

Parish of Central Exeter

Palm Sunday

10 April 2022

'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'.

Welcome everyone.



*Our reflections this morning have been provided by Sheila and the Intercessions by Helen.
Many thanks to you both.*

Call to Worship

The story of Palm Sunday tells of how people removed their cloaks and spread them out in front of Jesus as he entered Jerusalem.

The cloak we wear every day to face the world is both the persona we wish to present, and our defence against the elements.

As we come to worship may we be willing to lay down our defences and disguises, at the feet of the One who sees us we really are.

And then, set free for worship,
may we offer our praises
with open hearts and lives.

(written by Ann Siddall, and posted on the website of the Stillpoint Spirituality Centre.)

Gathering Hymn

'All Glory, laud and honour'. The words were originally written in Latin by Theodulf, Bishop of Orléans in about 820. Sung by the St Michael's Singers. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBfJyjDolwA>

Preparation

It is relatively easy for us
to roster someone
to go and gather palm leaves
to spread in the church today.

And we can easily find music
and a few good words
to help us to remember
and re-enact Palm Sunday.

But what if You arrived
inviting us to really lay down
something important to us
to acknowledge Your arrival?

What if we knew the imminence
of the danger that accompanies You,
or sensed that the authorities
were watching us as we worship?

How then, Jesus, would we meet You today.
and what would we spread before You?
And how would we regard humility
from the One we hope will save the world?

Palm Sunday Jesus, help us to see
how and where You enter our world today,
and what You ask us to lay at your feet,
and how we may welcome You in. Amen.

(written by Ann Siddall and posted on the Stillpoint Spirituality Centre website.)

Confession

Gracious God,
as we come together to celebrate
the entry into Jerusalem of the Prince of Peace,
we confess to you that we are like the people
who carpeted the road and waved their branches,
but who understood so little of this king.

We are tempted to put our trust
in powerful Warrior-Messiahs of our day
and find it hard to believe
that the way to life passes through death.



We prefer protection to vulnerability,
control over destiny rather than faith in God,
who brings life out of self-giving death.
We want our own life to continue,
and find it hard to look beyond our shores
to nations whose ways differ from ours,
But who, like us, need trust, love and life
instead of our mutual defensiveness and fear.

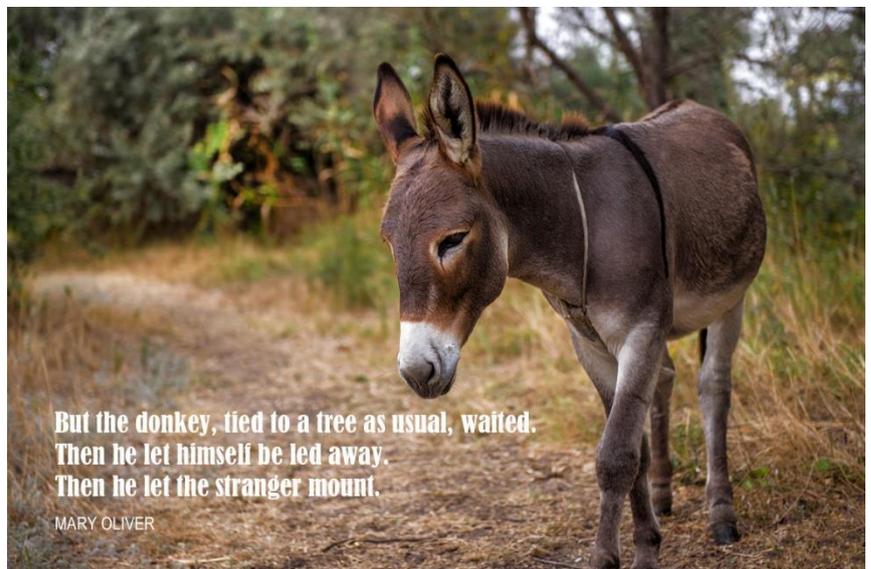
Forgive us and our hostile world,
for we find it hard to follow the Prince of Peace in faith,
or to trust God instead of weapons.
Set us and our world free, we pray. Amen.
(Australia, in Procession of Prayers, WCC, 1998)

The collect for Palm Sunday

True and humble king, hailed by the crowd as Messiah:
grant us the faith to know you and love you,
that we may be found beside you
on the way of the cross,
which is the path of glory.

