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PALM SUNDAY C

10th April 2022

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

O Lord,
There is a time for everything.

A time for listening,
And a time for speaking.

Help my ears to collect your wisdom.

Help my mouth to form words that bring hope.

Help my voice to not falter,
And my heart to beat bravely.

There is a time for everything,
And now is the time to raise my anthem.

Let your song be sung from my lips,
And your love flow through me.

Give me the voice to speak up,
To be a beacon of light and hope when it gets
dark and frightening.

There is a time for everything.

Help me, O Lord,
To find my voice.

God of Wisdom,
Hear my prayer.

Amen.¹

You may wish to say the Lord's prayer in whatever language or tradition you are most comfortable with.

Hymn:

265 STF – Ride on, ride on in majesty! [YouTube](#)

Readings: [Luke 19:28-40](#)

Responding to the reading

Today is Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter, when we celebrate Jesus' arrival into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey – a moment of great celebration, as well as the beginning of the difficult time of Holy Week, where Jesus eventually faces his death.

¹ Opening prayers written by All We Can, as part of the *Let Wisdom Speak* Lent resource

Revd James Morley offers a poetic take on Palm Sunday.

Is it a bird?
Is it a plane? –
No, they haven't been invented yet.

Is it a king? –
It can't be, he's riding a donkey.
But everyone's cheering and celebrating –
it's turning into a proper street-party!

But why do they keep asking 'Whose Anna'?
It's him, that bloke people are saying is a king.
Our king –
allegedly.
Everyone's king –
apparently.
The one God's sent to save us –
although, sometimes I think the only person I need saving from is myself...
Some people say he's the Messiah.

Although some people have said that he's not the Messiah –
That's certainly what the powers that be will think if he keeps stirring things up –
they'll crucify him!
But apparently, he doesn't go around saying he's the Messiah –
no, he just asks other people who they think he is.
Well, I think he must be a few loaves and fish short of a picnic –
what sort of king is supposed to ride a donkey?
Just look at everyone though –
I can't remember the last time I saw people round here so happy.
There must be something in the water –
or the wine.
It would be great though – if he was the one.
I mean, we've waited long enough.
We've prayed hard enough.
But things don't seem to get any better though.
Maybe God's not listening.
Or too busy.
Or just doesn't care –
at least not about people like you and me.
I really wish God would send someone though –
it'd be nice to have a bit of hope.
Anyway –
seeing everyone having such a good time –
at least it lifts the spirits.
All this excitement's quite contagious actually –
I might get myself a palm branch –
when in Rome and all that –

although this is Jerusalem.

Yeah –

I could waft a palm branch at Jesus and tell him I'm his biggest fan...

'Course, it's all rubbish really isn't it –

all this Messiah mumbo-jumbo –

it'll never amount to anything –

probably end in tears.

No –

you mark my words –

It'll certainly never change anything.

It'd take an act of God to change things in this world...²

What are you being called to?

On this Palm Sunday, the challenge for you to think about is: 'what or who are you singing your praises to at this moment'?

Yes, we are here to praise God, and to sing our Palm Sunday songs, but so where the crowd on that first Palm Sunday – perhaps some of them through the cynicism and doubt expressed in the reflection we heard earlier from Revd James Morley. So, God's on the list. But is God at the top of the list?

Who else is on the list?

What else is on the list?

Do we praise money, either as an end in itself or what it can achieve?

Do we sing the praises of celebrities, or films, or fictional stories?

Do we sing the praises of products, or holidays, or gadgets?

Do we sing the praise of companies, and friends, and heroes?

None of these are necessarily bad things in and of themselves (except perhaps the praise of money as an end in itself), but our praise is best reflected in how we live. Do we live as if following Jesus, and learning from his teachings, matters more to us than being able to afford the new iPhone?

Do we listen more carefully to the words of scripture, or do we know more lyrics by Abba than we do verses from the Psalms?

What would make us turn up on the road side to sing praise? For whom, or for what, would we wave our banners and sing our praises?

This is not a judgemental space, and no one is telling you what you should and shouldn't praise – the church has spent too long coming up with rules about what people should and shouldn't do...

But this is a reflective space, and so as you go from this moment, go with the challenge of 'praise' in your heart. Go away and reflect on where your priorities lie, on where you are drawing strength from, on what brings you hope and wholeness and a sense of peace.

Go and pursue all that is good.

² Reflection written by James Morley

Blessing

Go from this place, into this difficult week,
With 'hosanna' in your heart,
With praise in your soul,
And with a hope for a better kind of world.

Amen.³

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week

Monday 11th April

- Here, at the beginning of Holy Week, we remember the final few days of Jesus' earthly ministry – a time of much pain and suffering, as well as some transformational conversations.
- If you are coming into this week carrying burdens, doubts, fears and uncertainties, then you might like to spend a few minutes prayerfully listening to this song from The Kingdom Choir and Guvna B: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKj6xjjhQvE>
- Just use this as a space to hand over your cares and burdens.

Tuesday 12th April

- Today is a time to commit to prayer. As he faced the events of Holy Week, we know Jesus spent time in prayer, asking that God 'take this cup away from me'.
- Whatever your prayer rhythms usually are, could you make space to do a little more prayer today? Can you find a time to reflect in quiet, to focus on what it is that you need to say to God and – if you can – to name those things out loud. And make space to listen for the still, small voice...

Wednesday 13th April

- In some traditions, today, the Wednesday of Holy Week, is marked as the day of 'heading into the darkness'.
- In the midst of all the darkness we see in our world at the moment, could you find a few minutes today to light a candle, and – in the stillness – hold your prayers for the world in the light of the flickering flame. If it helps, you might like to just stare into the flame and allow the peace of that image to shape you and your thoughts.

Thursday 14th April

- It's Maundy Thursday, when Jesus ate the 'Last Supper' with his disciples. Who are the people in your life who you need to break bread with – either literally or metaphorically? Perhaps those with whom your relationship has gone cold (even if you live together or see each other often!), or perhaps you have fallen out and need to heal the wounds.

³ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

- Today, pray for those people, pray for those relationships, and listen to the invitation and the challenge to heal those wounds where you can, even if that may be uncomfortable.
- Lord, help me to love my neighbours as myself. Amen.

Friday 15th April

- Holy God,
We are sorry, for all the times we have let you down,
For all the times we have denied you,
All the times we have betrayed you.
- Today, on this day of pain and suffering,
We give you thanks for your sacrificial love for us,
For the way your crucifixion, and your forgiveness for those who persecute
you help to break the cycle of violence.
Show me how to be a person of peace, this Good Friday.
Amen.

Saturday 16th April

- Holy Saturday: this oft forgotten day that stands between the events of Good Friday and Holy Week, and the celebration of resurrection that is to come.
- In this waiting time, this grieving time, when we think about what it might have felt like to be part of that first Jesus movement: watching the teacher, the rabbi, the leader, the man you had hoped was messiah, put to death by the regime.
- Today, allow yourself to grieve.
- And, in your prayers, acknowledge all who are grieving. The people of Ukraine. The people of Syria. The people of Palestine. The people of Yemen. And those, much closer to home, in our own lives and families who have lost loved ones recently, or who carry the scars of bereavement through the years.
- Let us lament together today. We grieve, though we do not grieve as people without hope.
- Amen.