**PALM SUNDAY SERVICE 2020**

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 **ST MICHAEL’S CHURCH HOOLE**

**Jesus comes to Jerusalem as King**

***“See, your King comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey”***

**Today we remember Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey – as the King who brings peace. We can’t join in the donkey procession and wave palms as we had planned but we can still worship the King of Kings together in spirit in our homes. And we can make our own palm cross – why not put it in the window of your home to show Jesus the Servant King is with us now to bring peace?**

We begin with a verse from a great Palm Sunday hymn: https://youtu.be/h3a8fTTrAdE ***All glory laud and honour to thee Redeemer King.***

**Let us Pray:**

**PRAYER FOR PALM SUNDAY AND THIS WEEK:**

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 READING: Matthew 21: 1-11.**

**Jesus comes to Jerusalem as King**

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.’

**Song: https://youtu.be/HGnpfYqwO8k**

King of Kings, Majesty

 God of Heaven, living in me

 Gentle Saviour, closest friend

 Strong Deliverer, beginning and end

 *All within me falls at your throne*

 *Your majesty, I can but bow*

 *I lay my all, before you now*

*In royal robes, I don't deserve*

*I live to serve Your majesty*

Earth and heaven, worship you

 Love eternal, faithful and true

 Who bought the nations, ransomed souls,

 brought this sinner near to Your throne;

*All within me cries out in praise ……*

**SERMON**

*Lord Jesus King of Kings, Gentle Saviour, teach us more about your kingship today and how to ensure you are really King of our lives. Amen*

It was immensely moving to stand outside the Rectory on Thursday at 8.00pm and see the whole of Liverpool Old Rd lined with all our neighbours applauding and cheering carers with huge enthusiasm. We had planned the return of donkeys Jack and Jenny this year but this was an even better visual aid to the passionate welcome Jesus received from the crowds as he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey as their King and their Saviour.

Donkeys I understand usually come in twos and the same is true in Matthew’s account of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday in 30 AD. These special donkeys were no exception; Jesus had carefully planned his historic ride down to the very last detail. He was consciously fulfilling the great prophecy about the Jewish King who was to announce his kingship by riding into Jerusalem (Zion) on the foal of a donkey.

This is one of the most familiar stories in the New Testament ; most of you will have had a children’s Bible at home or school with a picture of Jesus seated on a donkey and people happily waving psalms and singing Hosanna. But it is also one of the easiest stories to get wrong; what’s it all about? And what does it have to say to us self-isolating at home, worried and lonely maybe and wondering what is going to happen to us and our family or worse perhaps on the front line putting ourselves and our loved ones at risk every day??

Just for a moment transport yourself in your mind away from Lockdown in Lancashire to Passover in Palestine 2000 years ago. There in Jerusalem, self-isolation would not be possible; there are two and a half million Jews camped on the ring of hills surrounding the great city of Jerusalem; they have come from all over to celebrate the great annual feast of Passover- the festival of freedom and liberation. It’s a hugely political event as well as a religious one; the Jewish people are living in a fragmented troubled society; they are occupied by the pagan Romans and there are many groups desperate for a great leader to rally round the whole nation and defeat their occupiers. And many thought Jesus of Nazareth was their long awaited King or Messiah. The situation is electric, explosive; the Jews had waited a 1000 years for this moment. They tore down palm branches, they threw their cloaks on the ground – you only do that for royalty and not usually then if you only have one cloak. And they shouted, “ HOSANNA SON OF DAVID”. David was the great king everyone looked back to – he was a man of the people who brought peace; they believed Jesus was the same and so they shouted “HOSANNA” which is a great cry for help. They are desperate – it means “SAVE US”.

But no one had paid attention to the donkeys. Jesus was riding a donkey – quite a feat actually to ride one that hadn’t been ridden before. For Jesus was fulfilling prophecy; he wasn’t coming to lead a military coup – he would have ridden a horse for that – he was coming to bring peace. When he entered Jerusalem through the Golden Gate, he didn’t turn right to the military garrison, but left to the Temple. He wasn’t coming to deal with the Romans – he was coming to deal with them! He went straight to their place of worship to look into all the activities- search every room and cupboard; it was profoundly disturbing, there were things they didn’t want Him to see.

