

Worship for Palm Sunday
(Complete text. The same as video is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Jemima's paper palms video (you may have a palm from last year to have before you? If not you can see we have included an image of a palm branch on this worship sheet)

Call to worship

Hosanna to the Son of David!

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest!

STF 265 Ride on, ride on in majesty

**Ride on, ride on in majesty
as all the crowds 'Hosanna!' cry:
through waving branches slowly ride,
O Saviour, to be crucified.**

**Ride on, ride on in majesty,
in lowly pomp ride on to die:
O Christ, your triumph now begin
with captured death, and conquered sin!**

**Ride on, ride on in majesty
the angel armies of the sky
look down with sad and wondering eyes
to see the approaching sacrifice.**

**Ride on, ride on in majesty,
the last and fiercest foe defy:
the Father on his sapphire throne
awaits his own anointed Son.**

**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!**

Sisters and brothers in Christ, during Lent we have been preparing for the celebration of our Lord's death and resurrection. Today we begin this solemn celebration in union with Christians throughout the world. Our Lord Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem in triumph to complete his

work as our Saviour; to be rejected, to suffer and die, and to be raised from the dead.

Let us go with him in faith and love, so that, united with him in his sufferings, we may share his risen life.

Blessing of the Palms

Let us pray.

God our Saviour,
whose Son entered Jerusalem as Messiah to suffer and die:
may these palms be for us a sign of his victory;
may we who carry them every hail him as king
and follow him in the way that leads to eternal life.

With all the faithful,
may we enter the new Jerusalem in triumph:
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Confession

So, let us confess our sins to God.

Lord, you entered Jerusalem to cheers of 'Hosanna' and left with your cross to cries of 'Crucify'.

We remember the times we have made you in our image,
the times when we have called our own aspiration yours,
the times when we have misunderstood the way of the cross and have deceived ourselves and others.

Give us strength to journey with you
and grace to discern the way that is yours.

Lord of the cross

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Forgive us and heal us.

Lord, you were anointed by an unknown woman in preparation for burial.

We remember the times when we have been too busy to love you,
the times when we have failed to recognise your needs in others,
the times when we have made ordinary that which is special and dismissed that which is precious.

Impassion us with the love of an unknown woman that we may serve you in friend and stranger.

Lord of the cross

Forgive us and heal us.

Lord, you humbly took a towel and washed the feet of your friends.

We remember the times when we have fought for prominence,
the times when we have desired power and have forgotten those without a voice,
the times we have pursued our own freedom and enslaved others.

Lord of the cross

Forgive us and heal us and make us one in heart and mind to serve you in humility.

Amen.

(Revd Annabel Shilson-Thomas)

Collect

Let us pray.

Eternal God,
in your tender love for the human race
you sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ
to take our flesh and to suffer death upon the

cross.

Grant that we may follow the example of his great humility,
and share in the glory of his resurrection;
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

STF 77 Give thanks to the Lord, our God and King

Give thanks to the Lord, our God and King:

His love endures forever.

For he is good, he is above all things.

His love endures forever.

Sing praise, sing praise.

With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm,
His love endures forever.

For the life that's been reborn.

His love endures forever.

Sing praise, sing praise,
sing praise, sing praise.

Forever, God is faithful,
forever God is strong.
Forever God is with us,
forever, forever.

From the rising to the setting sun,
His love endures forever.

By the grace of God, we will carry on.

His love endures forever.

Sing praise, sing praise,
sing praise, sing praise.

Philippians 2.5-11

⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,⁶ who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
⁷ but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,

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⁸ he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.
⁹ Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Gospel Reading

A reading from the Gospel according to St.
Matthew 21.1-11

Hear the Gospel of Christ
Glory to Christ our Saviour.

The Gospel is read.

Matthew 21: 1-11

Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, "The Lord needs them." And he will send them immediately.' This took place to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, 'Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.' The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the

trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,
'Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is the one who comes 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?' The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'

This is the Gospel of Christ
Praise to Christ our Lord.

(On a donkey?! Video)

STF 263 Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest

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 oh Lord my God!
Hosanna in the highest! (Glory to the King of Kings!)
(second time around)

Glory, Glory
Glory to the King of Kings!
Glory, Glory,
Glory to the King of Kings!

Reflection

The story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem features a community on the move and a city in turmoil. As we look around us, we see not just a city but a whole world in turmoil (and many communities stuck at home!)

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After their long journey from Galilee, Jesus and his disciples finally reach Jerusalem. They must have been fearful. For, however enthusiastic the reception was as they approached the city gates, this was the place where both secular (Roman) and religious (Jewish) authorities had their headquarters. Not everyone is a fan of the film, but Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* does seek to show, in horrible detail, probably more realistically than we want to imagine, the brutality of the Roman occupation as well as the deep unease of the religious leaders of that time and place.

In our time and place, with flights cancelled, many people are still seeking to make difficult journeys home from far flung places; and others have had to cancel holidays or long weekend breaks as travelling of any kind is now denied for most of us (except for minimal 'essential' journeys). Also denied to us are the enthusiastic welcomes from families and friends we expected to see over Easter. Lock down is not holiday.

