

WEEK 3 - FREE CHURCH MEDITATION - PALM SUNDAY

5th April 2020

Matthew 21.1-11

Jesus' Triumphal Entry

The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who come 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?'

Matthew 21.9-10

Reflection

Today is Palm Sunday but we will not gather to see palm branches on display at the front of the church. Our Palm Sunday celebrations will be quieter and simpler than we would have imagined just weeks ago, but they need not be stopped. Even if we worship from home, we can acknowledge Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. We can still join with the crowds to say, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

So, let's remind ourselves what happened so long ago. It was the time of Passover and crowds of Jewish people were walking on pilgrimage toward Jerusalem for the festival. The atmosphere was becoming more excitable as Jesus' and his followers met others on their way. Then Jesus, having walked all the way from Galilee, asks two of his followers to borrow a donkey so that he could ride it into the city. Jesus knew his Scriptures and it is likely he chose to do this in fulfilment of prophesy of the future king and restoration of God's people recorded in Zechariah 9.9. *The king comes triumphant and victorious, but humble and riding on a donkey.* Jesus is making a statement in this entrance.

He is visually and cryptically declaring that he is king. However, we know that Jesus had a different view of his kingdom from what the people expected. They wanted a powerful leader to overturn the Roman power and restore Israel's place as a strong nation. Yet, being God's chosen people was a gift not for dominance over other nations, but for service so that all peoples through them might be blessed as God said to their forefather Abraham. (Genesis 12.3)

This entrance threw the city into an uproar. In just a few days the city would be stirred up again: the earth would shake, the sky turn black and the temple curtain be torn in two. This celebratory scene, teeming with people, would soon be deserted, Jesus alone with only the women remaining. All will seem lost and dead and beyond redemption, but only for a while, for three days when time will seem to stand still. The story continues next week.

Our lives, the whole world is stirred up right now. Many of us cannot help but wonder what this Saviour who rides humbly on a donkey can do to help our locked down world. Everyone

longs to know when things will return to some semblance of normality. We may not see or know what God is doing during this uncertain time, but we can see where there is new life: people's kindness to neighbours, a building sense of community through telephone, internet and social media, generous acts of giving. We can celebrate God at work in the world through people showing the values of his kingdom of mercy and grace.

Prayer and Action

1. Are you grieving the loss of something or someone during this season of COVID-19? Bring it to God, trusting that God hears you and is with you in your loss.
2. What do you have to offer Jesus this week? What metaphorical palm branch will you wave will you offer him?
3. Are there ways you can connect with people even if you cannot be physically together?
4. What are your favourite memories of Palm Sunday? Share them with someone and think about how you can incorporate the most meaningful aspects of this Sunday and this week into your reordered circumstances.
5. Take time to pray for the needs of your neighbours and the village. Who are those who are struggling in this difficult time and in need of encouragement?
6. As we are not able to give out palm crosses this year, why not make a cross out of whatever you have at hand and make it a focal point for the coming week.