



AT HOME SERVICE

Sunday 13th April 2025 - Palm Sunday

compiled by Barbara Dalton - Local Preacher in training

On Palm Sunday we enter Jerusalem with Jesus, the King of Peace.

This week's readings, provide us with an opportunity to identify what is distinctive about Luke's account of the entry into Jerusalem, recognising Jesus as the King of Peace. Jesus chooses to arrive in Jerusalem on a donkey, to show that he is not the victorious King, or revolutionary Messiah, that everyone is expecting.

Gathering prayer

God of surprises, riding on a donkey,
not the obvious kind of King,
we come to follow you with palms and praises,
cloaks and crosses,
thankful that we are all welcome. Amen

Song: STF 262 - All Glory Laud and Honour

1] All glory, laud, and honour,
to thee, Redeemer, King,
to whom the lips of children
made sweet hosannas ring.
Thou art the King of Israel,
thou David's royal Son,
who in the Lord's name comest,
the King and Blessed One.

2] The company of angels
are praising thee on high,
and we with all creation
in chorus make reply.
The people of the Hebrews
with psalms before thee went;
our prayer and praise and anthems
before thee we present.

3] To thee, before thy passion,
they sang their hymns of praise;
to thee, now high exalted,
our melody we raise.
Thou didst accept their praises;
accept the prayers we bring,
who in all good delightest,
thou good and gracious King.

4] All glory, laud, and honour,
to thee, Redeemer, King,
to whom the lips of children
made sweet hosannas ring.

St Theodulph of Orleans (d.821)
Translated by John Mason Neale(1811-1866)

Old Testament reading - Psalm 118: 1-2, 19-29

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his steadfast love endures for ever!

Let Israel say, 'His steadfast love endures for ever.'

Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD.

This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it.

I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.
The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.
This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.
This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Save us, we beseech you, O LORD!

O LORD, we beseech you, give us success!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD.
We bless you from the house of the LORD.
The LORD is God, and he has given us light.
Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.
You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, I will extol you.
O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever.

Song: STF 265 - Ride on Ride on in Majesty

1] Ride on, ride on in majesty;
hark, all the tribes Hosanna cry.
O Saviour meek, pursue thy road
with palms and scattered garments strewed.

2] Ride on, ride on in majesty;
in lowly pomp ride on to die.
O Christ, thy triumphs now begin
o'er captive death and conquered sin.

3] Ride on, ride on in majesty;
the angel hosts beyond the sky
look down with sad and wondering eyes
to see the approaching sacrifice.

4] Ride on, ride on in majesty;
the last and fiercest strife is nigh.
Thy Father on the sapphire throne
expects thee, loved, anointed Son.

5] Ride on, ride on in majesty;
in lowly pomp ride on to die.
Bow thy meek head to mortal pain;
then take, O God, thy power and reign.

Henry Hart Milman (1791-1868)

New Testament reading - Luke 19: 28-40

After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' say, 'The Lord needs it.'"

Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?"

They replied, "The Lord needs it."

They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"

"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

Poem: The stones cry out (author unknown)

'What of these stones,' the traveller said.
'Buildings, bones, dry and dead?
Can they speak of what they knew?
Have they left no trace or clue?'
We can measure, we can delve,
search the rubble, scan the shelves
for the fragments of their history,
seek to pierce the veil of mystery.
Then these walls are freed to speak,
just in whispers to those who seek
to find the truth of what they've known,
bedded deep in rock and stone.
But once would they have given voice,
had not pilgrims cheered by choice
acclaiming him who made the stone,
and with wood would build a throne.

Reflection

There is a chapel on the Mount of Olives that gives a panoramic view of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. It marks the spot where it is thought that Jesus wept over Jerusalem and so is called *Dominus Flevit* (Latin for 'Jesus wept' - John 11:35). Jesus wept because he knew that, despite the enthusiasm of the visitors, the pilgrims, the city would not recognise 'God's moment' in his (i.e. Jesus') arrival. Instead, it would continue on the path that would lead to its eventual destruction - which happened in AD 70. While for us the failure to recognise God's moment may not be as cataclysmic as that, nonetheless there may be moments in our lives, or in the lives of our communities, when we need to sense 'God's moment'.

