

Morning Prayer Palm Sunday

5th April 2020

To watch the hymns, and hear from Anne, Nathan and Ted, turn up the volume and click on the links

You may wish to light a candle.



Introduction – Rev Anne Taylor

<https://youtu.be/zmVVcAxgg4A>

Welcome as you join us for this Palm Sunday service.

The contrast between that first Palm Sunday and this year's couldn't be more stark!

People lined the streets of Jerusalem as Jesus entered. All over the world and even in Jerusalem the streets of towns and cities are deserted because of the coronavirus.

Jesus was welcomed by people waving palm branches and they were full of hope and joyful expectation. Both of these are sadly lacking today as we rather stoically face restrictions and lockdown. We all miss the hope and joy, the support and encouragement we get from each other as we meet for worship in St. Peter's.

The streets echoed with worship and praise as Jesus entered the gates of Jerusalem and made his way to the Temple. Our churches are empty and silent. Our doors remain locked and closed. How we miss the cheerful faces of our churchwardens at the end of the path!

Palm Sunday marks the beginning of Jesus' walk to the cross and resurrection. However different this Holy Week has to be, yet we will mark it as best we can. Online each evening of this week Nathan will offer a reading and reflection as we walk with Christ in his passion. On Good Friday at 2pm we will mark our Lord's last hour on the cross with readings, hymns and reflections and then on Easter Day a service to celebrate the resurrection.

There is an old children's hymn which goes, "Jesus bids us shine...you in your small corner and I in mine."

Though each of us may be in our own small corners this Holy Week let us nevertheless watch with Christ and on this Palm Sunday offer him our praises and worship.

Hymn – Ride on, ride on in majesty <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zo5pfl6z6lA>

Opening Sentences

O Lord, open our lips and our mouths shall proclaim you praise.

Send your Holy Spirit upon us, and clothe your people with power from on high.

Pause for reflection as you offer the day to God.

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and forever. Amen.

The Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, who in your tender love towards the human race sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ to take upon him our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross: grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility, and also be made partakers of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Bible Readings

Epistle – Psalm 118:19-24 <https://youtu.be/4NeCqocXqXc>

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.



Gospel – Matthew 21:1-11 <https://youtu.be/wHsBi5Vwsdo>

Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, "The Lord needs them." And he will send them immediately.' This took place to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

'Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

'Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!'

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?' The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'

Sermon – Rev Nathan Thorpe

<https://youtu.be/ZmlSPMgsWoM>

(text printed below)

Prayers

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. Amen

Lord, on this Palm Sunday, you were given a hero's welcome as one who was going the way of the crowd; but you had chosen the way of the cross, and their applause was short lived. Grant that we who now praise you with our lips may never fail to give you the service of our lives and follow in your steps of love and sacrifice; to whom be all glory, praise and honour, this day and always. Amen

God in heaven, as we your people prepare once more to follow the events of Holy Week, Good Friday and Easter, may we be led by your Spirit to deeper insights into your love and saving grace, that we may love you more and serve you better, for the sake of him who died for us and rose again, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hear our prayer for those who are sick especially Amanda, Barbara, Denise, David, Eileen, Graeme, Sam, Tony and all those in hospital and our parishioners who are housebound or live in Nursing Homes. We pray for those suffering from the effects of the Coronavirus. Strengthen and sustain the staff of the NHS, carers, and emergency services as they are agents of your healing love. In desperate times keep them strong and when their work is done hold them through their weariness. We pray for the families of those who have died remembering Shirley Dixon, Sandra Mawhinney and Eileen Abram. May they rest in peace and rise in glory. Amen.

God of love, passionate and strong, tender and careful: watch over us and all those whom we love and hold us all the days of our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come;
thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn – The royal banners forward go

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9a6COrcR5K0>

The Conclusion

<https://youtu.be/CIJkw0jAL-Y>

May Christ draw us to himself and grant that we find in his cross, a sure ground for faith, a firm support for hope, and the assurance of sins forgiven: and may his blessing rest upon us and all for whom we care today and always. **Amen.**

SERMON FOR PALM SUNDAY – Rev Nathan Thorpe An Eye for Opportunity

Psalm 118:19-24 & Matthew 21:1-11

I was going to Westbrook Asda in Warrington on Palm Sunday. The church we were at would meet outside, by the trolley shelter, have a prayer, then press play on a big boombox. It would blare out 'Make may, make way, for the King of Kings' and we'd walk along the parade of shops back to church for our service.

