



Sunday 28th March 2021 Palm Sunday Written service

Call to worship PS 118 vs 15,16 and 24-29

Hymn S the F 262, H&P 160, MP9 9 All glory laud and honour

Prayers

Our God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Creator of all that we are, all that we need and so much more.

We thank you for the many signs of new life around us.

Fresh green leaves on the hawthorn, flowers in a host of colours

And birds building nests, tell us that Spring is here again

We thank you Lord for this day of rejoicing,

We imagine the light and colour, the warmth and the excitement
as the crowd gathered to watch Jesus fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy.

With the excitement, we feel the sheer delight -

and a sense of something coming..... something changing.

As we prepare to join Jesus in his final week on earth

We long to be there - part of that crowd, welcoming our Saviour cheering, and
waving branches of palm.

Yet Lord, we remember that a few days later the
same fickle crowd was screaming 'Crucify him!'

We wouldn't have wanted to be there THEN would we Lord?

So, this morning we just want to think of the triumphant Jesus

And to lay aside the part our sins played in the story of Holy week.

But Loving Lord as we travel with you to Gethsemane

As we see you brought before the Sanhedrin and Pilate

And finally watch you face degradation and death at Calvary –

for our sins – we think too of your closest friends, so happy

at this moment and still in ignorance of what is to come.

Loving self-giving Jesus may we be ready

to take up our crosses in your name when the call comes.

We ask our prayers in your name knowing that they are listened to and
answered as may be best for your great plan

Amen

Hymn S the F 263, MP 242 Hosanna

Reading Mark 11 – 1-11

Sermon

We've been travelling through Mark's gospel with Jesus this Lent? Watching the apostles watch him - as they build understanding and hope. I would like to look a little more closely at those most intimate friends of Jesus this Palm Sunday morning. I want us to try to stand in their shoes asking ourselves 'Which one of these people do I feel closest to in my discipleship for Jesus - which apostle in fact would I relate to if I could return to Jerusalem as they prepare to enter the city?'

Some of the twelve are shadowy figures to us. We merely catch glimpses of them while others are content to stay in the background simply be a part of the list in one gospel or another.

We know the names of Bartholomew and Thaddaeus (who may actually be the same person as Judas the brother of James -listed in other gospels - but different from Judas Iscariot the purse holder whose sticky fingers stole from his friends. One can imagine that the name Judas was shunned in early church circles.)

We know the story of Matthew, the tax gatherer of repentance fame.

But what about Simon the Zealot? – we imagine him longing for rebellion, an end to Rome, and a great new kingdom of Israel? What are **his** thoughts as he feels the tension, the electricity in the crowd?

There is Philip, who 'wanted to SEE the father!' He led Nathanael a man who was sceptical about a Messiah coming from Nazareth - to Jesus. Nathanael was astonished when Jesus made it clear that he already knew all about him. And what about Thomas who seems to have dealt in the concrete, only believing what he saw..... 'where **is** the way Jesus?'... 'I will only believe Jesus is alive if I can touch him physically' But he was brave enough to encourage a return to Jerusalem at Jesus side when Lazarus died. He knew the authorities were out to get Jesus yet was prepared to follow Jesus to possible death.

Andrew was pointed to Jesus by John the Baptist, and brought his brother Simon, Andrew seems quietly practical. He brought the small boy with the loaves and fishes Then we have the inner three - Simon Peter and James and John, all there it seems, at important points in the life and ministry of Jesus - those chosen to be the closest to him.

James and John, nicknamed Sons of Thunder by Jesus – it seems they may have been his cousins so he would have known them well. We might imagine them as loud, excitable Galileans. They exhorted Jesus to call down fire from heaven on a Samaritan village which rejected him and they do seem more than a bit a bit pushy when they demand special places in heaven. The promise that they receive instead, is that they would drink from the same cup as Jesus - a promise fulfilled for James, at least when he was killed by Herod Agrippa in AD 44

Though pushy, John may well be the 'beloved disciple' standing by the cross and being given the responsibility of caring for the mother of God and equally he may be the author of the fourth gospels.

