

Let's enter these familiar words of Matthew's gospel that describe Jesus' pilgrimage to Jerusalem, listening for what speaks to your hearts in THIS moment, your own pilgrimage to the inner Jerusalem of transformation, remembering that this is not a story from history. It is about current events.

**Matthew 21:1-611**

**1** *When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples,*

**2** *saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me.*

**3** *If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately."*

**4** *This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,*

**5** *"Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."*

**6** *The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them;*

**8** *A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.*

**9** *The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"*

**10** *When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?"*

**11** *The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."*

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In 2006, John Dominic Crossan and Marcus Borg published ***The Last Week: A Day-by-Day Account of Jesus's Final Week in Jerusalem***. Diana Butler Bass uses a passage from it in her [Palm Sunday blog: \*Hosanna, not Alleluia\*](#). She also reveals the deeper etymology of the word Hosanna from the Hebrew/Aramaic meaning “help or save, I pray.” In that context, Hosanna means 'a special honor to the one who saves,' a far more complex rendering of the shouts of jubilation we might picture in our images of Palm Sunday.

Here is the passage Butler Bass refers to:

*“The book begins with an unforgettable image:*

*“Two processions entered Jerusalem on a spring day in the year 30... One was a peasant procession, the other an imperial procession. From the east, Jesus rode a donkey down the Mouth of Olives, cheered by his followers. . . On the opposite side of the city, from the west, Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Idumea, Judea, and Samaria, entered Jerusalem at the head of a column of imperial cavalry and soldiers.*

*Jesus’s procession proclaimed the kingdom of God; Pilate’s proclaimed the power of empire.”*

She writes: *“Matthew depicts the throng cheering, waving branches, and singing hosanna[and] interlaced the Jesus procession with a prophecy from Zechariah. In the Hebrew scriptures, Zechariah envisioned a humble king who arrives in Jerusalem on a donkey and a colt. That king will end all war... This king commands peace.*

*Of course, Pontius Pilate wasn’t a king of peace. He commanded an army on behalf of Caesar. But he and that legion were there to keep the peace during the holy days of Passover — making sure the Jews caused no trouble for their*

*Roman rulers. As his procession made its way to the city gate, most likely no one cheered him. The crowds hated and feared him...*

*Meanwhile, at the eastern gate, Jesus' noisy supporters were crying out Hosanna! Save us! Please save us now! They weren't asking for some sort of spiritual salvation, for a place in heaven, or for eternal life. They wanted to be saved from Pilate, from the legion entering the other gate, from Caesar, and that faux peace of Roman swords. They knew there was no Pax Romana, it was nothing but misery and death.*

*Hosanna Jesus! Free us, we pray you! Deliver us! Save us from Pilate and Caesar and the misery of Rome!"*

### [From Spirituality and Practice in a review of \*The Last Week\*:](#)

In their comments on Palm Sunday, Borg and Crossan discuss the domination system in Jerusalem that was characterized by political oppression, economic exploitation, and religious legitimation (*using religious language and precepts to enforce policy that excludes those outside the boundaries of that religion*). Jesus was sharply critical of the temple in the city and its collaboration with the domination system. His message was to repent, not in the sense of contrition, but "to embark upon a way that goes beyond the mind that you have." ...His preaching about the Kingdom of God emphasizes the *present moment, not life after death*.

As we enter the gates of Jerusalem, with Jesus on the colt, and the crowds singing Hosanna waving palm branches to the "king and conqueror," what are our expectations and understandings of this historic Jesus, and the eternal Christ we carry within? What are the systems of domination, violence and suffering alive right now? If we are pilgrims on our own journey to Jerusalem, how does that pilgrimage lead us beyond the mind we have? The heart we have? How does this king arriving on a colt call us to break the chains of domination and violence?

**The Power of Christ Love now releases me from any sense of separation from Spirit or Others.** *The true self lives in union with God and the world. It sees that our deepest reality is... about oneness, and whatever diminishes that oneness, is the false self...Christ is... the spiritual dimension of reality, or the... unfolding unity of the entire world, in which my deepest self participates.*

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Oneness is seeing the Christ too, in those I would crucify with my anger and absencing— and seeing the Christ in my own shadow that may lurk under my righteous anger. Oneness is seeing myself as whole in the Great Mystery of the Eternal Holy One, no matter how often my “small s self” leads me away from that truth.

What would happen if we truly stayed awake to that Oneness? If we saw the gift and meaning of the story of Jesus as the reminder that the HOLY ONE is PRESENCE, and so is present with us in every moment, in every circumstance, in every being, in every blessing that rips the illusion of separation from our eyes, our hands, our hearts? This is the blessing of living into our vision and mission as a beloved community, coming together imperfectly, perhaps, but trusting the Oneness of our Christ-selves.

I'll leave us with this as a prayer. In an interview with Krista Tippett that aired March 9 on the [OnBeing podcast](#), Isabelle Wilkerson author of ***Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents***, says this: “This book was a prayer for our country. It was a prayer for humanity. It was a prayer for our species. It was a prayer for the planet because this has consequences for our planet as a whole.”

Here is the excerpt from the epilogue:

“In a world without caste, instead of a false swagger over our own tribe or family or ascribed community, we would look upon all of humanity with

wonderment: the lithe beauty of an Ethiopian runner, the bravery of a Swedish girl determined to save the planet, the physics-defying aerobatics of an African-American Olympian, the brilliance of a composer of Puerto Rican descent who can rap the history of the founding of America at 144 words a minute—all of these feats should fill us with astonishment at what the species is capable of and gratitude to be alive for this.

In a world without caste, being male or female, light or dark, immigrant or native-born, would have no bearing on what anyone was perceived as being capable of. In a world without caste, we would all be invested in the well-being of others in our species if only for our own survival, and recognize that we are in need of one another more than we have been led to believe. We would join forces with indigenous people around the world raising the alarm as fires rage and glaciers melt. We would see that, when others suffer, the collective human body is set back from the progression of our species.

A world without caste would set everyone free.”

The narrative of Jesus, and the people who longed for a hero to throw off the oppression of an unjust government and a church in collusion, is *not* history. It is current events and it calls us to our own pilgrimage to love.

May we enter into the mystery together, and in our own lives, our own spheres, awaken LOVE in all we encounter- our own species, and the entirety of creation.

“Hosanna! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of THE ETERNAL ONE.”