

Meditation for Palm Sunday

The Little boy's story

Matthew 21:1-17

He was good with children. It's a few years back now, but I remember him as vividly as if it was yesterday.

The first time I saw him was early on – everyone seemed to be talking about him. It was very exciting. Then, one day, my parents took me to see Jesus. I had been ill as a young child, apparently, and they wanted Jesus to bless me. I guess they thought it might protect me from any further problems. We got quite close. There was a little group of us who were kids, and I expect we were making a little bit of noise. He looked at us, and there was a delight in his eyes to see us, and I trusted him completely. We were so excited, but then a few of his followers told us to be quiet and go away. "The teacher isn't here for children", they said.

That's when I first heard his voice, strong and clear, but with a kindness I can't quite describe. "No!" he said in a loud voice that made everyone jump. "Let the children come to me, and don't you dare stop them. My father's kingdom belongs to people who follow me and trust me like children do. Learn from them." After that, I'm sure he took extra time to talk to each of us and bless us. His disciples looked really shamefaced.

When we heard that Jesus was coming in to Jerusalem just before the Passover Festival, we had to be there. My dad took me early in the day to the road into the city, quite near the gate. And we waited with great excitement – I think my dad was as excited as I was.

You could hear the crowd coming a mile off. "Hosanna! Hosanna!", people were shouting. They had cut down palm leaves and had put branches and their cloaks in the road. People were singing and dancing and celebrating, and we all got carried away with the atmosphere. My dad and I managed to slip in to the procession just a little bit behind Jesus and we followed him up into the city. It was as if Jesus was my hero – I felt like I would have done anything for him at that moment.

The first thing Jesus did was head up to the Temple, and the next thing we knew all these people were rushing out – carrying bags of money and cages of birds. "They're all crooks", said my dad "about time they were taught a lesson." Jesus was looking angry – a bit like he did when he told off his disciples about the children. "This should be a place for prayer, but you've turned it into a place to steal from people seeking my Father", he shouted. But I wasn't scared, because I trusted him. In fact, I thought he was brilliant.

We sneaked in, and there were some more children there, and we soon made up a song and sang it about Jesus. The grown-ups in the Temple were a bit like the other ones – they complained about us. But Jesus spoke up for us again. "These children are singing the truth", he said. "Sometimes children can hear God much more clearly than you who think you know so much."

While he was saying this, he caught my eye for a moment. I saw the kindness I had known before, even a little of the delight, but I was shocked to see something else. There was a sadness in his eyes too, a pained look that mean I knew something was wrong. Something bad was going to happen. It was the look people have when they say goodbye to go on a long journey, not knowing if – or when - they will return. I had no idea then what would lie ahead – how could I? I was just a child. But I could see what he was feeling, and for the first and only time it made me a little bit scared. Not of him, but for him.

He needed his friends more than ever, but despite all the people round him, he seemed lonelier than I had ever seen him. He was starting something only he could do, and all I could do was treasure the memories I had and watch and wait to see what would happen.

"Come on", said Dad, "we've a Passover to prepare". It would be one I would never forget.