



## AT HOME SERVICE

Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2026

**PALM SUNDAY**

*compiled by Rev. Melvyn Cooke*

### Call to Worship

Hosanna, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David,  
Hosanna in the highest

### Hymn: 262 StF

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 mortal men and all things  
Created make reply  
The people of the Hebrews  
with palms before thee went:  
our praise and prayer 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 Nealer (1811-1866)*

### Prayer

Holy Lord Jesus, we praise you today and every day. All that we celebrate in our life is from you. And we are so thankful for the joy you offer on this earth. But Lord, every blessing and celebration pales in comparison to the joy we have and long to express that you came to the world, lived among us, and died in our place for our sins to give us freedom and eternal life. We are delighted to have the joy of celebrating you and your immeasurable sacrifice for us every day. May we remember your goodness, faithfulness, power, and sacrificial love with every breath we breathe today and every day now and to eternity. Blessed are you, Lord, forever and ever, Amen

### Matthew 21: 1 - 11

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.'

This took place to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet:

‘Say to Daughter Zion,

“See, your king comes to you,  
gentle and riding on a donkey,  
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”’

The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’

‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’

‘Hosanna in the highest heaven!’

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, ‘Who is this?’

The crowds answered, ‘This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.’

### **Hymn: 264 StF**

1] Make way, make way, for Christ the King in splendour arrives;  
fling wide the gates and welcome him into your lives.

*Make way, make way, for the King of kings; make way, make way, and let his kingdom in.*

2] He comes the broken hearts to heal, the prisoners to free;  
the deaf shall hear, the lame shall dance, the blind shall see.

3] And those who mourn with heavy hearts, who weep and sigh,  
with laughter, joy, and royal crown he’ll beautify.

4] We call you now to worship him as Lord of all,  
to have no gods before him, their thrones must fall!

*Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)*

### **Reflection**

To approach Jerusalem from Bethage via the Mount of Olives is a steep and winding road, literally! As you stand coming out of Bethage the whole vista of Jerusalem lies before you, the view of the Al-Aqsa Mosque with its golden dome, dominates the horizon, and as you pass down the slope towards the Mount of Olives you pass by the thousands of Jewish Tombs of those who want to be close to Jerusalem on the day that the Messiah is to come, in order for their resurrected bodies to enter through this gate to greet the Messiah. As you journey down the hillside it becomes obvious that this gate, also called Beautiful Gate, that Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, is now bricked up, and has been since 1541, to stop the return of the Messiah when he comes, as if a brick structure could impede God. The whole image is, it seems to be a parable of our times, a microcosm of the state of humanity, that we think that we can manipulate and control who God works, how he engages with us, and how he is not swayed from his purpose in Jesus.

As we reflect upon this familiar story, at the beginning of Passion week, I want to share with you a few thoughts concerning my own observations from trips to the Holy Land and present-day experiences.

Those who greeted Jesus on that morning as he prepared to enter Jerusalem for the most momentous week in his own life, and I would say, in the history of the world. They were so quick to just live in the moment. They demonstrated with gusto and enthusiasm a belief that this was the moment! The overthrow of oppression was about to commence. They proclaimed in a loud united voice 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord', a proclamation from the Messianic Psalm 118. In essence it announces that Jesus was sent from God. Yet within days, probably some of those who so succinctly declared allegiance may well have been among those who called for the release of Barabbas. How fickle we can be when carried along with a crowd, or things don't just happen to go the way we intended.

At the heart of this story of palms and passion is an underlying essential truth only partially grasped. Indeed, Jesus was and is the Messiah, not just sent from God, but who is God. Sent not for a moment only in time, but that we might live beyond, and from that moment as transformed people. The destiny of Jesus was more than just the regime change that people desired, but his death and resurrection was to signal the commencement of a whole new Kingdom, whose values were not just set in law or through order, but by values instilled in the lives of all believers, values to transform and change the hearts of humanity.

So back to the bricking up the Golden Gate by Ottoman Sultan Suleiman in 1541, as an act of spite. While primarily considered a defensive, strategic move, it is widely believed that Suleiman also sought to thwart the Jewish prophecy that the Messiah would enter through this gate. To further prevent the entry of the Jewish Messiah - as Jewish law prohibits a Kohen (priest) from traversing a graveyard - the Ottomans established a Muslim cemetery directly in front of the gate. He is of course, not alone in thinking that God's will and purpose can be thwarted or manipulated. History is peppered with acts that are counter to God's grace and mercy.

Matthew records that this was indeed God's moment to enter Jerusalem, and today could well be the day that you might unbrick some walls, so to speak and seek God's moment in your life today.

## **Prayers**

Heavenly Father,

On this Holy day of Palm Sunday and Passion,  
we have so many mixed feelings inside of us.

We remember your son's triumphant entrance into Jerusalem  
with the people shouting praises and waving Palm Branches.

And we join them with our own praises and yet...

we remember too that this wonderful parade for your son, becomes  
another kind of parade before officials and the booing crowds.

And instead of the crowds singing his praises they are shouting to crucify him.

And our hearts are broken by those very shouts,  
and the pain and suffering he bore that day.

And yet we know that it is because of his choosing to enter  
Jerusalem and taking the path, he knew he was taking,  
there is hope, grace, love and salvation for all.

And there are still many in need of hope in our world.

There are still many in need of your grace in our world.

There are still many in need of your love in our world.

And there are still many in need of salvation in our world.

Lord, enter our lives, our churches, our cities, our countries  
once again today.

Heal us, Lord.

Transform us.

Renew us.

Draw us closer to you in this journey of Holy Week,  
empower us with strength and courage and  
with the assurance that you are with us, world without end. Amen

**Hymn: 410 StF**

1] Lord, your church on earth is seeking  
power and wisdom from above:  
teach us all the art of speaking  
with the accents of your love.  
We will heed your great commission  
sending us to every place-  
'Go, baptize, fulfil my mission;  
serve with love and share my grace!'

2] Freedom give to those in bondage,  
lift the burdens caused by sin;  
give new hope, new strength and courage,  
grant release from fears within.  
Light for darkness, joy for sorrow,  
love for hatred, peace for strife-  
these and countless blessings follow  
as the Spirit gives new life.

3] In the streets of every city  
where the bruised and lonely dwell  
let us show the saviour's pity  
let us of his mercy tell.  
In all lands and with all races  
we will serve and seek to bring  
all the world to render praises  
Christ, to you, Redeemer King.

*Hugh Sherlock (1905-1998)*

**Blessing**

May the warmth of Christ heal you,  
The eyes of Christ gaze on you,  
And the peace of Christ shine through you  
Today and evermore.