

All of us will reach a point in our lives when there is no turning back.

Bridges have been fired, boats have been burned and the past is irrevocably gone. The test papers have been collected in, the letter has dropped into the postbox and there is nothing now we can do to change the outcome. The plane is lifting from the runway, the ink has dried on the paper and the die is cast.

For so much of our lives it can feel that we are simply the puppet playthings of the gods of chance and luck but for all of us there are moments when, we find, dizzyingly, that fate is in our hands. It may be the moment when we say 'I do' and one minute we were single, the next tied with marital bonds strong enough, we hope, to bind us till the day we die. It could be the moment when admiring the colours of the newly added visa we come through passport control and take the first steps of our new life in a new country.

Jesus meets just such a moment this day.

Till this moment, he has been nothing more than an itinerant holy man, one of those crazies that breed like flies out in the provinces, where the people are poor and uneducated and culture is non-existent and there is no other entertainment than listen to the ramblings of religious fools. If he has appeared on the radar of the powers-that-be before now, and that is unlikely, it is as a speck of dust on the screen, unimportant, soon wiped away.

And then from out of nowhere, today, Jesus enters Jerusalem. Not as one of the throngs of myriads who arrive each day dusty from the provinces hoping for a better life in the city. Not surreptitiously and secretly as these armchair general nobodies tend to do, deluding themselves into believing that the authorities care enough to feel threatened by their presence. He does not arrive unannounced and unnoticed as a carpenter's son should be.

Jesus arrives at the front door. He doesn't bother to knock. He flings open that door and enters Jerusalem as a king. If there was a chance that this regal entrance was all

in his mind, some febrile fantasy of a hallucinating psychotic, his followers make it abundantly clear that they believe he is a king. And there's something about their belief that is clearly infectious

From the moment the cloaks hit the donkey's back, there was no turning back. As soon as the palms were hacked from the trees, the ladder has been kicked away.

The machinery of an imperial bureaucracy can move at a glacial pace. Forms have to be filled, protocol has to be observed, messages must be delivered, palms have to be greased. Out in the sleepy provinces, far, far away from the sleepless empire eye, roasting under the Levant sun, it moves slower still. But not always. What you see is the imperial illusion of a sleeping cat. Motionless yet fully aware, it is content to ignore most of what it notices. Any hint of political challenge however and that cruel carnivore is at once fully awake, alert, ruthless and ready to crush dissent.

Palm Sunday is the movement that wakes that sleeping tiger.

Palm Sunday is the switch once flicked that cannot be turned off.

Jesus has reached Palm Sunday and there is no turning back.

Today, Jesus enters Jerusalem as its king. As the events of this week culminate in Good Friday, we will learn what the cost of true kingship really is.