

Actions Speak Louder than Words

Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. Would the people around you say that you are direct when you want or need something? Explain.
2. Have you ever ridden a horse or camel or any other animal? Explain.

Read the following passages: Mark 11:1-11.

Jesus was a mystery to just about everybody. All throughout his ministry, Jesus would do something startling, and the people would ask, "Who is this?" And, for the most part, Jesus left that question unanswered. Until Palm Sunday. On Palm Sunday Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey in deliberate fulfillment of a prophecy in the book of Zechariah (see Zechariah 9:9). Everybody knew what Jesus was saying: "I am the king." But what kind of king? Jesus, himself, provoked this question with a reference to Psalm 110: "David himself calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?" (See Mark 12:35-37.) Jesus was not the kind of king anyone was expecting. He was a strange son (being much more than a human son of David). He fought a strange battle (addressing the evil in human hearts rather than taking up the sword). And he won a strange victory (defeating sin by taking our defeat).

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. What were some of the Jewish expectations associated with the kingdom of God? (See, for example, Isaiah 14:1-2 and Psalm 2:1-12.) How did these expectations impact perceptions of Jesus? (See, for example, Luke 7:18-23.) How are your own expectations of God impacting how you are processing your life experiences right now? Explain.
2. Read Psalm 110. What are some of the puzzles associated with the figure described in this passage? How did Jesus become an unexpected fulfillment of this psalm?
3. Read Hebrews 2:14-18. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor and theologian, gave the following explanation for his return to Germany just before the start of World War II. How do Bonhoeffer's motivations reflect aspects of Jesus's incarnation?

I must live through this difficult period of our national history with the Christian people of Germany. I will have no right to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people...Christians in Germany will face the terrible alternative of either willing the defeat of their nation in order that Christian civilization may survive, or willing the victory of their nation and thereby destroying civilization. I know which of these alternatives I must choose, but I cannot make this choice in security.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letter to Reinhold Niebuhr

4. Have you come to the realization that Jesus died for the evil in your heart? Explain. How should this reality impact our lives moving forward?
5. Read Ephesians 1:3-14. What are some of the blessings that God has given us “in Christ”? Are these blessings having a practical impact in your life? Explain.
6. Do you know anyone you can invite to an Easter service?

Pray