

“Who is this?!” It was utter chaos. The temple was always chaotic to a degree, but we had never seen it like this. Sheep were running free. Birds were escaping from their cages. Coins were rolling around on the ground. Disabled folks were entering areas they were forbidden. And children were running around screaming. And the authorities were so shocked it was like they were paralyzed and unable to move. It was all centered around Jesus. And everyone was asking the same question, **“Who is this?!”**

We had finally gotten to Jerusalem after months of preparation and anticipation. Jesus had clearly been planning things. He had a donkey ready for us to pick up in one of the villages to the east of Jerusalem. He was going to ride on a donkey from the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem to purposely fulfill the imagery of the prophet Zechariah. Great crowds gathered and led the way for Jesus into Jerusalem. The crowds were shouting, **“Son of David!”** They saw Jesus as the king, the heir to king David’s throne. But this young donkey he was riding was pathetic and small, the **lowliest** of animals. Not something fit for a **king**, not something fit for the **war** we thought was ahead of us. And as Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was thrown into an uproar, asking, **“Who is this?!”** The crowds that had led Jesus into the city answered them, **“He is Jesus, the prophet!”** They believed that Jesus was speaking on behalf of the Creator himself.

As soon as he got into Jerusalem, Jesus went directly into the temple. He immediately drove out all those buying and selling, bringing the sacrificial system to a screeching halt. He overturned the money tables and knocked over the chairs of those selling animals for sacrifice. He shouted that the temple was supposed to be for prayer, not for economic gain. Then in the chaos he created, the blind and lame followed Jesus into the sacred spaces of the temple they had never been able to enter before. Jesus welcomed them and healed them. And children started running around, shouting that Jesus was **“the Son of David!”** The priests and authorities were absolutely furious at this scene. And watching all this, we were asking ourselves, **“Who is this?!”** Then Jesus left and went back to the small village of Bethany for the night.

The next morning we headed back into the city. Along the way, Jesus was hungry and saw a fig tree. But when he went up to it there was no fruit to be found on it. Jesus cursed the tree and said, **“You will never produce fruit again!”** Immediately the fig tree withered up and died. We were in shock and wondered to ourselves, **“Who is this?!”** We asked Jesus, **“How did the tree wither so quickly?!”** Jesus said to us, **“If you have faith, then you will be able to wither a fig tree or throw this mountain into the sea. If you have faith and do not judge, then whatever you ask for in prayer you will receive.”** We came to realize that the fig tree represented the temple in which Jesus had found no good fruit the day before. And the mountain represented the whole of Jerusalem. By shutting down the temple, Jesus was cursing Jerusalem, expecting it to be completely destroyed at his word. We looked around at each other thinking, **“Who is this?!”**

When we got back to the temple, the priests and authorities immediately came up to Jesus. The chaos from the previous day had died down and they wanted answers. They said to Jesus, **“Who or what gives you the authority to do these things?”** They were thinking to themselves, **“Who is this?!”** Jesus refused to answer them and instead told them a story about a father and his two sons. The father asked both sons to go and work for him. The first son said he would **not** go, but ended up **changing his mind** and working for his father. The second son said he **would** go, but did **not** follow through on his promise. Jesus said, **“Which of these sons did the will of their father?”** They said the first one did. Jesus then told these pious political leaders, **“I say with certainty that great sinners will be entering the Kingdom ahead of you.”** Many sinners had indeed initially told the Lord “no” with their lives and choices, but when the Kingdom was preached they **repented** and changed their ways. But these pious authorities, who said they would follow the Lord, had not done so and had refused to listen to the preaching of the Kingdom. The rulers were deeply offended and thought to themselves, **“Who is this?!”**

Then Jesus told them another story. He said there was an owner of a vineyard who left his vineyard in the care of some gardeners. When the owner sent them servants to receive the fruit of the vineyard, the gardeners rejected, hurt, and killed those servants. The owner then sent his son to receive the fruit from them. Instead of listening, the gardeners killed the son in hopes of taking the vineyard for themselves. Jesus then asked the authorities, **“What do you think the owner will do to those gardeners?”** They said, **“Destroy those evil gardeners and give the vineyard to others who will produce good fruit!”** Then Jesus said, **“Have you never read what is written in the Scriptures that the stone the builders rejected will become the cornerstone?”** He said, **“Therefore, the Kingdom will be taken away from you and given to other people who will produce its fruit.”** Then Jesus said, **“The one who falls on this stone will be shattered and the one this stone falls upon will be crushed.”** They were furious and ready to kill Jesus, even as they again asked themselves, **“Who is this?!”**

We were starting to see who this Jesus really was. Yes, Jesus was the **“Son of David,”** the king, but he was not a king in the way we expected. Jesus was humble and lowly, refusing to lift himself up. Jesus was peaceful, refusing to wield the sword. But he was not weak and weaponless—he wielded the truth of the Creator’s Word and it cut deep. He was slashing at our lives with the Creator’s word and turning everything in our worlds upside down. **“Who is this?!”** Jesus is the faithful one, who receives whatever he asks and has the power to wither temples and throw cities into the sea with a word. Jesus is the Son sent by the Creator to receive the good fruit of the creation, the one rejected and killed by those trying to own the creation for themselves. Jesus is the stone that has become the cornerstone of the Creator’s new people. Jesus is the stone that will crush all of human civilization into dust and be the foundation of the Kingdom of Heaven.

As we confront Jesus we are always faced with this question: **“Who is this?!”** There is no way to avoid this. And answering this question is not easy. Sure, we can give our Sunday school answers that we know are “right”—Jesus is the “Lord,” he is the “king,” he is the “Christ,” he is the “Son of God.” But those phrases can never fully capture the depths of **who** Jesus is. **“Who is this?!”** Who is Jesus, really? Jesus is the one who rides into our lives and turns over the tables and scatters our money. Jesus is the one who calls out our hypocrisy and tells us we are being left out of the Kingdom. Jesus is the one who withers the tree of our lives with a word. Jesus is the one who throws the mountain of everything we have built into the sea. Jesus is the one we trip over as we try to live out our selfish lives. Jesus is the one who crushes us under his word of truth. Jesus is the one who tears us down to nothing, so that he can bring us into his Body and rebuild us in the image of the Creator. Jesus is the one who **saves** us by shattering us, crushing us, and even casting us out. We can fight against Jesus, but we will not win. We can try to get rid of him, but we will be crushed in the process. We can try to run away and ignore him, but we will trip and be shattered. **“Who is this?!”** He is Jesus, the one who is seeking to **save you**, and he is not going to give up, even if he has to ruin your whole life in the process. **Amen.**