Reading Luke 19:28-44

Jesus went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹ When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰ saying, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" just say this: "The Lord needs it.'" ³² So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. ³³ As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, 'Why are you untying the colt?' ³⁴ They said, 'The Lord needs it.' ³⁵ Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it.



³⁶ As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. ³⁷ As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, ³⁸ saying,

‘Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!
Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!’

³⁹ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, order your disciples to stop.’ ⁴⁰ He answered, ‘I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.’

⁴¹ As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, ⁴² saying, ‘If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. ⁴⁴ They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God.’

New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicised Edition, copyright © 1989, 1995 Division of Christian Education National Council Churches of Christ USA

Reflection

One of the legacies we have from Averil are her books and particularly today the Lent ones by Stephen Cottrell, written while he was Bishop of Chelmsford. Today I want to quote from ‘The Things He Did’ where he looks at the actions of Jesus beginning on Palm Sunday. He creatively imagines the scene. For example, when the two disciples are sent to fetch a donkey he describes their blank looks, ‘incomprehension masking fear’. He suggests that they were pleased to be doing something and that as they went there, they discussed recent events – the parable of the vineyard and Jesus’ predictions about the ‘Son of Man’ being handed over. He clearly depicts their confusion and expectation that something was happening.

His imagination of Jesus’ thoughts I found intriguing so I will quote a section.

‘He recited the words in his head.....for this is what it meant to be the one who does what no one else could do; to be the one who was God’s Messiah, an anointed one, who achieves God’s purposes of love by confronting the powers and principalities of death and evil; who becomes the sacrifice that takes sins away. And walking towards Jerusalem, surrounded by laughter and intrigue, he didn’t know exactly how this would work out in the days that lay ahead of him, and that was hard. Everyone seemed to think he could see into tomorrow. But all he could see was what he had to do. He knew it was of God; that God had called him to this hour. But he didn’t know where it would end, except in confrontation and vindication: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and ... riding on a donkey.”’

Cottrell continues to describe the journey, the crowds, and the watching Pharisees before concluding with the contrasting action which only Luke records of Jesus' lament over Jerusalem. He adds colour to those simple words 'he wept over it' by describing him stopping as if by an 'invisible force', dismounting and seeming confused. 'He stopped, and his whole body convulsed with a violent and terrible sorrow. Weeping, he cried out: "O Jerusalem... you did not recognise the time of your visitation from God."' He concludes the chapter with a description of a tear-stained Jesus walking into Jerusalem, an unlikely looking leader.

Two years ago, CMS produced a resource 'Lament for Lent' never realising that it would be used as we went into the first covid 19 lockdown. It used this definition of lament:

'Lament is an expression of a grief, an active process of a soul trying to wear out its pain, outlive it, persist though it to a place of respite and a different perspective on living...It's the expression of a sorrow and a path to a life beyond that sorrow.'

Through these last two years with the continuing loss of life with the pandemic, with the conflicts and wars across the world, the destruction of biodiversity and the effects of climate change, there is much to lament about it. Yet I am aware that I have not taken time to truly lament. The sixth session is titled lament to hope. Another quote

'By letting ourselves grieve and standing alongside those who are suffering, we participate in the mystery of God's own suffering, death and resurrection. Through this, hope is released. Our friend, Emmanuel Katongole claims that the African church is a unique gift to world Christianity as a laboratory of hope which "provides a living witness of what hope looks like in the context of violence and war".'

Are we able, in our own contexts, to be public laboratories of hope and newness? Only if we can be real and show that we know what it means to lament.'

That is a challenge for us as we enter Holy Week this year with war in Europe and much suffering elsewhere in the world as well as in our own neighbourhoods.

Roman Catholic Ugandan theologian, Emmanuel Katongole 'Born from Lament: The Theology and Politics of Hope in Africa'.

Reflective Prayer

The king enters the city
on his war horse
while across town
love rides a donkey.

Guns and towers, vast machines,
engines. Generals boast
of victory over the child,
the hard edge over soft flesh.

The powerful strut and shamble,
loudspeakers announce their lies.
If there were money in darkness
they'd dismiss the sun.

