# People in the Crowd

## Reading:

Mark 11:1-11

As we reflect on this reading, where are you in the crowd?

## Shopkeeper

I’ve got to love the Passover time. It’s always so busy here in Jerusalem with pilgrims coming to worship, and with the influx of pilgrims people who need to purchase their food to celebrate properly. In many ways, it is a blessing for me as it’s the time of year I can make the most profit and that means I don’t have to worry about how I will feed the family. It gives me the chance to give my children the little extras that village people could only dream of having.

Each year I watch the crowds come to the city and each year I hope I have enough produce to sell. But that’s not the only worry. Each year I also watch the Romans come marching in – to keep the peace, they claim, but more like it to show their power and make sure the fervent pilgrims don’t stir up trouble. Each year I worry there will be a clash between the pilgrims and the Roman soldiers. We have heard the rumours of what the Romans have done in cities that have resisted their rule. If that happens, what will become for me and my family?

But mostly my thoughts are on the preparation for Passover and it is exhausting. By the time I’ve sorted out my shop, there is little energy for anything else. I feel caught between wanting to celebrate properly and knowing a good sale will take the edge off the struggle for the year to come. I feel torn in two directions and not sure how to resolve this.

As I look out at the people gathering for this celebration, where are you in the crowd?

## Child

I love Passover time. It’s so exciting especially when I get to see people who have come from all over the world to be here and celebrate the Passover. Sometimes I ask the visitors to teach me new words in their language – Dad says it’s important to learn some Greek since that’s the language I’ll be able to use anywhere. Maybe one day when I’m grown up I’ll be able to travel too, and see all sorts of strange countries and people.

Usually the adults are a bit grouchy – they are so busy organising everything for our special dinner – but this year Granny is a bit excited. She says she’s heard there’s a special teacher coming to Jerusalem called Jesus. She says he treats everyone as important – even the women and children can talk to him. Wow! I’d be really excited if I got to say hallo. Granny says she’ll take me to see him when he gets here.

I can hear the crowds coming now and if I stand on tiptoes, I can see there’s a man on a donkey – I wonder if that’s him. He hasn’t been to Jerusalem before, so I don’t know. I’m going to tell Granny it is him and get her to take me. I want to see this procession – I really want to be there! Where are you in the crowd?

## Grandparent

Have you seen Hannah? She’s so desperate to go and see Jesus that she might have slipped off on her own… I hope she’s taken one of the other kids with her. Usually she’s old enough to go around Jerusalem on her own, but at Passover… it’s not the crowds, it’s the extra Roman soldiers who are around. Those soldiers can commandeer whatever they want for Imperial purposes, and that includes the children.

Pilate is, of course, extra jumpy at the moment. He’s worried that these pilgrims are going to stir up trouble. The Passover is when we remember freedom from slavery and now with the imposition of Roman rule, looking back to those times encourages people to look forward to another time when we are freed from those who would control us.

I wonder what’s the best action to take – keep our heads down and hope that Rome goes away, or take active resistance against the powers. Either is a risk and either could have devastating consequences for the family. There are days when I look at the children playing together and wonder what their future will be. How many more Passovers will our family celebrate looking once again to freedom?

When I hear of Jesus and the hope he brought in Galilee, I wonder what he will do here in Jerusalem. Part of me dares to hope he will be the start of a new uprising, part of me fears it. I want to go and hear him teach, but will I simply be sucked in with the emotions of the people? There are so many things to consider…

I look out at the gathering people and wonder… where are you in the crowd?

## Town Crier

My job is spreading the news. Of course, often it is the news the powers that be want people to hear. Herod is amazing, Pilate has done a good job. Sometimes we all know my news is more of propaganda and people snigger, but we all know we need to be careful.

Today I’m supposed to be shouting the news that Pilate is coming. Look to the West and there’s a grand procession of the might of Imperial Rome. Row after row of soldiers are marching, with their bright spears pointed to the sky. Calvary officers ride upright and proud on their tall war-horses. Colourful banners declaring the rule of Rome wave in the sea breeze. All of this is done to remind the people who is really in charge. It’s needed at Passover because the Jewish people, who are always dreaming of freedom, have this as their feast to celebrate that freedom won once long ago and the promise of a future freedom.

As I glance into the distance at the dust on the road that signals the marching might of Rome, I see crowds and dust to the East of the city. A lone man rides a donkey, while the crowds give him a royal welcome, waving branches and laying down cloaks. Is this a parody or something more sinister? They say the Messiah will come from the East. I glance back and forth between the two gatherings of people, east and west. Pilate and the Messiah. I wonder which group I will join: where are you in the crowd?

## Soldier

What’s that happening on the other side of the city? I’ve got to keep an eye out, all these pilgrims coming in and any one of them could stir up trouble. My job it to squash it down before anything starts up. It’s a balancing act. Hit too hard and fast, and they will really get up in arms; be too soft and they will think they can walk all over us. I hate it at this time of year – more trouble than it’s worth. And Pilate? He is afraid of losing control.

Pilate is arriving soon, with all the extra army that he will need and I guess the commanders will be getting together soon to talk about strategy. What are we going to do? How will we need to keep the peace this Passover.

Now I look at the other side of the city, it seems to be another procession. What are they doing? It looks almost as if it’s a royal procession – treason! This procession is treason! Now I see it, I’m not so sure. Well, let’s call it treason, even if it’s satire, someone like Pilate won’t want to be shamed by what seems to be happening. I’ll have to report this and someone will want to respond. This is a threat to Rome.

Let me look around and see if there are faces there that I can recognise. Where are you in the crowd?