

**Call to Worship.**

Friends in Christ, those who are gathered in church buildings and those who are joined by zoom and YouTube: through the weeks of Lent we have been preparing for this Holy Week of Jesus's suffering and death. Together with the whole church throughout the world we begin this Holy Week remembering how Jesus begin at with his entry into Jerusalem. He who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, He who was in the beginning with God and in whom all things hold together begins His days before He will hang on those blood- soaked planks of wood, the Cross.

And so we sing a hymn which celebrates who He is for us.

Hymn St F 357 Jesus the name high over all

<https://youtu.be/y3Jpx0Rnmno>

1 Jesus — the name high over all, in hell, or earth, or sky ! Angels revere, and nations fall, and devils fear and fly.	4 O that the world might taste and see the riches of his grace ! The arms of love that compass me would all the earth embrace.
2 Jesus — the name to sinners dear, the name to sinners given ! It scatters all their guilty fear, it turns their hell to heaven.	5 His only righteousness I show, his saving grace proclaim ; 'tis all my business here below to cry : 'Behold the Lamb !'
3 Jesus — the prisoner's fetters breaks, and bruises Satan's head ; power into strengthless souls it speaks, and life into the dead.	6 Happy if with my latest breath I might but gasp his name ; preach him to all, and cry in death : 'Behold, behold the Lamb !'
	Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Prayer

**Lord our God,**

You are the author of creation, the giver of life, Your prophets were called to forth to tell your Word, unfolding a vision of your eternity and a promise that one day there would come a Messiah, prophet, priest and king, who would show the fulness of your will and purpose. We thank you that in the fulness of time, Jesus, the Living Word, came to us, being born in Bethlehem, walking the way of obedience and journeying to Jerusalem to the cross.

**Lord our God**

The whole universe is alive with your energy and in creation we glimpse something of your power to bring life. We thank you for the sending of your Son, being born in the likeness of humankind, setting before us an open door to you that no one can shut so that we may have life in all its fulness.

**Lord our God**

On this Palm Sunday as we begin our journey with Jesus through Holy Week, give us a due sense of all your mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, worshipping in holiness and in righteousness, rejoicing in the means of Grace and the hope of Glory. Bless us with a fresh anointing of your Holy Spirit that we may know we are in the presence of a Living God and embrace your will for us to your praise and glory. Amen.

Video address for young people

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1g8SwCRb0S8aWCb1ckkV8h6wETRe7oFyA/view?usp=sharing>

Hymn StF 263 Hosanna

<https://youtu.be/SKHwBamBSPk>

<p>1 Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest ! Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest ! Lord, we lift up your name, with hearts full of praise ; be exalted, O Lord, my God ! Hosanna in the highest !</p>	<p>2 Glory, glory, glory to the King of kings ! Glory, glory, glory to the King of kings ! Lord, we lift up your name, with hearts full of praise ; be exalted, O Lord, my God ! Glory to the King of kings !</p> <p>Carl Tuttle (<i>b.</i> 1953)</p>
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Bible Reading Luke 19 verses 28-40

Hymn StF 265 Ride on Ride on

<https://youtu.be/uHeIX8xTpYs>

<p>1 Ride on, ride on in majesty ! Hark, all the tribes 'Hosanna !' cry ; your humble beast pursues its road with palms and scattered garments strowed.</p> <p>2 Ride on, ride on in majesty ! In lowly pomp ride on to die : O Christ, your triumphs now begin o'er captive death and conquered sin.</p> <p>3 Ride on, ride on in majesty ! The wingèd squadrons of the sky look down with sad and wondering eyes to see the approaching sacrifice.</p>	<p>4 Ride on, ride on in majesty ! Your last and fiercest strife is nigh ; the Father, on his sapphire throne, expects his own anointed Son.</p> <p>5 Ride on, ride on in majesty ! In lowly pomp ride on to die ; bow your meek head to mortal pain, then take, O God, your power, and reign.</p> <p>Henry Hart Milman (1791–1868)</p>
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Sermon

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1t5djfCaRARHZfMd7jXyjOzdDeongmdgF/view?usp=sharing>

