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# THE LOOKOUT

APRIL 2023

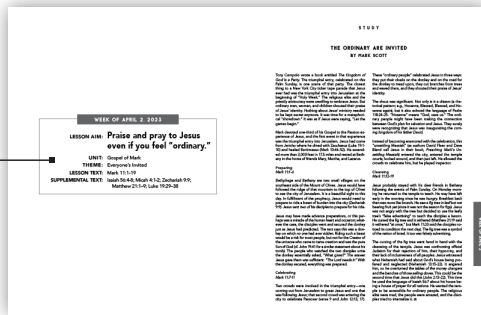
## Unit: Gospel of Mark

### Theme: Everyone's Invited

**Overview:** Reading the Gospel of Mark is like preparing for the arrival of company. The fast-moving Messiah of Mark's Gospel was getting his house (kingdom) ready for a wide assortment of guests. Jesus wanted everyone in his kingdom—the ordinary, the nations, sinners, the hurting, and even you. Students will want to give Jesus their RSVP.

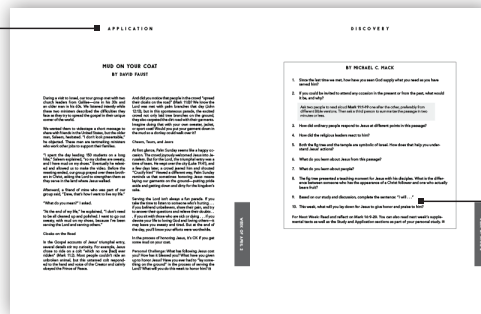
## HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.



Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.



Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

WEEK OF APRIL 2, 2023

**LESSON AIM:** Praise and pray to Jesus  
even if you feel "ordinary."

**UNIT:** Gospel of Mark

**THEME:** Everyone's Invited

**LESSON TEXT:** Mark 11:1-19

**SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT:** Isaiah 56:4-8; Micah 4:1-2; Zechariah 9:9;  
Matthew 21:1-9; Luke 19:29-38

## STUDY

### THE ORDINARY ARE INVITED

BY MARK SCOTT

Tony Campolo wrote a book entitled *The Kingdom of God Is a Party*. The triumphal entry, celebrated on this Palm Sunday, is one scene of that party. The closest thing to a New York City ticker tape parade that Jesus ever had was the triumphal entry into Jerusalem at the beginning of “Holy Week.” The religious elite and the priestly aristocracy were unwilling to embrace Jesus. But ordinary men, women, and children shouted their praise of Jesus’ identity. Nothing about Jesus’ ministry needed to be kept secret anymore. It was time for a metaphorical “showdown.” It was as if Jesus were saying, “Let the games begin.”

Mark devoted one-third of his Gospel to the Passion experience of Jesus, and the first event in that experience was the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Jesus had come from Jericho where he dined with Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) and healed Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52). He ascended more than 3,000 feet in 17.5 miles and rested at Bethany in the home of friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

#### Preparing

Mark 11:1-6

*Bethphage and Bethany* are two small villages on the southeast side of the Mount of Olives. Jesus would have followed the ridge of that mountain to the top of Olivet to see the city of Jerusalem. It is a beautiful sight to this day. In fulfillment of the prophecy, Jesus would need to prepare to ride a beast of burden into the city (Zechariah 9:9). Jesus sent *two of his disciples* to prepare for his ride.

Jesus may have made advance preparations, or this perhaps was a miracle of the human heart and occasion; whatever the case, the disciples went and secured the donkey just as Jesus had predicted. The text says this was a donkey on *which no one had ever ridden*. Riding such a beast would be a risk for most people, but not for the Creator of the universe who came to tame creation and was the pure Son of God (cf. John 19:41 for a similar statement about his tomb). The people who watched the two disciples untie the donkey essentially asked, “What gives?” The answer Jesus gave them was sufficient: “*The Lord needs it.*” With the donkey secured, everything was prepared.

#### Celebrating

Mark 11:7-11

Two crowds were involved in the triumphal entry—one coming out from Jerusalem to greet Jesus and one that was following Jesus; that second crowd was entering the city to celebrate Passover (verse 9 and John 12:13, 17).

These “ordinary people” celebrated Jesus in three ways: they put their cloaks on the donkey and on the road for the donkey to tread upon, they cut branches from trees and waved them, and they shouted their praise of Jesus’ identity.

The shout was significant. Not only is it a chiasm (a rhetorical pattern; e.g., Hosanna, Blessed, Blessed, and Hosanna again), but it also echoed the language of Psalm 118:24-25. “*Hosanna*” means “God, save us.” The ordinary people might have been making the connection between God’s plan for salvation and Jesus. They surely were recognizing that Jesus was inaugurating the *coming kingdom of his father David*.

Instead of becoming enamored with the celebration, this “unsettling Messiah” (as authors David Fler and Dave Bland call Jesus in their book, *Preaching Mark’s Unsettling Messiah*) entered the city, entered the *temple courts*, looked around, and then just left. He allowed the crowds to celebrate him, but he played inspector.

