

Palm Sunday, March 29, 2026

## Transforming Kingship

John 12:12-28

### Small group Questions with Leader Guide

- 1. Share a time in your life when you had expectations that were not met. What happened when you realized that expectations would not be met? What was challenging about the situation and what did you learn through it?**

*This is more of an icebreaker to get your group thinking about how our expectations affect us and provide an opportunity for learning and growing maturity. We're not looking for the "correct" answer here, but honest personal reflection.*

- 2. Read John 12:12-13. What are the crowd's expectations of Jesus when they welcome him into Jerusalem? What kind of king do they seem to be looking for?**

*In the sermon, we considered the imagery of the Palm branch. The sermon mentioned how the palm branch was a symbol of national identity for Israel. We mentioned the Maccabean revolt that overthrew the Macedonian Empire 150 years before Jesus' time. Another piece of context not mentioned in the sermon: a hundred years after Jesus there was another violent revolt against Rome led by Simon Bar Kokhba (132 CE). They gained independence, this time only for 3 years – and minted their own revolt coinage, striking the image of a palm branch on their currency.*



*Bar Kokhba silver Zuz/Denarius*

- 3. Read John 12:14-15. How does Jesus respond to the expectations of the crowd? How does his response transform our ideas of what it means for Jesus to be God's Messiah/King?**

*In the sermon we observed two aspects of Jesus' response and John's ensuing quotation from Zechariah 9:9. First, Jesus publicly comes out as a king. He's not avoiding that claim in any way. Second, while he embraces being a king, he redefines what it means to be God's king. Help your group explore the contrast between Jesus and popular conceptions of what a king should be like. Bring out the universality of Jesus' kingship (not only king of Israel, but*

*king of all), and the unique way he brings about his reign (not through conquering life, but by giving his life to conquer death itself).*

- 4. In John 12:23, Jesus says, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” What hour is he talking about? How does he immediately redefine “glory” in verses 24–26? How does this transformation of glory and kingship inform and transform our lives?**

*Explore what it means to follow Jesus in the way of his kingdom. Consider the differences between the kingdoms of the world and the kingdom of God and the deeper paradigms of power, glory, love, self-giving, healing, and reconciliation that play out in the cross and ought to play out in the life and witness of the Church.*

- 5. Read John 12:16-22 and notice the different responses to Jesus’ actions. How do the following groups respond to Jesus?**

**His disciples:**

**The crowd:**

**The Pharisees:**

**“Some Greeks”:**

These different responses to Jesus help us understand the mixture of attitudes towards him that are at play in holy week. The responses are clearly laid out by John in the passage, so help your group engage the text and draw out those responses.

- 6. If you were to use your imagination and place yourself in the story watching the events unfold, where would you be in the story? What group might you be part of and why?**

*The goal here to use our imaginations to interact with Jesus in the story. It might be helpful to reference the different groups and responses from question 5 and highlight parallels to our own expectations. At this moment in your relationship with Jesus are you experiencing confusion (like the disciples), excitement (like the crowd), hardness or hostility (like the Pharisees), or curiosity (like the Greeks)? Some in your group may be a mixture of these, and some may not identify with any of these options at all. Make room for this, inviting personal response and reflection.*

### **Closing Prayer**

*Close in a time of prayer focused on:*

- Trusting Jesus, especially when the gap between our expectations and his reality gets exposed.
- Surrendering our expectations, yielding to his will and his ways.

- Welcoming Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to form us in the way of his self-giving live.
- Asking Holy Spirit to renew us for worship and witness that is in line with the transformed kingship of Jesus.
- Leading us into holy week with eyes open to see the glory of Jesus' cross and resurrection.