

Worship for Fleet URC & Beacon Hill URC

Sunday 28th March 2021

Palm Sunday

Seeds of Hope: Meeting Expectations



Led by Karen Smith

Opening music: Ride on, ride on in majesty

Welcome & Gathering Prayer

In this season of Lent we reflect on our journey of faith with Christ, remembering that long ago God planted the Tree of Life, and yet it is on a tree that Christ is crucified. We are again reminded that life comes out of death, and we are promised that death does not have the final word.

We light this candle on this Palm Sunday, the last Sunday of Lent, remembering God's faithfulness through the cross upon which our Lord was crucified, that death will be no more, mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for Christ triumphs over death.

Prayer: As the days lengthen, dear God, may we remember that you are the one who calls life out of death, that you are the Lord of our lives. In the name of Christ, may we have the strength found in him to journey towards the cross. Amen.

Call to worship

With cloaks and leaves laid in the road, let the people shout:

Give thanks to God for everlasting love!

With arms stretching high to wave and to welcome, let the people shout:

Open the gates of justice for this day!

With voices raised up, loud and uncontrolled, let the people shout:

The stone that was rejected will be our salvation!

Everlasting God, fling wide the gates.

Come to us now in our time, for we need your salvation, your justice, your everlasting love.

Come to us now – we welcome you!

Prayers of Thanksgiving & Confession

Gracious God,
As we remember this day
How Jesus entered Jerusalem to cries of celebration,
Help us to welcome him afresh into our hearts and lives.
Accept the praise and worship we bring you,
And give us a real sense of expectation as we look towards his coming kingdom.
Hosanna to the Son of David, glory in the highest heaven.

Gracious God,
Like your people long ago we do not always see clearly,
Our faith shallow and self-centred;

We do not understand as we should, our praise short lived and superficial.

But, we ask, take the faith we offer, weak though it may be,
And deepen it through this day,
So that we may truly welcome Christ
and worship him with joyful praises, now and always.

Hosanna to the Son of David, glory in the highest heaven, now and always. **Amen.**

Our Father, who art in heaven, read by Kathy Le Fanu
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

Reading **Psalm 118 1,2 & 19 -29** read by Steve English

1 Give thanks to the Lord, because he is good, and his love is eternal. 2 Let the people of Israel say, "His love is eternal." 3 Let the priests of God say, "His love is eternal."
19 Open to me the gates of the Temple; I will go in and give thanks to the Lord! 20 This is the gate of the Lord; only the righteous can come in. 21 I praise you, Lord, because you heard me, because you have given me victory. 22 The stone which the builders rejected as worthless turned out to be the most important of all. 23 This was done by the Lord; what a wonderful sight it is! 24 This is the day of the Lord's victory; let us be happy, let us celebrate! 25 Save us, Lord, save us! Give us success, O Lord! 26 May God bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord! From the Temple of the Lord we bless you. 27 The Lord is God; he has been

good to us. With branches in your hands, start the festival and march around the altar. 28 You are my God, and I give you thanks; I will proclaim your greatness. 29 Give thanks to the Lord, because he is good, and his love is eternal.

This is the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Donkey Owner by permission Rev. Phil Nevard
[donkey seller on Vimeo](#)

Reading: **John 12: 12 – 19** read by Elizabeth English

12 The next day the large crowd that had come to the Passover Festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 13 So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting, "Praise God! God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord! God bless the King of Israel!" 14 Jesus found a donkey and rode on it, just as the scripture says, 15 "Do not be afraid, city of Zion! Here comes your king, riding on a young donkey." 16 His disciples did not understand this at the time; but when Jesus had been raised to glory, they remembered that the scripture said this about him and that they had done this for him. 17 The people who had been with Jesus when he called Lazarus out of the grave and raised him from death had reported what had happened. 18 That was why the crowd met him - because they heard that he had performed this miracle. 19 The Pharisees then said to one another, "You see, we are not succeeding at all! Look, the whole world is following him!"

This is the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Hymn: All glory, laud and honour
St.Theodulph of Orleans (d.821)
Translated by John Mason Neale (1818 – 1866)

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.