Some of you know my husband Nigel who was a Church of England Parish Priest for 40 years of ministry until his retirement in 2012. He was co-founder of the Church Computer Uses Group and from 1986-1989 worked in London at what was then called the British Council of Churches. As part of his contract there he wrote a book: Computers for Churches. What use for today though— other than a historical interest in the beginnings of computer things for churches. - so much has been put into place that couldn't even be through of then and over those decades so many cultural changes in how we use computers and what they look like. I recall that just before the first Covid 19 lockdown my friend Mary rang me up, and with tones of wonderment in her voice said "June, I went to that church service I was telling you about. They made me welcome and the man on the door was very chatty and told me that they don't have an organist but have a music system. I couldn't see any sign of it. Then when the vicar announced the first hymn, I saw her touching her WATCH then the music came on. June, can you believe it: she was controlling the music system from HER WATCH!" In the mid to late 1980's the Apple Watch with its many possible functions was yet to be dreamed of, let alone produced.

So, we come to Palm Sunday and we might have the same frame of mind. What use really is that story for us today other than another historical story about Jesus – so many cultural changes since then and the mindset of those who were there is so different to ours.

Let me explain that

How many of you today came here with Habakkuk 2 verse 11 at the forefront of your minds. When the Pharisees ask Jesus to make the people silent Jesus replies referring to Habakkuk 2 verse 11 that the very stones would cry out if he didn't receive the proper welcome. A different mindset

If you are in church and have been given a Palm cross did you mentally read the script of Psalm 118 v 26 which was originally the priest's blessing pronounced on pilgrims coming up to Jerusalem for a festival and Luke has inserted the word King so that there can be no doubt that this is a royal occasion. Also, the crowds were waving palm branches just like the crowds waved palm branches when Judas Maccabaeus came as conquering hero into the Jerusalem after his victory over the Greeks.

A different mindset.

How many of us have on the tips of our tongues, on the forefront of our minds the prophecy of Zechariah 9v 9 that the Messiah would ride on a young donkey?

How many of us hearing the story make an immediate link between the donkey that has not be used and the tomb where Jesus would lay less than a week later, not been used? A kind of bookend theme for the beginning and the end of the last week of Jesus's earthly life.

How many of us when hearing of the people throwing their coats in front of Jesus think immediately that this is not a good signal for Herod or for Rome – a link back to When Elijah's messenger anointed Jehu as king to rebel against King Ahab and Jezebel, the people threw their cloaks before Jehu as signs of loyalty to him and rebellion against King Ahab- and we all know what fate awaited him

And so I could go on.

A different mindset.

And I ask again – with those little snippets in mind -what use really is that story for us today other than another historical story about Jesus which OT enthusiasts like myself could expound upon FOR SOME TIME....

The thing about history is that it shows us what circumstances then led to our present circumstances and what it is about then that can challenge us today.

So what are the challenges for today in the Palm Sunday story? So much that could be said but I am going to pick out just two things.

This is the first: when we hear the Hosanna in the Palm Sunday story, we often hear it in the rather jolly terms like HURRAH! HAIL! However, the word Hosanna means *Save Now*. It was cry for help that the Jewish people used in times of distress when they approached God or their king for help. Have a look at Psalm 118 verses 25 and 26 when you get a chance.

The challenge for us is this: as we join in those Hosannas, what things are we asking God to save us from: as individuals and in society and in the wider world?

This is the second and it links with the first. At the beginning of his Gospel Luke, chapter 1 verse 68, he records Zechariah, dad of John the Baptist, as saying "The Lord has visited and redeemed his people." And all leads up the day when Jerusalem receives a visit from Jesus in accordance with the old prophecies which I touched on the beginning of this sermon. That day has come, Palm Sunday, and we will see through Holy Week how Jerusalem does not by Friday welcome Him as the Messiah, but tries to erase him from history as crucifixion did to countless others.

The challenge for us is this: are we hearing the story as one of those 'historical stories of Jesus' or is it calling to us to, as our annual covenant service says, to renew our covenant with him, in seeking to do His will and with joy offering ourselves anew?

I finish with this little story. Our eldest grandchild is doing A Levels this year, one of which is Computer Studies. His dad has worked for Microsoft for a very long time. When Callum was at Primary school, his dad arranged for him to go for a day which Microsoft had organised to introduce children to coding. I was looking after the grandchildren for the school holiday so it fell to me to take him. He moaned all the way from Tilehurst to Winnersh. He wasn't interested. He didn't want to go. He couldn't believe he had to be there for 5 hours and so on. I practically had to drag him into the Microsoft foyer! I was dreading my return at 3pm. However, in the foyer was a beaming grandson. He has much enjoyed the day and what he said to me was "It has made me think I would like to work alongside my dad."