Think about any experiences, either personal or communal, when you felt that God was nudging you to go in a certain direction, or to change your direction.

Pause

Jesus planned his entry carefully. He could have walked with the other pilgrims, but to ride was a self-conscious symbol of his purpose. It recalls King David's return to Jerusalem after the death of Absalom, when he rode on a humble donkey as a gesture of peace. Jesus is deliberate and determined, aware of fulfilling prophecy. He comes in peace to a kingdom that is not of this world. Will you follow and obey such a leader in our world today?

For many, the fall of the Berlin Wall was an unimaginable event, representing the sudden collapse of a supposedly impregnable regime. The wave of human passion and commitment seemed to sweep away, almost overnight, decades of repressive rule. As Jesus entered Jerusalem as Messiah, a new world order was becoming established. Jesus said that even the stones would shout out, if the passions of the people were quelled. It was one of those moments that could not be repressed, and that had an energy and power so much greater than the physical action itself.

Sir Walter Raleigh reputedly placed his cloak across a puddle for Queen Elizabeth I as an act of chivalry. We give the red-carpet treatment to royalty and celebrities as a mark of respect. The Galilean crowd threw their travel-soiled cloaks before Jesus' colt. Why, when to do so risked ruin or loss, and they would not have had spares? It was an act as foolishly lavish as Mary's with the ointment, and it even recalls the haemorrhaging woman who sought healing simply by touching the hem of Jesus' cloak. To sacrifice a precious cloak in

celebration of the long-awaited Messiah was a privilege the cost of which was not to be counted. What will we offer in wholehearted celebration of the presence of the Messiah in our lives?

Mass demonstrations do not always have the desired effect. And the crowd who shouted 'Hosanna' certainly did not achieve what they seem to have wanted. On Good Friday many Christians will walk through towns and cities, passing bemused shoppers, many of whom have little or no understanding of the event that is being marked. Might they have come out to wave palm branches and follow the donkey on the first Palm Sunday? Or might they have joined with those who shouted 'Crucify' five days later? Or might some have done both? In first century Palestine ordinary people had no vote and shouting in a crowd was their only voice.

How do we think that the faith of those who formed the crowds on Palm Sunday influenced their actions? The Jewish authorities' unease about the political implications of the shouts of 'Hosanna' was motivated, in part, by a wish to protect religious practices in an occupied country. And maybe that also influenced them as they encouraged the crowds to shout, 'Crucify' later in the week. When should we put our heads above the parapet, and when should we keep them down and go along with the crowd?

Intercessional prayers

As we think of Jesus riding on a donkey so we pray for all animals today.

We pray for donkeys forced to carry heavy loads, those who are mistreated and beaten...

We pray for animals who live in cramped cages, or in factories or laboratories,
those who never see the sky or feel the sun on their backs...

We pray for those who are trapped and hunted and for those who are killed needlessly and violently...

We pray for strays living on the streets, for those in shelters waiting for someone to take them home...

And we give thanks for the animals in our lives:

those who are our special companions, those who have died and who we miss.

Loving God, bless all your creatures, large and small...

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Song: STF 263 - Hosanna, Hosanna in the Highest

1] Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest, (2X)

Lord, we lift up your name, with our hearts full of praise,

Be exalted, O Lord, my God,

Hosanna in the highest!

2] Glory, glory, glory to the King of kings! (2X)

Lord, we lift up your name, with our hearts full of praise,

Be exalted, O Lord our God,

Hosanna in the highest!

Carl Tuttle (b. 1953)

Final prayer

I invite you to say this prayer each day during Holy Week.

May the humility of Jesus,

the kingship of Jesus,

and the love of Jesus,

sustain and inspire you today,

throughout this Holy Week,

and always. **Amen**

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