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.

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.

Seeds of Hope:

Showing the seeds planted at the beginning of Lent – have they met our expectations?

Blessing of the Palm Crosses

Prayer:

With shouts of joy and jubilation you entered your city, Lord Christ.
With shouts of anger and hatred you carried your cross to your death.

With a cry you breathed your last and bought for us salvation and peace.

May these palm crosses remind us that while our love may be like the morning mist that vanishes so early, yours remains constant and true.

In this is our hope and confidence to stand before you. Keep us faithful through times of trouble and peace, and may we rejoice in your eternity. **Amen.**

Taken from Prayers for All Occasions by Ian Black

Reflection

Like you, I have experienced many Palm Sundays over the years as I worshiped in different churches. I have participated in some Palm Sunday processions; I have watched my children process into church.

I have been at a church where we gathered at the door and came into the church, singing, and waving palms. I have been at a church where the children in Junior church excitedly came down the aisle waving their palms as the congregation sang 'All glory, laud and honour' and then when the account of Jesus' entry was read from John, the children called out "Hosanna" at the top of their voice.

It is a Sunday and a reading which calls us to be part of it, to invite us back to the time of Jesus, to ask us to stand with the crowds and somehow recapture the moment; to help us experience the entry into Jerusalem, as if we were there. And if we were, I wonder what our expectations would be? Where would we fit in?

Our reading speaks of a large crowd that gathered to welcome Jesus at one of the gates into Jerusalem. A large crowd! Can you remember what that's like, to be part of a crowd? It's no longer part of every day experience is it? Going to a football match, walking down Oxford Street in the Christmas shopping crowd, going to a

concert. Last weekend, when I saw the news report on the 'Kill the Bill' protest crowds I felt as if it was a scene from a film, not real, after a year of lockdown and social distancing.

So the idea of being a crowd gathering on Palm Sunday is a true act of imagination at the moment! But if the protests at the weekend remind us of anything, it is that there are smaller groups within a larger crowd, who are there for different reasons, with different expectations, even if they too are waving palm branches. Jesus and the disciples were no strangers to crowds. They had been surrounded by large groups of people throughout their time together. Remember? There was a crowd around Him when He delivered the Sermon on the Mount; He fed a crowd of 5,000 men besides women and children. As we heard in the 'Donkey Owner' earlier, where Phil Nevard has cleverly linked that donkey owner to a crowd on the occasion when Jesus called Zacchaeus down from the sycamore tree because the short tax collector had climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus over the heads of the crowd.

There were definitely the curious among the crowd who had seen Jesus preach, teach, heal, and perform many miracles over a three-year period. They probably followed Him on Palm Sunday because they wanted to know what He was going to do this time. Perhaps another miracle like the raising of Lazarus? Or would he notice them in the crowd as he had Zacchaeus and honour them in some way?

No doubt there were some who were confused about who Jesus was. They may not have had the chance to see him before and coming to Jerusalem for the Passover was the first chance they had to see this teacher, prophet or whoever he was.

It's likely there were some who were Zealots, expecting from all they knew, had seen and heard that, at last, the political regime under Rome was going to be upset as a long - awaited king was proclaimed. The donkey or colt was not just a symbol of humility. According to custom, a great leader wishing to show war-like intent

would enter a city on a horse in full armour – but a king coming in peace would sometimes show this intent by riding a colt or a donkey. For those aware of this custom, Jesus' action might be interpreted as accepting the title of king – and therefore his coming might even be interpreted as a challenge to the established religious leadership and to Rome. After all, the route from the East gate to the Temple went past the barracks and the Romans might react to this procession, giving an opportunity to see what this Jesus was made of.....

We know the Pharisees were there too on the side lines, opposing what he was doing, the warm reception of the crowds fuelling their dismay. The Good News Bible really expresses the jealousy and frustration they felt.

