + Sukkoth, Hanukkah
 - combined 2 pilgrimage psalms (118, 148)
 - Psalm 118 + Passover seder
 - Hallel psalms follow 3rd cup
 - but what rabbinic literature describes might not be true 200 years earlier in time of Jesus
- why do authorities not intervene?
 - if crowd expects Jesus to inaugurate kingdom of God?
 - Mark confines entry to road leading to city
 - Mark links acclamation with Jerusalem + temple
 - Jesus came to see not occupy
- Mark confines activity of Jesus to temple + Mount of Olives
 - only teaches
 - perhaps Jesus has taken over the area his opponents claim
 - 3 million pilgrims!?! (so Josephus)
 - visitors would need to stay outside city

Reflections

- crowd hopes for salvation focusing on Jesus
 - conscious of God as one who liberates
 - people normally hope for order of new peace + justice
- (2) holidays bring out hopes + tensions
 - Jesus knows crowds are not reliable
 - knows patient suffering + lack of success for coming of God's rule
 - power of God will be demonstrated on the cross
- (3) pilgrimage as special time of separation

- great feasts of Israel were pilgrimage for all but residents
- some might do this once in a lifetime
- today Christians + Jews might celebrate feasts without time of preparation/pilgrimage
- do we take time to prepare spiritually by changing our routine?

Mark 11, Lamar Williamson

- 4 parts
 - (1) setting
 - (2) procure the colt
 - (3) acclamation
 - (4) conclusion
- (1) begins Jerusalem ministry toward which Mark has been moving since Mark 8 at Caesarea Philippi
 - hints of enthronement procession
 - recalls teachings about rejection
 - foreshadows confrontation
 - Mount of Olives
- (2) colt
 - had Jesus made prior arrangements?
 - “Lord” = God, Jesus, or owner?
 - Jesus nowhere refers to himself as Lord
 - seems to be another example of Jesus’ authority
 - “Lord” -> God (in narrative)
 - (people in story might think Lord -> Jesus)
 - allusion to Zechariah 9:9 + sacred pilgrimage
 - later interpreters stress details of story
 - point = Jesus took initiative to arrange acclamation
 - every step -> foreknowledge + plan
- (3) acclamation
 - coronation custom?
 - explicit reference to Psalm 118:25-26
 - pilgrimage + royal
 - “save” here becomes shouts of praise
 - (a) Hosanna!
 - (b) Blessed... who comes
 - (b2) Blessed... coming kingdom of David
 - (a2) Hosanna!

- crowd does not call Jesus Lord or king or son of David
- enthronement procession yet reticent about Jesus
- Jesus rides in silence (Rw - ~ Transfiguration)
- “Triumph only for Jesus’ followers who have not yet understood his destiny as son of Man”
- entry to suffering + death
- as pilgrim yet more than a pilgrim
- silence = “I am Messiah not as you expect”
- crowd is both wrong right
- (4) he goes to temple but leaves
 - underscores centrality of temple
 - helps set up temple scene next day

Significance

- In Mark, Jesus not shown as king yet humble
- simple as lowly one, yet ironically a king
- focus can shift to silent one on the colt
- “Authoritative lowliness of God in Jesus Christ”
- important -> we tend to be like God/gods we worship
- easy to join crowds
- yet silence of Jesus is striking!
- look + listen intently
- “Some follow, knowing him in part will know failure as did fickle crowd”
- “By grace of crucified + risen Lord those who continue to follow him may also come to share... his lowliness + strength” (205)