I was incredibly self-conscious of it as a teenager – I can remember wishing none of my friends would be out – I kind of miss it today. All the bustle of a Palm Sunday extravaganza!

But, whatever you are doing this Palm Sunday, I think we've all got an incredible opportunity here.

St John of the Cross wrote 'to come to the knowledge you have not, you must go in the way you have not'¹. So, in that spirit, let's look at the psalm!

Our reading this morning is from psalm 118.

Open for me the gates of the righteous; I will enter and give thanks to the Lord.

This is the gate of the Lord through which the righteous may enter.

I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.

The first few verses are ones that emphasise and celebrate self. Now, please don't get me wrong – self-care in a pandemic is a good thing.

But if you took that verse without the second bit, it sounds like something you could put on a motivational tea-towel.

We have, more than ever before in our recent history, a real chance to imagine how it feels not to know the story. We have an opportunity to experience holy week in a way not focussed on the activities within our buildings but spent in the places where we are – because we have no option but to be!

The second part of our reading puts the tea-towel into context – and reminds us that just focussing on what is good to the exclusion of all else does not do us much good at all.

The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this,

and it is marvellous in our eyes. The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad.

¹ St John of the Cross, *Ascent of Mount Carmel*.

Jesus enters Jerusalem in the way that was least expected on the back of a donkey. Yet, even to start with, a carpenter's son was an equally unexpected way to transform a world. Yet the crowd threw their cloaks and palms down for him.

The Christian thinker and activist, Jim Wallis, once wrote 'Hope is believing in spite of the evidence and then watching as the evidence changes'.

Far from being a ridiculous statement, it acknowledges that on some level we all hope for better to come – and we all have an idea, deep within us, of what that looks like – no matter who or where it comes from.

Mark Oakley² describes it as: 'We believe in two conversions. God loves us just the way we are but he loves so much he doesn't want us to stay just like that. The first happens when this suddenly makes sense somehow and the second is the rest of our lifetime – trying to slowly adjust to that way of being human that has not yet been tried.'

I wonder, in our search for a holy week, is there something precious, a cloak, or palm, that can be throw down today before Jesus as that will be a cause of joy? Or what about something not precious? A grudge, prejudice, or quarrel?

Notice how the psalmist's language changes when they shift their gaze outwards. 'It is marvellous in *our* eyes' – collectively. Not just our eyes, or their eyes, but all eyes!

Katherine Preston, from the Iona Community, sums up the sentiment of *this* year's Palm Sunday for me, as we *all* walk this Holy Week once again:

'We are in a singular time of change. Old practices, old assumptions, especially about government – are being challenged. We are still trying to figure out what it all means; the path often remains indistinct and frightening at times. But the signposts -surges of hope- are strategically positioned by God to guide us. Watch for them. Listen. This *is* the way!'³.

We might even add to ourselves – let us try to walk the walk, so we know a little more of what we're talking about. The questions from our psalm, demonstrated by Jesus' donkey ride into Jerusalem, are:

Where are those who feel rejected? What buildings might be built with those who feel cast aside? How can we spot them to talk of hope as we walk along our own streets?

I will end with a prayer for you from last week's intercessions, that Bishop Paul also included on an update us during the week:

Saviour Christ, in whose way of love lies the secret of all life, and the hope of all people, we pray – for ourselves and those in adversity - for quiet courage to match this hour.

We did not choose to be born or to live in such an age; but let its problems challenge us, its discoveries exhilarate us, its injustices anger us, its possibilities inspire us and its vigour renew us for your kingdom's sake.

Amen

² Mark Oakley, Dean of St John's College Cambridge. *By Way of the Heart: Seasons of Faith*.

³ Katherine Preston, 'Palm Sunday: Surges of Hope'. Neil Paynter (ed.), *The Sun Slowly Rises: Readings, Reflections and Prayers for Holy Week from the Iona Community*.