

Lessons from history

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I rarely mention issues relating to faith on this blog. There is good reason. Like many, I was long ago alienated from the conventional religious interpretations of Christianity, which was the tradition in which I was brought up. I fully understand anyone who wants nothing to do with religion as a result. I found a personal accommodation of faith and a rejection of the imposition of religion with the Quakers, but evangelising is the last thing I am interested in doing.

However, this is Palm Sunday, which Christians consider the start of what is called Holy Week. And, in the context of what is happening in this country now with regard to protest the story of Palm Sunday, and the day that followed, seems worth sharing to me, not least because this one has a decided ring of historical accuracy to it, versions being in all four Gospels. This is from Mark:

11 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, 2 saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 3 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'"

4 They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, 5 some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" 6 They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. 7 When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. 8 Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. 9 Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

"Hosanna!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

10 "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"

“Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

11 Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

12 The next day15 on reaching Jerusalem , Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, 16 and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. 17 And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’. But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’

18 The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

This is a story of protest. It is not a story of peaceful protest. It is a story of anger at corruption. And it is the story about those exposed as corrupt.

Nothing much changes, I suggest.

Those exposed disliked angry protest as much then as they do now.

We supposedly venerated the angry protestor in this story. And yet we have not learned to listen to those who oppose corruption, oppression, inappropriate profiteering and the powerful who gain as a result of those abuses. Instead, those with the power to abuse still seek to criminalise those who righteously protest.

I wish we did not have to go through the pain of the learning process that this does not work, yet again. But it seems that those who are corrupt insist that we must.