In these circumstances, it is hard to imagine the enthusiastic welcome which Jesus received. But did the claps and cheers for NHS workers in recent evenings perhaps reflect something similar? Do the many skilled people returning to jobs in the NHS give us another image of similar enthusiasm? And can we all take a moment to remember and thank the many who are keeping essential services running in these challenging times? Among them are those who work in food shops, those who deliver the mail, those who keep the electricity flowing and the broadband functioning, those who collect our rubbish, who drive the trains and buses so that essential workers can get to work. Then there are those keeping the children of key workers safe in nurseries and schools, and those working with the older and vulnerable in care homes. And more...

Not long after Jesus and his friends entered the city, came the fateful week – leading to that last meal together on Thursday, Jesus' arrest, his trial and the horribly brutal punishment of crucifixion. The disciples were fearful. Most of them were nowhere to be seen, as the final events unfolded. Yet among that fear, someone lent them a room for the Last Supper. And it was during that week (according to Matthew 22.34-40) that Jesus gave the teaching on the greatest commandments, which together with the 'new commandment' (John 13.34), has so influenced the development of our faith. And, just before he begins the story of the Passion, Matthew reports Jesus as telling the story of the sheep and the goats (25.31-46), including the words: 'as you did to one of the least of these...you did it to me' – another image and message which many of us hold dear, and which seems so resonant as we are each challenged in the present circumstances to love our neighbours in new ways by staying apart from them.

Whether you are using this reflection alone or with your household, consider how you might mark this most solemn week in the church's calendar in these most extraordinary times. Perhaps you have a garden where you might cut or gather branches, and display them for others to see – to mark the day when people 'cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road' (Matthew 21.8).

Whether we receive a palm cross today or make our own, and however we are forced to spend Holy Week this year, we can all spend some time this week reflecting on Jesus' Passion, on the Cross, and on its significance for us. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING

For the sunshine, the daylight and the promise of Spring,

We praise and thank you, O God

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For the NHS, the delivery drivers and those who support others,

We praise and thank you, O God

For modern technology, which bridges the physical distance,

We praise and thank you, O God

For the power of human love, appreciated afresh in the midst of crisis,

We praise and thank you, O God

STF 504 May the mind of Christ my Saviour

May the mind of Christ, my Saviour,

Live in me from day to day,

By His love and power controlling

All I do and say.

May the Word of God dwell richly

In my heart from hour to hour,

So that all may see I triumph

Only through His power.

May the peace of God my Father

Rule my life in everything,

That I may be calm to comfort

Sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me

As the waters fill the sea;

Him exalting, self-abasing,

This is victory.

May I run the race before me,

Strong and brave to face the foe,

Looking only unto Jesus

As I onward go.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

A prayer written especially for this time by Jan Berry, a URC minister who was one of my tutors at college:

God our refuge

We seek your protection.

Protect the vulnerable from illness;

Those who are old or frail,

Weakened by years and struggle;

Those who care for others,

Expending energy and love,

Those for whom inability to work

Means hardship and poverty.

Protect us

From the greed and suspicion

Which snatches at our own security

Stock piling and panic buying

That deprives others of the necessities of life.

Protect us from the short sightedness

Which sees the germ in our own eyes

And ignores the plagues

Of hunger, war and violence

That takes so many lives each day.

Protect us from the isolation

That leads us to loneliness and despair

Denying the interconnectedness

That links us with one another.

God our refuge

In our panic and fear

May we not lose sight of our common humanity

That makes us one people in you.

Amen

(copyright Jan Berry)

THE LORD'S PRAYER

We say together the prayer that Jesus gave us:

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your Name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,

now and for ever. Amen.

OFFERING

Although we are not able to meet together and pass round the offering plate as we normally would, we still want to dedicate the gifts which many of our members make by standing order.

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Perhaps this would be a good time to remember the instructions which St Paul gave to the Corinthians, whom he visited very infrequently. It's in 1 Corinthians 16:1-3:

Now concerning the collection for the saints: you should follow the directions I gave to the churches of Galatia. ² On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra you earn, so that collections need not be taken when I come. ³ And when I arrive, I will send any whom you approve with letters to take your gift to Jerusalem.

Let us pray
Generous God, we thank you for all your rich blessings, which enable us to give gifts of money as well as our time, our talents and our prayers. We dedicate to you all that is given to our churches by standing order or other means, and all that we put aside for the work of your Kingdom through the people of this circuit. We bring them all in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

STF 317 At the name of Jesus

**At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow,
every tongue confess him king of glory now;
'tis the Father's pleasure, that we call him Lord,
who from the beginning was the mighty word.
Humbled for a season, to receive a name
from the lips of sinners unto whom he came;
faithfully he bore it spotless to the last,
brought it back victorious when from death he
passed.**

**Bore it up triumphant with its human light,
through all ranks of creatures to the central
height;
to the throne of Godhead, to the Father's
breast,
filled it with the glory of that perfect rest.**

**In your hearts enthrone him; there let him
subdue all that is not holy, all that is not true;
crown him as your captain in temptation's
hour,
let his will enfold you in its light and power.**

**For this same Lord Jesus shall return again,
With his Father's glory, with his angel train;
All the wreaths of empire meet upon his brow,
And our hearts confess him King of Glory now.**

Final Blessing

The God of all grace
who called us to eternal glory in Christ,
make us perfect,
confirming and strengthening us;
and to him be the power for ever and ever.
Amen.

The almighty and merciful Lord,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
bless us and keep us
now and always. **Amen.**