And, of course, there were the disciples, the committed followers over the years. There with Jesus and for Jesus, accepting the principles and values he had shared with them, possibly hoping and expecting that at last this was a great day when all they had learned and done would be accepted and recognised. Little did they know how this week, that we call Holy Week, would unfold. The disciples being confused: "His disciples did not understand these things at first." And I don't blame them. Jesus was the king, but he came to Jerusalem on a donkey. Jesus was supposed to be the Messiah, but he talked about dying. How did it all fit together?

All those people with different expectations. The crowd seems to be expecting something that is at odds with what Jesus will actually offer. I wonder how we would each have reacted; what expectations do we have of Jesus, our faith? Would we wave and cheer at the one in the parade, simply as spectators, curious or confused as to who Jesus is? Or would we accept the challenge laid down by this extraordinary act of his and welcome him as the Son of God, accept his humility, his message and values and stand by him, come what may?

In this coming week the man on the donkey awaits our response.

Prayers of Intercession

As we recall Jesus entering Jerusalem,
Let us gather our thoughts to pray:

Living God, as the crowds welcomed Jesus
and sang your praises,
we pray that many more will welcome you
into their hearts and lives over the coming year.
We pray for opportunities to spread your good news
and courage to take them.

Silence

You are our God:

We welcome you!

Living God, we recall the donkey Jesus rode on,
and we pray for that real humility in our hearts
which treats status and image casually,
and truth and loving service seriously.

Silence

You are our God:

We welcome you!

Living God, the crowds were responding
to the healing love they had seen in action in Jesus.
We bring to you in our love and imaginations now
all those we would have brought to Jesus for healing and help.
Give them comfort and reassurance, wholeness and hope.

Silence

You are our God:

We welcome you!

Living God, Jesus knew he was riding to his death.
We pray for all on that last journey,
Especially those burdened with fear and guilt.
We commend to your eternal love all who have died,
Thanking you for the blessings we have received in knowing them.

Silence

You are our God:

We welcome you!

Living God, we too spread palms on the road
As we express our thankfulness for all you have done for us
And the amazing extent of your love.

Merciful Father,

**Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour,
Jesus Christ. Amen**

Adapted from Prayers of Intercession for Common Worship by Susan Sayers

Hymn: Ride on, Ride on in Majesty

Henry Hart Millman (1791 – 1868)

Ride on! ride on in majesty!
Hark! all the tribes hosanna cry;
Thine humble beast pursues his road
with palms and scattered garments strowed.

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.

Ride on! ride on in majesty!
Thy last and fiercest strife is nigh;
the Father on his sapphire throne
expects his own anointed Son.

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.

Closing Prayer

Gentle Christ, you set your face to Jerusalem –
The place of trial, of torture and death –
Surrounded by noise, by expectation and by hope;
Love unknown, vulnerability unrecognised.

Gentle Christ, we will walk with you;
we will weep with you;
we will watch with you;
our eyes on you,
our hearts with you,
our lives for you;
in humility, in awe, in peace.

Rachel Poolman 'Conversations' URC Prayer Book 2021

Blessing

The blessings of this week will be extravagant, unexpected,
transforming:

The extravagant blessings of the one who remembers those who
the world will usually shun;

The transforming blessing of the one who will tell of betrayal
coming, but still shares his bread;

The transforming blessing of the one who knows we will not always
keep watch, but still calls us his friends.

The unexpected, extravagant and transforming blessing of Christ,
beaten and crucified, be ours this week and forever. Amen

Anne Sanderson Listening for the Whisper 2015 URC prayer handbook

Closing music: Hosanna to the Living Lord

Responses led by Kathy Le Fanu

Opening music from [Downloadable MP3s | The Adoremus Hymnal – Ignatius Press](#)

Closing music: <https://www.smallchurchmusic.com/Snippet-2010/S-HosannaToTheLivingLord-Hosanna-PipeLC-48-CAM.mp3>

Hymn: [Ride on, ride on in majesty on Vimeo](#) by Permission sung by Susan Durber, Ruth Whitehead, Phil & Lythan Nevard

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Donkey image from Worship Words Ana Gobledale (Donkey at Carisbrooke Castle Isle of Wight)

Hosanna Palm Sunday mural painted by the youth, London UK Ana Gobledale

Readings from the Good News Bible