And many of those who had cheered Him on would end up in a few days shouting with passion and venom in front of Pilate’s Palace. “Crucify Him”.

Of course Jesus was coming to save them but not from military domination-from a much greater enemy -from sin and death. That was why He had come – He was indeed entering Jerusalem as their king, the Son of David but in peace, to bring the peace that the world cannot give, a peace that required of Him the greatest sacrifice of all -that He lay down his life in love for the world.

In fact He is here to save us now; Hosanna is exactly the word we need in our global and national crisis –“SAVE US NOW”.

Major crises make people turn to God – though you could say that is rather like finally deciding to learn how to learn to use a telephone when you need to call 999. Fortunately God doesn’t mind that. Jesus always said He was there for the people who needed Him; not for those who felt they were ok on their own. In fact the very reason Jesus came and died on a cross was precisely to save those who knew they needed help – it has been well said that the church (the people not the building) is a ‘Hospital for sinners’. We have just witnessed this week a hospital with 4000 beds spring up in London: imagine the church - infinitely bigger than that but with space for everyone who wishes to be healed and the means to ensure that happens - through Jesus who died that we might live.

 So, on this Palm Sunday turn to Jesus the Saviour. You can’t go to church at the moment but you can still go to Him in prayer. Jesus longs to give you the help you need. However beware: if you ask an accountant to sort out your finances he may well find out things you would have preferred remain hidden. It may not be comfortable to turn to Jesus, the great Physician; he may tackle more issues that you envisaged. But the One who rode into Jerusalem on a donkey is the only one who can sort out your life, your fears and your hopes and give you the peace you desperately desire in this crisis.

Let us pray:

Look at the Palm Cross I am holding.

Let the cross remind you of 3 things:

1. the death of Jesus on the cross for you – He died that you might be forgiven.

2. it is an empty cross – He is risen and is alive and with us now in the midst of our suffering , pain and fear

3. the crowd who shouted in excited greeting on Palm Sunday shouted ‘Crucify Him’ 5 days later – let us ask Him to keep us close to Him in faith love and obedience.

Amen

**INTERCESSIONS**

Dear Lord, at this difficult and stressful time, please guide us as we seek to worship with one another, even if it is not possible to be together in church

Lord in your mercy; Hear our prayer

On Palm Sunday we recall how you Jesus were welcomed into Jerusalem by large crowds, entering in triumph, but humbly on the back of a donkey and we pray that people today will welcome you into their lives

We thank you Lord for our young families at St. Michael’s who represent the future of our parish. Thank you for the lovely prayers that some of our Sunday school children have written put up in the church porch. Though we are saddened that the children cannot enjoy their donkey rides this year, please watch over them and keep them safe and give strength to the parents as they home school and try to keep their children entertained in challenging circumstances.

Lord please give those in need of support the strength to ask for help

Lord in your mercy; hear our prayer

We pray for all world leaders to work together and to share their scientific findings to best overcome this pandemic.

We thank you Lord for our NHS staff who show such dedication to care, healing and mental wellbeing, sometimes putting themselves at risk to save others

Gracious God, give skill, sympathy and resilience to all who are caring for the sick, and your wisdom to those searching for a cure, that through their work many will be restored to health

Lord in your mercy; hear our prayer

O God of peace, you know the needs of our hearts and in a quiet moment we pray for ourselves, who we often forget to include in our prayers. In the silence, Lord please stay with us until we know we have been heard

Lord in your mercy; hear our prayer

We give thanks for the lives of those who have died recently and we particularly ask for your love for the families and friends of those who have lost their lives to the Coronavirus, who have been unable to spend their last days and hours with their loved ones. May they find comfort in you.

God of compassion, be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation. In their loneliness, be their consolation; in their anxiety, be their hope; in their darkness, be their light

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

**BLESSING**

Jesus said, ‘Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid’.

And so may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and all those whom you love now and for evermore. Amen

**Hymn: https://youtu.be/MD9rMkIS1yw *Ride on ride on in majesty***

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