#### Cleansing

Mark 11:12-19

Jesus probably stayed with his dear friends in Bethany following the events of Palm Sunday. On Monday morning he returned to the temple to teach. He may have left early in the morning since he was *hungry*. Breakfast back then was more like brunch. He saw a *fig tree in leaf* but not bearing fruit yet (since it was not the season for figs). Jesus was not angry with the tree but decided to use the leafy tree’s “false advertising” to teach the disciples a lesson. He cursed the fig tree and it withered (Matthew 21:19 said it withered “at once,” but Mark 11:20 said the disciples noticed its condition the next day). The fig tree was a symbol of the nation of Israel. It too was falsely advertising.

The cursing of the fig tree went hand in hand with the cleansing of the temple. Jesus was confronting official Judaism for their rejection of him, their hypocrisy, and their lack of inclusiveness of all peoples. Jesus witnessed what Nehemiah had said about God’s house being profaned and neglected (Nehemiah 13:15-22). It angered him, so *he overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves*. This could be the second time that Jesus did this (John 2:13-22). This time he used the language of Isaiah 56:7 about his house being a *house of prayer for all nations*. He wanted the temple to be accessible for ordinary people. The religious elite were mad, the people were amazed, and the disciples tried to internalize it. ■

## APPLICATION

### MUD ON YOUR COAT

BY DAVID FAUST

During a visit to Israel, our tour group met with two church leaders from Galilee—one in his 30s and an older man in his 60s. We listened intently while these two ministers described the difficulties they face as they try to spread the gospel in their unique corner of the world.

We wanted them to videotape a short message to share with friends in the United States, but the older man, Saleem, hesitated. “I don’t look presentable,” he objected. These men are tentmaking ministers who work other jobs to support their families.

“I spent the day leading 150 students on a long hike,” Saleem explained, “so my clothes are sweaty, and I have mud on my shoes.” Eventually he relented and allowed us to make the video. Before the meeting ended, our group prayed over these brothers in Christ, asking the Lord to strengthen them as they serve in the land where Jesus walked.

Afterward, a friend of mine who was part of our group said, “Dave, that’s how I want to live my life.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“At the end of my life,” he explained, “I don’t need to be all cleaned up and polished. I want to go out sweaty, with mud on my shoes, because I’ve been serving the Lord and serving others.”

#### Cloaks on the Road

In the Gospel accounts of Jesus’ triumphal entry, several details stir my curiosity. For example, Jesus chose to ride on a colt “which no one [had] ever ridden” (Mark 11:2). Most people couldn’t ride an unbroken animal, but this untamed colt responded to the hand and voice of the Creator and calmly obeyed the Prince of Peace.

And did you notice that people in the crowd “spread their cloaks on the road” (Mark 11:8)? We know the Lord was met with palm branches that day (John 12:13), but in this spontaneous parade, the excited crowd not only laid tree branches on the ground, they also carpeted the dirt road with their garments. Imagine doing that with your own sweater, jacket, or sport coat! Would you put your garment down in the mud so a donkey could walk over it?

#### Cheers, Tears, and Jeers

At first glance, Palm Sunday seems like a happy occasion. The crowd joyously welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem. But for the Lord, the triumphal entry was a time of tears. He wept over the city (Luke 19:41), and a few days later, a crowd jeered him and shouted “Crucify him!” Viewed a different way, Palm Sunday reminds us that sometimes honoring Jesus means laying our garments on the ground—putting pride aside and getting down and dirty for the kingdom’s sake.

Serving the Lord isn’t always a fun parade. If you take the time to listen to someone who’s hurting . . . if you befriend unbelievers, share their pain, and try to answer their questions and relieve their doubts . . . if you sit with those who are sick or dying . . . if you devote your life to loving God and loving others—it may leave you sweaty and tired. But at the end of the day, you’ll know your efforts were worthwhile.

In the process of honoring Jesus, it’s OK if you get some mud on your coat.

**Personal Challenge:** What has following Jesus cost you? How has it blessed you? What have you given up to honor Jesus? Have you ever had to “lay something on the ground” in the process of serving the Lord? What will you do this week to honor him? ■

## DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. MACK

1. Since the last time we met, how have you seen God supply what you need as you have served him?
2. If you could be invited to attend any occasion in the present or from the past, what would it be, and why?

Ask two people to read aloud **Mark 11:1-19** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to summarize the passage in two minutes or less.

3. How did ordinary people respond to Jesus at different points in this passage?
4. How did the religious leaders react to him?
5. Both the fig tree and the temple are symbolic of Israel. How does that help you understand Jesus' actions?
6. What do you learn about Jesus from this passage?
7. What do you learn about people?
8. The fig tree presented a teaching moment for Jesus with his disciples. What is the difference between someone who merely has the appearance of a Christ follower and one who actually is a follower?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete the sentence: "I will . . ."
10. This week, what will you lay down for Jesus to give honor and praise to him?

**For Next Week:** Read and reflect on **Mark 16:9-20**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. 📖