

Palm (6th) Sunday - Crowd



Robed in the colour of heaven, Jesus sits astride a donkey (Matthew 21. 1-11). Her colt is tucked in close beside her, the heads of both animals lowered to brave the kerfuffle from the crowd spilling out of Jerusalem's gate. Lorenzetti's painting (1320) is divided into two: on the left, Jesus' haloed disciples follow him towards the city and on the right, its citizens respond to his arrival.

In the painting's centre there is an empty space circled on one side by Jesus' hand raised in blessing and on the other by the goose quill of a scribe. This central space is like a question mark, a choice. Yes, some are peeling off their fine Italian outer-garments and spreading them before the donkeys' feet. Yes, two men scale trees for branches with which to strew the road. Yes, many faces are open-mouthed in wonder. But is the vicious hostility which we'll see from Friday's crowd already stirring in whispered words between the bearded men (right)?

By using his hometown Siena as its backdrop, Lorenzetti deftly shows us that the scene is ours too, wherever we are. The complex crowd is us. When Jesus turns up in our lives, how do we respond? Welcoming or guarded? Fickle or faithful? The painting asks us to choose.

Today...

...give us grace, Lord Jesus
to open our lives to you.

Amen