

Today we celebrate Palm Sunday - Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. His teachings have spread and His followings have grown. As He rides into the city, a crowd welcomes Him with cheers and fanfare, waving palm fronds and shouting – Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest.

Can you imagine what they were feeling? Here is Jesus, the prophet, a man sent by God with Divine authority. He will be our king – the King of the Jews and He will continue to perform miracles, signs and wonders. And so, can you hear the hope in their hearts as they line the sides of the road entering into Jerusalem.

These people were being oppressed under Roman power. They were hurting, sick, impoverished and outcasts. And here was Jesus at last.

But there was a deep rumbling of anger at Jesus, for all of His actions, miracles, words and teachings which went against those in the Jewish hierarchy and the Roman oppressors.

And yet here He was, almost like thumbing His nose at them – riding in to a parade being given in His honour and He was being claimed King of the Jews.

Now we know what this Holy week held for Jesus as we have Scripture which informs us. And Jesus knew what was ahead of Him in this week. But His followers and disciples didn't. And as this Holy week progressed, the world of His followers would be turned upside down – dramatically and permanently.

And this once welcoming crowd would change their cheers to jeers – turn their support of Jesus to betrayal – egged on by the Jewish leaders.

Jesus tried to prepare His friends for what was coming while they had one last meal together. But as the week progresses, many of Jesus' closest friends abandoned Him. Why? Because they were terrified of what would happen to them as followers of Jesus.

Their joy, relief and hope changed to fear, loneliness, isolation, worry and uncertainty about the future.

We know something about this. In Australia we have experienced drought, floods, fires and now, as part of the world, COVID 19. Our world is changing because of this pandemic. Today there are many feeling unrest, confusion and fear due to the ever changing restrictions of COVID 19.

This situation challenges our beliefs and faith – why is this happening and what is God doing about it?

It confronts our way of life because we are now having to behave and live differently, for a time.

Our expectations often become more demanding – of ourselves, others and even God. We want life to go back to how it was.

And so you may think that what happened thousands of years ago, in the city of Jerusalem, when Jesus rode a colt into the town is nothing compared to today. **But you would be wrong.**

Jerusalem at that time was under Roman control. It had endured many invasions, conflicts and takeovers. It had a history of killing prophets, fighting wars and violence.

Like today, there were a significant number of people living in poverty. It was a place of unrest, confusion and fear. The crowds welcoming Jesus that Sunday had questions relating to their situation and of Jesus. We have questions relating to our life today with the pandemic and possibly also of Jesus. .

You can just imagine the murmurings that were heard amongst the crowd as Jesus rode in. All stating what they had heard:

A carpenter's son. From Nazareth – can anything good come from Nazareth?

He knew John the Baptist. He was related to John the Baptist

He can heal people – do you think He can heal me?

He talks to gentiles, children, even women and tax collectors – seriously.

He is the Son of David; He is the Son of Man

He is the One we have been waiting for. He was born of a virgin, in a stable.

Why is He riding a donkey?

How does He have so many followers?

Do you think Caesar knows that a man from Nazareth has been welcomed with such a large parade?

I don't know who He is, but I've heard He is gracious and kind

He fed 5000 people

He survived the wilderness

He helped the blind man see – do you think He sees me?

He walked on water – is that even possible?

I heard He can save us, save all of us.

**Who is this Jesus?** He is a prophet, the Son of David, but more than that. Jesus is the One who fulfils Scripture from the beginning of the Bible, He is a humble, loving Saviour who willingly chose to bear our burdens and save us in the way we need to be saved. He is our king today, and our king forever.

**Who is Jesus to you? Is He just a good person, who did good deeds and then died?**

**Is He God in human form – the only person in history to ever choose to be born and the only person in history to ever choose to give His life for us as He took all our sins upon Him?**

**“Who is Jesus?” Everybody was looking for something different from Jesus when He rode into Jerusalem. Everybody today are looking for something different from Jesus also.**

Although Jesus entered in triumph, this would soon change. Palm Sunday – the crowd shouted out “Hosanna,” and treated Him like the King of the Jews.

