

## Devotion Week of March 29, 2026 – Holy Week

### Rev. Jeanne Simpson

There's an interesting word in the Matthew 21 story that we looked at this past Palm Sunday. The text says that "When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil." The Greek word is *eseisthe*, a form of the root verb *seio*. It means to be "both shaken and stirred, to be agitated, to be rattled, to be in turbulence and turmoil and trembling." It is an action verb that implies violence.

Rev. Carol Holbrook Prickett in the Outlook magazine notes "it is also a relatively rare verb in the Scriptures. A form of *seio* is used only five times: once in Revelation, once in Hebrews, and the remaining three times here at the conclusion of the Gospel of Matthew. Poignantly, each of its appearances in Matthew marks a turning moment in the story of Holy Week. It appears first in Matthew 21:10, on Palm Sunday, when Jesus' entry into Jerusalem causes the city to shake with uncertainty and division. It appears secondly in Matthew 27:51, on Good Friday, when the whole earth shakes at the moment of Jesus' death. It appears for a third and final time in Matthew 28:4, on Easter morning, when the guards shake with fear at the sight of the angel who announces resurrection."

This turmoil, or shaking, would seem to imply something like a tornado or hurricane – an event that would cause great destruction and fear. But in this case, it is God who is doing the shaking. God is creating this turmoil to show that Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem to face incredible violence, which results in death, but also in resurrection. God's holy power is creating something new, and it isn't necessarily going to result in a terrible outcome. As we sit in Holy Week pondering the arrest and death of Jesus, there is a faint glimmer of light in the background. We are shaken by the events leading to Good Friday, but we are also reminded that as we sit in silence and horror through the Saturday vigil, something that shakes humanity to its core happens on Sunday morning.

Stay tuned.

*Jeanne*