

Zechariah 9: 9-10  
Psalm 118: 1-2, 19-29  
Mark 11: 1-10, 14: 17-21; 27-31

Meditation: Where is He Going?  
Palm Sunday, March 25, 2018  
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Holy Week requires imagination. The familiar story can never be truly real to us, because our life experiences, our mental frameworks are so different. So let's imagine a bit. Nobody knew what was going to happen. Each person imagined, out of their own experience and their own bewilderment. What did it feel like to know Jesus and to wonder where he was going as he headed to Jerusalem on that crowded and chaotic day?

My name is Peter. In the old days, I hauled in the nets, slick and tricky with fish.  
Everything stank of the sea.  
Then Jesus came along and everything we thought we knew was lost.  
We must have been crazy:  
We walked away from what we'd always done and known.  
Our neighbors laughed at us. They called us Jesus' gang of lunatics and fools.  
And much worse: scroungers and loungers with no self-respect. But Jesus...  
I don't expect you to understand, but it was like meeting goodness in the flesh.  
I even told him one time that he was the Messiah of God.  
He told me to shut up.  
And now this. This walk into the city.  
This is something else. I might have had a glimpse of glory before, but this is a new world.  
To have walked with him all this time – to have been part of all that, the dead raised, the broken made whole, the words taking us closer to God – and finally to arrive.  
To see the palms, to hear the cheers, to be at a festival where the nobodies are royalty.  
To see how they embrace him.  
I'd follow him anywhere: I'll never desert him now.  
They said we were mad to follow him.  
They said no one would listen. We were small fry. We were peasants.  
Power, they said, only listens to power.  
There is no justice for the likes of us  
and you can't make a revolution armed only with good will.  
I think they were wrong. I think this festival is our chance. We are marching for our lives.  
Will the world change this week?  
Where is he going?

My name is John. Ever since I can remember, it's been my brother and me, egging each other on, seeing who's fastest or strongest or smartest.  
We had fun, James and me. And then you grow up and it all gets boring.  
You end up working for your dad in a dull little village  
where the most exciting thing is seeing who can mend nets the quickest.  
And then you get scared and think you'll never go anywhere  
and you'll end up turning into your dad.  
Who wouldn't have taken their chance and followed Jesus?

The look on my dad's face the day James and I left the village!  
The look of fury and scorn. And behind the wrinkles and weather-beaten skin, the jealousy.  
Since then – wow -what I've seen.  
It's not just the stuff none of us can explain – the healings, the exorcisms and so on.  
It's not just the way Jesus is fearless,  
a poor man standing with the poor and loving anyone who doesn't seem to count.  
I was there that day on the mountain, when James and Peter and I saw something.  
It was like seeing the glory of God. I saw it.  
Jesus calls us the Sons of Thunder, James and me.  
It's that childhood thing again. The competition. And we can't help it.  
We egg each other on and want to be first in line for everything –  
for food, for jobs, for the good news itself. He gave us back ourselves, our trust in goodness.  
And when you've seen the stuff we have, can you blame us? Jesus is no ordinary guy.  
Well, he is and he isn't. I love him because he is one of us. But he's not, as well.  
He said we were on our way to Jerusalem and we'd seen the glory on the mountaintop.  
Now we were going to see his glory in the world.  
It was a bit of a joke really – the way we went up to Jesus and asked to sit on his right hand in glory.  
We'd pushed each other into it. We just wanted to be involved.  
We only said what the others were thinking. Everyone wants to get ahead.  
Now I know we were wrong.  
It was like a shadow descending upon us, a taste of what was to come. The group was fractured.  
Still we trudge along, pretending that everything can still be mended.  
Pretending we understand why we're headed to the crowded city.  
Pretending we still believe in Jesus' plan, or that there even is a plan.  
And...where is he going?

My name is Martha. I've always been busy. I've never suffered fools gladly.  
I'm no Lazarus and I'm certainly no Mary.  
I'm a grown-up. Because someone has to be. Someone has to take charge.  
Someone has to be the head of the household. That someone is me.  
Of course, when Jesus came along, he simply dazzled them.  
Mary sitting there at his feet, Lazarus acting transformed.  
A great visit, and I was happy to provide hospitality.  
Then Jesus was off again, off to somewhere in the East, and I wondered, "Where is he going, now?  
It's his job to help people, isn't it? Maybe that's why I got so mad.  
I didn't mean to sound bitter, but if ... if he had been here, none of this would have happened.  
My brother would've still been alive. Mary would not have fallen completely apart.  
And I wouldn't have to be strong for everyone. Again.  
And I know Jesus and his hangers-on and followers have plans.  
I know there is a bigger world than just us.  
But why couldn't he have been there for us when we needed him?  
Maybe that's just how it is with people like Jesus – maybe his plans are bigger than us.  
Maybe we were wrong about him. Maybe he isn't here for ordinary people after all.  
Where is he going, now?