As we begin this Holy Week may this and the other events be not just historical stories but may we so journey, as so renew our covenant, that by Easter Day we are 'champing at the bit' to work alongside our Heavenly Father in His salvation of the world through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer (adapted from Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church)

Loving God, on this day Your Son entered that rebellious city that later rejected Him: we confess that our wills are as rebellious as Jerusalem's. Our faith is often more show than substance. Our hearts and wills are in need of cleansing. Have mercy on us, Son of David, Saviour of our lives. Help us to lay at Your feet all we have and all we are.

Thank you that you put before us an open door which none can shut. Thank you for your forgiveness. Thank you that you continue to heal us. Thank you that receive us as Your own. Amen.

Hymn StF 338 There is a Redeemer

<https://youtu.be/G0LA3GvAUGU>

<p>1 There is a Redeemer, Jesus, God's own Son, precious Lamb of God, Messiah, Holy One.</p> <p><i>Thank you, O my Father, for giving us your Son, and leaving your Spirit till the work on earth is done.</i></p>	<p>2 Jesus my Redeemer, name above all names, precious Lamb of God, Messiah, O for sinners slain.</p> <p>3 When I stand in glory I will see his face, and there I'll serve my King for ever in that holy place.</p> <p>vv. 1-2 Melody Green (b. 1946) v. 3 Keith Green (1953–1982)</p>
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Intercessions, adapted from Rick Morley Blog.com

Lord God, we pray that you would hear our prayers,  
and graft in our minds the same mind that is in Christ Jesus,  
that we might be vessels of humility and grace.

Lord Jesus, you emptied yourself,  
trading in the form of God for the form of a servant;  
we pray for the Church, and all her people, deacons and ministers.  
Form us into a Church that empties itself for others, and for you.  
Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord Jesus, you were born in human likeness,  
and found in human form;  
we pray for the whole human family, for the nations of the earth,  
and for all who live in the midst of disaster, famine, or terror.  
This morning we pray especially for.....  
Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord Jesus your humility and your love for us  
was so broad and deep, it cost you your life.  
We pray for those who we love who have died,  
and as you are highly exalted, may they rest with you in glory in the heavenly Jerusalem.  
May those who grieve hold fast to your words that you have gone to prepare a place for us, so that where  
you are, we may be also.  
Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In your exaltation, O Lord,  
you were given the name that is above every name;  
we pray in your name for those who are poor,  
those who are hungry,  
and those who are hurting in any way in body, mind or spirit.  
Give them the grace of your healing and strength in their time of trouble.  
Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We gather up all our prayers in the words that Jesus taught us.... Our Father who art in heaven...

<p>1 My song is love unknown, my Saviour's love to me, love to the loveless shown, that they might lovely be. O who am I, that for my sake my Lord should take frail flesh and die ?</p> <p>2 He came from his blest throne, salvation to bestow ; but they made strange, and none the longed-for Christ would know. But O my Friend, my Friend indeed, who at my need his life did spend !</p> <p>3 Sometimes they strew his way, and his sweet praises sing ; resounding all the day hosannas to their King. Then 'Crucify !' is all their breath, and for his death they thirst and cry.</p> <p>4 Why, what has my Lord done ? What makes this rage and spite ? He made the lame to run, he gave the blind their sight. Sweet injuries ! Yet they at these themselves displease, and 'gainst him rise.</p>	<p>5 They rise, and needs will have my dear Lord made away ; a murderer they save, the Prince of Life they slay. Yet cheerful he to suffering goes, that he his foes from thence might free.</p> <p>6 In life no house, no home, my Lord on earth might have ; in death, no friendly tomb but what a stranger gave. What may I say ? Heaven was his home ; but mine the tomb wherein he lay.</p> <p>7 Here might I stay and sing, no story so divine : never was love, dear King, never was grief like thine ! This is my Friend, in whose sweet praise I all my days could gladly spend.</p> <p>Samuel Crossman (c. 1624–1683)</p>
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We say the Grace together. **The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. Amen.**

Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord and one another.