And then there is Simon Peter - Peter the impulsive the outspoken who loved Jesus so much and ended up letting him down so badly. Peter, whose confidence failed himself and his Lord. Poor Peter who wept so bitterly. So who do you relate to this palm Sunday and what are our hopes and dreams for the new life in a risen Jesus? I have a soft spot for Andrew- as a Scot he is my patron saint. The Scottish flag depicts his crossed planks of crucifixion - the saltire - because so the legend says, Andrew felt that he was not good enough to be crucified on the upright cross of Jesus.

When I think about Thomas, I am once again climbing the hill to Jerusalem for the first time with Thomas' words 'My Lord and my God' ringing in my ears. Yes! being there - walking where Jesus walked - visiting places he knew, did make things more immediate, and somehow more real.

Then there's Peter. He wants to do things for Jesus, build booths at the transfiguration, challenge those coming to arrest Jesus in Gethsemane - not what Jesus wanted in either case -.but he falls asleep when he is needed to be awake to support Jesus and he finds the idea that Jesus must die very hard to deal with.

I relate to those words 'the cock crowed and Peter went out and wept' No matter that I have accepted Jesus answered his question "Who do you say that I am?"...and know that I am loved and saved, I cannot suppress the thought 'Could a day come when I will be tested as Peter was and will I lack the courage to stand up for my Lord?' Please God no!

You will know where you stand among the apostles. If you are young you may have the fire for change of Simon the Zealot or you may have the quiet practicality of Andrew or the need for the concrete yet the bravery of Thomas. Or perhaps you are one who prefers to stand at the back of the groups quietly watching what is going on.

Jesus commissioned each of the twelve to go out and preach in his name even knowing the future and knowing their weaknesses as well as their strengths - even Judas! If you know Jesus as Lord and Saviour, then you will already have repented as Matthew did. Like Judas he was not too careful in his transactions but he **was** sorry and made reparation.

In 2,000 I attended the passion play in Oberammergau. I remember the cries of Jesus, nailed to the cross but most of all I remember the regret, the remorse of Judas when he realised what he had done and that there was no way back...it was altogether too late.

But thanks to Jesus gift of himself we can have forgiveness. We all need to travel the road to Calvary with Jesus, knowing ourselves disciples, and longing to do our best for him yet aware of our sins and repentant.

We know that many of those apostles who - apart from the beloved disciple - appear to have scattered into the shadows, would find forgiveness and new life and work to do for Jesus after the resurrection. We too have work to do for Jesus - we may be extrovert or introvert practical or thoughtful, brave or otherwise, aware of our failings as well as our good points. No matter - Jesus wants each one of us. So who DO you relate to? What qualities do you bring

as a disciple of Jesus? What new work does he have in mind for you this Holy week? Let's think and pray about that. Amen

Hymn S the F 546, H&P 788 Behold the servant of the Lord

Intercessions.

Loving, giving, Jesus you died to save the world from judgement and death and to win forgiveness and new life for all.

We pray this morning for your world and your people everywhere.

We pray that this Holy Week, a world brought to its knees by Covid may think carefully about the new time, the new order, that will come as we seek to move beyond pandemic.

Once again there is a feeling of change in the air, of something starting that will mean life is never quite the same again.

Lord we trust that the future will mean less of self and more time for others, less of greed and more sharing your bountiful provision..

We pray for more awareness that we are indeed one world in God's eyes. For understanding that we should be united in our care one for another.

We ask, that as those disciples became the leaders of the 'new thing,' So, leaders and citizens like ourselves, may be guided by your mind, your hands and your words to promote your plans for the future.

Dear Jesus as we look forward to new life in you, we ask that we may travel with you this week sharing your testing, your abandonment and your agony. In your name. Amen

The Lord's prayer.

Our father which 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 S the F 266, H&P 159, MP 580 Ride on ride on in majesty

The Grace