My name is Judas. All I ever wanted was to be a good man: to serve God, to help other people.  
And Jesus gave me my chance.  
All my life I've had to put up with people teasing me or pushing me around.

People didn't like me. I'd get into trouble with Jews and Romans alike.  
But Jesus saw me differently.  
That first time we met he just came up to me and smiled and said, 'Follow me.'  
And I smiled back, and I think I even laughed and, crazy as it sounds, that's what I did.  
I followed him. For the first time in my life I had the confidence to be myself.  
That's what he does for you – Jesus. He helps you be yourself.  
And, yeah, I know I've been following him around for three years,  
but I'm no longer just a member of the crowd.  
Sometimes in order to be yourself, you have to become a disciple and he's set me free.  
All I ever wanted was to be a good man ... to serve God and help other people.  
And through him that's what has happened.  
I've done more good in the past three years than I ever imagined. We all have.  
He's helped us become good men and women.  
And you know the greatest thing? He's given us hope.  
But, now ... now, it's so messed up. It's all got out of hand. Even Jesus is really troubled.  
I've seen him at night brooding and praying. He hasn't slept properly for weeks.  
I've always been his greatest fan, but things are getting weird.  
There are people – even some who've been with us from the start – who want to proclaim him king.  
People are treating him like a god.  
People are talking of a revolution. And that's got to be wrong.  
Surely he's just a man and not a king. And most definitely not God. That's blasphemy.  
All I know is I'm scared. I've heard others too, you know – the leaders of the Temple and the  
Romans. I've been listening. They're not going to let this get out of hand.  
The vultures and the wolves are circling. And Jesus is their chosen lamb.  
You know what I think? We should have stayed away from Jerusalem this year. Stayed home.  
I think Jesus is lost. He's starting to believe what they're saying of him.  
I've seen it in his eyes. There's no way we're going to get away with this.  
Someone's got to turn him around. Don't judge me for what I have to do.  
All I've ever wanted was to be a good man.  
But where is he going, now?

On this day, in spring, in the season of powerful memory of liberation,  
Jesus is going somewhere. Where is he going? A short way, this time, only a mile or two. Not far.  
It is the last leg of the journey for many pilgrims, streaming towards Jerusalem for the Passover.  
He's walked farther, most days. But this time, he sends for a donkey.  
He had been talking about this particular day for a long time,  
preparing himself, preparing his friends for the crisis to come.  
He sends for a donkey for this "triumphal entry,"  
knowing that it is the most dangerous step, the point of no return.  
His friends don't seem to understand – in that way he is alone in the crowd.  
This donkey will not carry him to safety in a faraway land,  
but into the vortex of conflicted loyalties, warring religions, and brute power.

He was going somewhere – where was he going?  
and Peter said, "Where are you going?"  
and John said, "Which of us is greatest?"  
and Martha said, "Lord, if only you had arrived earlier!"  
and Judas said, "Lord, is it me?"

He was going somewhere  
and Jesus said, "Come with me."

He was going somewhere – where was he going? -  
and a young man said, "What must I do?"  
and a blind man said, "Take pity on me!"  
and a leper said, "Lord, make me clean!"  
and the madman said, "What do you want with us?"  
He was going somewhere  
and Jesus said, "Do you want to get better?"

He was going somewhere – where was he going? -  
and a woman in the crowd said, "Happy the womb that bore you!"  
and a woman at his side said, "Yes, it was me who touched you."  
and a woman at the well said, "Can I have some of your water?"  
and a woman on the road said, "Lord, have mercy on me."

He was going somewhere  
and Jesus said, "I will be with you always."  
Do we have the courage to follow?  
He was going somewhere  
and John's disciples said, "Are you the one who is to come?"  
and his home congregation said, "Could this be the carpenter's son?"  
and the Pharisees said, "Why does he eat with outcasts?"  
and the scribes said, "From where do you get your authority?"  
He was going somewhere  
and Jesus said, "I have come that you might have life."

He was going somewhere  
and the crowd was calling, "Hosanna!"  
and the crowd was crying, "Blessings!"  
and the crowd was shouting, "Barabbas!"  
and the crowd was screaming, "Crucify him!"

Jesus was ahead of his disciples, who were filled with alarm;  
the people who followed behind were afraid.  
So Jesus took his friends aside and said to them:  
"We are walking into Jerusalem, where the Son of Man will be arrested.  
They will condemn him to death, and hand him over to the army,  
who will mock him, spit on him, and kill him. But three days later he will rise to life.  
Come, let us go forward."

Lord Jesus Christ, you called the disciples to go forward with you on the way to the cross.  
Since you first walked that road countless millions have followed you.  
In all that we do as your disciples, save us from false familiarity with your journey.  
May we never presume to step into your shoes, but make us small enough to fit our own,  
and to walk in love and wonder behind you. Amen.

\* I am indebted to resources from the Wild Goose Worship Group from [Stages on the Way](#).