

# twelvebaskets

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## **PALM SUNDAY A**

2nd April 2023

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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**Hymn:**

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

**Opening Prayers**

This is a day in the church calendar where we mark your arrival into Jerusalem, Lord God.

Today, may it be an opportunity for me to mark, to recognise, and to celebrate your presence here in my life, today, and the impact you are having on my relationships, my choices, my politics, my way of being.

So Lord, here I come, waving banners and shouting your name in praise.

Here I come Lord, joining in, feeling a little timid and scared and frightened after a difficult week, and with all the fear of the week to come.

Here I come Lord, experiencing all the range of human emotions, but present and open on this Palm Sunday to worship you.

Here I come Lord, seeking to know more of you, to receive the courage and forgiveness and hope and life I need for the week ahead.

Here I come, come here, by your Spirit, I pray.

On this Palm Sunday, I come to lay down the palm-branches and coats of my sins and shame at your feet, even as you ride into my life again. I come to say sorry Lord, and ask that you would forgive my sins and set me free.

Take a moment to say that prayer in a way that is helpful to you this day.

*[Pause]*

Thank you Lord, that you have already forgiven each and every one of us, including me, and set me free. Hallelujah!

Let your light shine through me Lord, this Palm Sunday.

Let your light shine, amongst the hosannas and the mocking voices,

Amongst the betrays and the denials,

Amongst the quiet meals with friends and the loud crowds with anger in their hearts.

At the foot of the cross, and in the garden of the empty tomb,

In all that this week will bring, let your light shine, Lord God,

Easter God.

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

**You may now wish to say the Lord's prayer in a version or translation with which you are most familiar.**

**Reading:** Matthew 21:1-11 – [Click for reading](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

## Response to the reading

'Open to me the gates of righteousness', cries the psalmist... and on this Palm Sunday, certain images come to mind... I wonder what pictures they create for you?

- If you are a fan of 'The Lord of the Rings', you may see Aragorn forcing open the mighty gates of Helm's Deep.  
If 'Frozen' is more your thing, then you will be singing along with Elsa and Anna as the gates of Arendelle are finally opened after years of shutting the sisters in – or shutting the world out.
- If your cultural tastes include Stainer's 'Crucifixion' then it will be the chorus 'The procession to Calvary' with its repeated phrase, 'Fling wide the gates' which becomes your ear worm.
- Perhaps you or someone you know has served a prison sentence and knows what it is to focus every hope and thought on the day when those gates will be opened to allow release.

The old city of Jerusalem is today surrounded by a wall which contains 8 gates; although one, the Gate of Mercy, also known as the Eastern Gate or Golden Gate, is now also a solid wall and is said by Jews to be awaiting a miraculous opening when the Messiah comes and the dead are raised. The gate was blocked off in the early 16th Century when the present walls were built by the Turkish Sultan 'Suleiman the Magnificent'. But Jerusalem has been a walled city since its earliest appearance in the bible around 1200 years previously, when David captured it by leading his army in through the drains, because the walls were impregnable.

With only a few days of his life on earth remaining, Jesus rides into the city of Jerusalem, most probably entering by the very gate which is now closed off, the Eastern or Golden Gate, the Gate of Mercy.

Worship can be a gate-opening experience! When we offer ourselves to God in worship something happens which speaks of the presence and the glory of God and can open the gates of people's hearts.

On this Palm Sunday, let's open the gates we find in ourselves and open gates for others too so that the King of glory can enter in!

## Questions for discussion with a friend or further reflection

- Have there been gates which have been significant in your life? In what ways?
- Palm Sunday is a day to show solidarity with other Christians around the world; how can you do that from where you live?
- Do you sometimes feel that you have to be perfect and strong and self-sufficient all the time? How does it feel to reflect that perhaps God wants us to express our need for help?
- Think about your friends and family members who don't worship. Are there ways you could open gates for them?

Let us pray:

God of the gateway, as I worship you today, I recognise that you are worthy of all I can offer. Open something in me, free me to worship you in spirit and truth.

Jesus Christ who, by your death and resurrection, opened the gates to salvation for all, I worship you today, recognising that I need you. I can't make it on my own after all.

Holy Spirit, mediator and energiser, come here, come amongst my friends and family, that gates may be opened and lives transformed by your power and to the glory of God.

Amen.<sup>2</sup>

### **Hymn:**

You might find it helpful to end this act of worship by singing or listening to this hymn: 277 STF – My song is love unknown - [YouTube](#)

My song is love unknown, my saviour's love to me,  
Love to the loveless shown that they that might be lovely be.  
Oh who am I, that for my sake, my Lord should take fail flesh and die?

Go in peace, and serve the Lord.  
Amen.

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## **Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week**

### **Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> April**

- God of raucous entries and parties in the street,  
God of Palm Sundays and Good Fridays,  
God of love and hope and resurrection,  
This Holy Week – we worship you and give you thanks, for all the ways in which you are at work in our lives.
- As we journey through this monumental week with you, leading up to Easter Sunday and the celebration of resurrection and new life, show me how to travel with those who grieve and celebrate, weep and cry, despair and hope.  
Show me what is mine to do, Lord God.  
Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> Reflection written by Jill Baker

## **Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> April**

- Look at the palm of your hand. Consider the story of Palm Sunday when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey before his crucifixion and the crowds welcomed him. Think of five ways, one for each finger, that you welcome Jesus into your life?

## **Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> April**

- Draw a picture of your local church. Include on the picture all the ways you see God at work, and all the things you want to ask God to work in. Pray about it.

## **Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> April**

- As Jesus gathered to eat with his friends, and reflected on betrayal, denial and his upcoming death, so we pray for all who live with those experiences on a daily basis – either relieving the trauma of some past denial or betrayal they experienced or they inflicted on another.
- God of grace, come amongst us this Maundy Thursday, break bread with us, broken as we are, and show us how to follow you, how to build your church in the days and weeks and years to come.  
Amen.

## **Friday 7<sup>th</sup> April**

- Today is the day when we mark Good Friday, the day of Jesus' crucifixion. It is a day of reverence, and frustration, and prayer.
- Perhaps today, you can find a time to light a candle and watch the flame for a few moments. In the stillness, as you watch the flame flicker, think about all the situations in the world that lead to people dying young, and all the grief they leave behind.
- If you know someone who is grieving right now, pray for them. Hold them in the light. If its you, hold yourself, gently, in the light of your Good Friday candle.

## **Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> April**

- Holy Saturday, perhaps one of the strangest days in the Christian calendar. A day of nothingness, of waiting, the last day of Lent.
- How do you pray, today, in the midst of grief, but knowing that 'we do not grieve as those without hope'?
- Spend some time today in lament. Lament for all that is broken in our world, all that is not as you think God would have it, including in your own life. Use this as an opportunity to let go, to be still, to allow yourself to feel.
- Perhaps find someone you trust and ask them what they are grieving, on this Holy Saturday? Can you hold each other in your grief?