

Palm Sunday 24th March 2024

Scripture: Luke 19:28-40

They ran eagerly, spreading their cloaks on the road as Jesus came, waving palm branches and



shouting: “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.” This surely would signal the beginning of their deliverance, and the ending of their oppression, sorrow, and shame.

What’s this? No mighty horse or chariot? Only a man riding a lowly donkey, His feet almost grazing the ground as He makes His way to Jerusalem, and to the mystery that it would be through suffering that healing comes, through His shame, that dignity is restored, and through His cross that powers are disarmed, and death done away with forever.

Today is Palm Sunday and it is all about involvement and commitment – and the difference between the two. Those who followed Jesus on the final leg of His journey into Jerusalem, singing His praises were surely involved and caught up in the excitement of the moment.

Even Jesus’ friends who had spent day after day with him as He travelled around telling the crowds all about God and performing amazing miracles, were a bit bewildered when He asked them to borrow a young donkey and then proceeded to ride it into Jerusalem. They knew that God’s word had promised a Messiah, a

Saviour, but some of them thought that that meant that He was going to overthrow the Romans.

The crowds were welcoming Him into Jerusalem and appeared to know who Jesus was. But did they really? Have you ever found yourself singing or humming a song but had no idea what you were singing? I think this happens sometimes, in the church – we sing hymns or melodies but don't really take the time to fully understand what it is we are singing.

I suspect these people did not understand what they were singing, or whom they were singing to. They sang “Hosanna” which means “Lord save us!” They were asking Jesus to save them, not in a spiritual way, but a rebellion, freedom from the Romans.

They put their coats and palm branches on the road and treated Him like the king they said He was. They shouted praises to God for sending someone to help them. These people had no idea who Jesus really was, or what He was going to do for them.

But just five days later, instead of shouting “Hosanna” they were shouting “crucify Him.” No-one was left to lay down branches or cloaks for Jesus. All, including His disciples, had abandoned Him. Jesus was on His own.

We might have heard this story many times before but forget the truth of what Jesus represents and what He asks of us. We might be like the crowd and think He's an alright bloke but when it really comes to the crunch isn't worth the bother.

As the people put down their branches and picked up their coats to return to their homes or continue their journey to Jerusalem, I

wonder what they were thinking. I wonder if they had the same hopes and fears that we have today.

We read in Genesis and from the prophets, that God is always firmly committed to His people. No matter the faults of the people – no matter how much they become sidetracked and preoccupied with trivial concerns – God’s commitment remains unwavering.

You may have times when you feel the most forsaken and abandoned, the Lord is the closest to you. The emptiness of our hearts at such moments makes room finally for the presence of the One who will tolerate no competition from our myriad diversions and distractions.

Palm Sunday takes us on an emotional roller-coaster ride. The involvement of the crowds at Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem challenges us once again to reflect on the commitment that led Jesus to give His life for our redemption. Amid all the changes and challenges of this world, we must never forget the Cross.

Jesus enters the Holy city of Jerusalem on a colt provided for the exact purpose, by a stranger. Like the throngs surrounding Him that happy day, perhaps He too was caught up and engaged in the moment and the spectacle. But days later, as we know too well, He leave the city for the last time, not on a colt, much less a royal sedan, but on foot and carrying a cross, given over to the enormous task of winning our redemption one painful step at a time.

It would be easy to come to church today, Palm Sunday, sing the sweet songs, gather a palm frond or two, head home and not

return until Easter Sunday. You may think – palm branches and hosannas one Sunday, Easter buns and halleluiahs the next.

But this would be missing the most important and essential piece of the Gospel story – the story of Jesus' death. We would have missed Good Friday.

No matter where our life journey and its twists and turns may take us as followers of Christ, our voyage of faith leads most assuredly through Jerusalem and on to Calvary with our Lord.

Like good pilgrims the world over and like Jesus Himself, we too must walk the way of the cross. There is no other route home.

For only at the cross does our Lord at last turn our feeble involvement into the commitment and Covenant of Calvary and the assurance of our salvation.

Opening Prayer

Father, Palm Sunday is a reminder of the unexpected, yet fully anticipated, King of Kings. Jesus did not look like the Messiah Your people hoped for. The way He entered the Holy City of Jerusalem on that day, riding a young donkey as a significant sign of peace and fulfillment of prophecy, did not align with their expectations of a military conqueror. Much of our daily lives don't align with our expectations, Father. So much of our lives don't make sense. This Palm Sunday, let us embrace the unexpected entrance of our Savior, Jesus. He is Peace. Let us apply this incredible truth to our lives. Peace mattered to Jesus. He came to bring us Peace. He is peace. Father, how quickly we forget the Peace we possess in Christ! Remind us, minute by minute, as we navigate difficult days and trying times. Father, we need Peace to live life to the full, as Jesus died for us to live.

Closing Prayer

Almighty and eternal God, in your tender love towards humanity you sent your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ

to take on himself our flesh and to suffer death on the cross.

Grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility, and also be made partakers of his resurrection;

through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and forever.