On Friday, they hung Him on a cross and put up a sign saying, “The King of the Jews.”

So the question remains for you to answer **“Who is this person Jesus to you?”**

Holy Week is the most important week of the Christian calendar. And you may be feeling overwhelmed as we enter into this week when there are so many difficult things already happening around us.

**But there is also good news in Holy Week.**

For we learn that Jesus also felt scared and alone.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, as He was in so much anguish, He remained focused on why He had come to earth in the first place – to take our sins upon Him. Jesus promised He would die for us and even in facing His death alone, He kept this promise. And He kept His promise of resurrection.

And just as the disciples experienced loss and grief during this unsettling time, we too are experiencing loss and grief in today's challenging times.

Just as the disciples experienced hardship as they stayed true to what they knew of Jesus and held onto the promise of eternal life; we too may experience hardship but we can hold onto the promise of eternal life through our belief and faith in Jesus.

These hard times will pass. I know though, it can be very challenging and difficult to continue to hold onto God as we journey through this dark valley but we have no other light but Jesus.

Scripture assures Jesus is the One who gives us light in our darkness, who leads us from death to life and who nourishes us as the bread of life. He is the Word and the Wisdom of God; the promised Messiah and the one with God.

**Who is Jesus for you? Are you still looking for a Saviour?** The real meaning of this Easter week is that Jesus came and died for us. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

If given a choice I suspect most prefer a domesticated Jesus; one who brings peace and security, one who makes life easy and happy. That is not what Jesus is about. Jesus is our Saviour. Since the day of His birth, He has turned the world upside down.

His life, teaching and behaviour all caused confusion, challenge and change. Palm Sunday is no exception. Although the crowd waved their palms, deep inside their hearts was the most troubled place. And today is no exception. Our troubles often reveal something not quite right about our way of life and faith. We may not be living the way God wants us to.

And our upset, confusion and fear points to the deeper mystery of Jesus' identity and leaves us asking, **“Who is Jesus to me?”**

Jesus rode into Jerusalem carrying a burden – the burden of our sins. All the sins we have committed over the years, all the sins of the world for all time – this is what Jesus is carrying.

And He is taking our sins upon Himself to the cross, suffering the rejection of His own people, suffering injustice at the hands of a weak ruler. But He chose to do this to fulfil the plan and purpose that God had, from the very beginning, to redeem the world and to save sinners like you and me.

**Today, Palm Sunday Jesus was everything** – the centre of the parade, the centre of attention. His arrival was Holy and unexpected and beautiful.

**Monday – Jesus turned the world upside down.** He flipped the tables in the temple and He flipped the script.

**Tuesday He was a teacher** unlike any others. He sat and they sat. He

spoke and they listened.

**Wednesday He was nothing** more than a man worth 30 pieces of silver.

**Thursday** He was betrayed and arrested. He was treated like a convict. On Thursday He was alone.

**Lord Jesus, Servant King we pray for those who are experiencing life as a bitter wind. Those suffering because of broken relationships, painful memories, low self-esteem, bitterness, loneliness and despair.**

**We pray for all who wait for a new day; those seeking new employment or vision; those struggling for peace or justice, those accepting a new challenge, those desiring a sense of recognition over rejection.**

**We pray for all who struggle to make ends meet; those whose land produces no harvest or whose labour produces no reward; those who have lost their jobs because of the pandemic; those who are trying to survive each day in a world that appears upside down.**

**We pray for all who are facing darkness; those who are ill in body, mind or spirit or whose lives in this world are ending.**

**Lord Jesus, Servant King, You came into Jerusalem. May You go with us as we seek to serve others.**

**Lord Jesus, Conquering King, You came into Jerusalem. May You go with us as we seek to live for You. Hosanna to you Lord, Hosanna. Amen.**