God slips in through
the locked gate, the high wall.
In their high offices the light
is invisible to them.

The judge, the warden, the guards
believe you're nothing.
You'll never convince them otherwise.
But the stars know. The air knows.

Your peasant heart
rides a donkey, small and tender.
Honour the Royal Majesty
of the heart that belongs to love.
(written by Steve Garnaas-Holmes and posted on Unfolding Light.)

Worship song

'Ride on, Ride on in majesty'. Sung here by the choir of Salisbury Cathedral. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUYCxw0quuQ>

Affirmation of Faith (Philippians 2: 5-11)

May we in our relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶Who, being in very nature God,

did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷rather, he made himself nothing

by taking the very nature of a servant,

being made in human likeness.

⁸And being found in appearance as a man,

he humbled himself

by becoming obedient to death—

even death on a cross!

⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place

and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,

in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father.

Intercessions

O Lord our God, this Palm Sunday,
we remember how You knew in Your earthly life
not only fellowship and the cheers of the crowd
but betrayal, torture and death on a cross.

We thank You for Your faithful love for us.

We bring You the needs of our world,
broken by division and suspicion,
by hatred and war.

We pray for Ukraine, for Yemen, for Afghanistan,
and for all those people whose suffering
does not make the headlines,
for all those affected by or implicated in conflict,
that their lives may be touched by You.

We bring You the needs of our country,
the hungry and homeless,
the wounded and despairing.

We pray for all those experiencing or fearing poverty,
for all those facing illness, death or bereavement,
that they may be held in Your healing presence.

We bring You the needs of ourselves and our loved ones,
seeking Your peace and healing,
Your wisdom and protection.

We pray especially for _____

Hear us, O God, and come to us,
In compassion and love rescue and restore us,
And make our lives a channel for your love.

Amen

(Adapted from the Sacredise website)

The Peace

If alone, smile and hug yourself (God does). If otherwise, share the Peace as appropriate.

A short Spiritual Communion

The Book of Common Prayer reminds us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', even when we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

O God,
help me to trust you,
help me to know that you are with me,
help me to believe that nothing
can separate me from your love
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

An offertory prayer

We may not be in church, but we can still offer ourselves and our talents to God.

Blessed are you, God and creator of the universe,
as we offer you our activities, thanksgivings and our life.
We present ourselves, and our world, as we are and as you can make us,
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours,
and of your own do we give you. Blessed be God for ever.

As we prepare for communion you might like to listen to Hosanna to the Son of David sung by a virtual choir of St Mary of the Angels – a Roman Catholic Church in Singapore

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uyYtQ9TEUpo>





Because there is no Breaking and Sharing we can have only Spiritual Communion with Christ. I'm sure you can find a way to use a few minutes of silence or conversation to enjoy this, and make it a sacramental moment.

Giving thanks for Christ's death and resurrection you may wish to say

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

Post Communion Collect

Lord Jesus Christ,
you humbled yourself in taking the form of a servant,
and in obedience died on the cross for our salvation:
give us the mind to follow you
and to proclaim you as Lord and King,
to the glory of God the Father.

Closing Prayer

And now we lay down the palm branches.
And with them we lay down our belief
that there is another way for you to be God.

As the last echo of the final alleluia fades,
so does our hope that this journey can end
in any other way.

The week stretches ahead
glory-less
and pain-full

Whether we walk with all faith or none
we look towards the cross,
knowing it is both the most human
and most divine
of all journeys

travel the road with courage,
with love,
and with the uneasy peace that is the gift of faith
into this holiest of weeks.

Amen.

(written by Cheryl Lawrie and posted on [hold this space].)

Blessing

May you trust in God's promises to his people:
peace
security
blessing
even when they are difficult to believe.

May you know that God's news is good news,
nourishing
true
even when people tell you it is not.

And when you encounter doubt,
may you strengthen your belief
guiding you in his perfect wisdom and counsel.

(posted on Jeff's Blog. <https://blog.wisch.org/category/benedictions-and-prayers/>)

Closing Music

'Lord of the Dance.' This is a version by Jean Watson.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crkjOGAIKI>



Modern-day Catholic Palm Sunday procession, Mount of Olives, Jerusalem