

TFTD 2025.31 Wednesday April 9th

The tipping point: Luke 19.29-44



**‘Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!
Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!’**

I took this photo on our first pilgrimage to Jerusalem, back in 2011. It was a cold April morning, I remember, with flurries of snow, and we wondered what lay ahead, as we stood at the top of the Mount of Olives, looking down the precipitous slope to the city spread out beneath us. You can see how steep it is in the picture — a narrow road hurtling down towards the city at an angle of about 45 degrees (or so it felt). On this side of the valley you can see the tombs of an ancient cemetery — both Jews and Muslims believe that the Mount of Olives is a good place to be buried, because it’s there that God’s kingdom will be revealed. As the road ascends on the far side of the valley, you can just see the walls of the city surrounding the Temple Mount. And on

the road below us, a small donkey waiting to give rides to pilgrims.

29 When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰saying, ‘Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹If anyone asks you, “Why are you untying it?” just say this: “The Lord needs it”.’

This is the tipping point of Jesus’ long ‘journey to Jerusalem’. For the last few miles, he has been toiling up the long road from Jericho, 258 metres below sea level in the Jordan valley, up through the barren slopes of the Judean wilderness to the crest of the Mount of Olives. This is the point where traditionally the pilgrims from Galilee would stop and sing one of the pilgrim psalms: *I was glad when they said to me, Let us go to the house of the Lord! Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!* (Ps 122.1). Once you get to that point, journey’s end is in sight: there’s no way back, once you start to go down that precipitous slope.

³³As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, ‘Why are you untying the colt?’³⁴They said, ‘The Lord needs it.’ ³⁵Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. ³⁷As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, ³⁸saying, ‘Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!’ ³⁹Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, order your disciples to stop.’ ⁴⁰He answered, ‘I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.’

For Jesus, what started out as a personal journey of obedience to the will of God becomes a triumphal procession. A donkey appears out of nowhere, as if by magic (was it a pre-arranged signal?). He is escorted down the hill by crowds of cheering followers — not just the Twelve, but crowds of Galilean pilgrims, coming up for the Passover. This is the high point of Jesus’ popularity. For the Galilean crowd, he’s the wonder-working prophet from Galilee, the one who makes God’s presence visible and tangible: when he’s around, you can really believe the kingdom of God is just around the corner. It feels like all the prophecies are coming true: it’s as if the stones themselves want to shout out, *‘Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!’* It’s like Christmas all over again — one of those moments when the veil between earth and heaven grows

thin, and you can almost hear the angels sing.

41 As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, 42saying, 'If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. 43Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. 44They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God.'

But Jesus knows there's more to peace than shouting and celebration. Half-way down the hill is the *Dominus Flevit* chapel, set in its rocky garden confronting the city. Here, by tradition, is where Jesus stopped and wept over the city, foreseeing its tragic future. Luke has already shown us Jesus' deep sense of grief and empathy for the city and its inhabitants (Lk 13.34-35). As the king finally comes to his city, this is a tipping point: peace is here, on offer — but there's a choice to be made. Kingdom fervour is exciting, invigorating; it's easy to get swept up in a tide of enthusiasm. But the 'way of peace' Jesus offers is demanding and costly: only he knows how much it will cost to open the way into God's kingdom.

As we enter the holy season of Passiontide, this is a good moment to go back to the first two chapters of Luke's Gospel, and re-read the Magnificat (Luke 1.46-55), the Benedictus (Luke 1.68-79), and the Nunc Dimittis (Luke 2.29-35). Think about all the promises made at the time of Jesus' birth. How are they being fulfilled at this point in his ministry?

God bless,

Loveday

