

10th April, 2022

The paper-version Service

To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable



place. If safe, light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service set out below.

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Song:

Over all the earth, you reign on high,
every mountain stream, every sunset sky.
But my one request, Lord, my only aim
is that you'd reign in me again.

Lord, reign in me, reign in your power
over all my dreams, in my darkest hour.
You are the Lord of all I am, so
won't you reign in me again.

Over every thought, over every word,
may my life reflect the beauty of my Lord;
'cause you mean more to me than
any earthly thing,
so won't you reign in me again.

Lord, reign in me, reign in your power
over all my dreams, in my darkest hour.
You are the Lord of all I am, so
won't you reign in me again.

Read Philippians 2:5-11 and Luke 19:28-40

The sermon given by Rob Hughes: Reign ...

I have often thought about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, imagining his travel along that wooded ridge overlooking the Kidron Valley, the valley along the city's eastern wall. The way down to the Golden Gate is steep and narrow. The descent is rough. The way is quite unlike a Roman Road.

So, I'm not sure how well I 'follow' the traditional 'take' on that scene - the arrival of a 'King'. I cannot imagine the Governor of Judea coming into the city by that route, or in that way. These verses read like a counter-narrative of 'kingship'. And are Jesus' on-lookers that day really followers, admirers, or are they just curious, false friends, 'fickle'?

It is more than twenty years since Pip and I walked the route. And since that time I have been brought to see that crowd as a nascent church, the first of us struggling for the meaning in Christ for their lives, people with hope but no fixed expectation. 'Well', you ask, 'didn't their religious tradition promise them a 'Saviour'', a 'Messiah'? Maybe, I reply, but can it be religion that brings them to the roadside? Then perhaps they see Jesus as a soldier, you say. And I reflect that nothing I discern in him tells me he was about to overthrow the most potent power known to the ancient world. So, surely yes, the people did dream of freedom, but of what kind, of what hope for ordinary people like us?

It is sometimes said the crowd cheering him on his 'regal' way were among the first to demand his death one week later ... some, maybe; perhaps those caught in the hysteria to which we are all too prone. But I suspect the numbers of his supporters, well-wishers, and committed followers, were much greater than is given credit. This was a man after all who'd lived among them for thirty years, whose teaching attracted hundreds, if not thousands at a time; who made God accessible to people like me. People queued. He filled fields, hillsides, shorelines with his charisma. He healed bodies and minds. He brought people back from the dead.

Although, despite the miracles, Jesus somehow remained one of the people, this was no 'Jesus meek and mild', no shrinking violet, but a spiritual giant, a power-filled man, a man to be 'feared' by the shallow and self-seeking. Recognising that, should we interpret the applause of the crowds in a different light? So, should we see irony in the branches strewn along his path? Here is a man every inch and more a King, showing

crownless leadership - an unparalleled example of righteous authority - and we respond by tossing branches at the feet of his donkey, palm leaves! Why?

Well, we know that Ancient Greeks and Romans associated laurel leaves with victory in battle. But did we know that for the Hebrews, leafy branches symbolised victory of another kind, of faith. They recalled God-inspired leaders like Moses and his older brother Aaron the Priest; guides who for forty years conducted their people through wilderness to a land of promise, of shelter from the burning sun, - of water and trees. So the first time Aaron lead the procession to the Tabernacle during their first days in Canaan, there were branches over his head and leaves upon the hot ground beneath his feet.

That folk memory engraved upon their hearts eventually became the festival called Sukkoth, Booths, or Tabernacles. But here, on this Palm Sunday, Jesus' followers were not celebrating a festival; they were celebrating Jesus, applauding his special kind of leadership; they were associating him with that famous time of 'rescue', from the 'Wilderness'. They were cooling the road before his feet.

What a joyful day! We should not allow the coming events to to eclipse the Son of Man in those moments. The brought the triumph of hope to the city gate to usher-in the subsequent triumphs of his resurrection and ascension. But here, first, we are witnessing the victory of goodness for a demoralised people - the wave of optimism that startled Israel's authorities. How hard it must have been, then, for the people to restrain their expectations of him that day.

Jesus discouraged speculation about his identity. When He healed he said 'say nothing'. When demons recognised Him He told them 'shut up'. But on Palm Sunday nothing was going to hold back the exultation of the crowd, the triumph of hope in Him!

In the book of Zechariah it is written: 'Look, your king is coming to you! He comes triumphant and victorious, but humble and riding on a donkey – on a colt, the foal of a donkey.' Thus, entering Jerusalem as he did that day, Jesus was proof of prophesy in Scripture, and true to his following, and obedient to the path ordained by The Father.

Prayers: *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* (Philippians 4:4-6)



- Pray for this day, and the coming week.
- Pray for justice, mercy, peace, and hope.
- Pray for individuals, for neighbours, for family and friends.
- Pray for the Church.

Collect: Palm Sunday: *Almighty and everlasting God, who in your tender love towards the human race sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ to take upon him our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross: grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility, and also be made partakers of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*



The Lord's Prayer: *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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.*

Blessing to be declared over yourselves, The Good Shepherd, the communities around us and our whole nation. 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV).

The Notices: We are now holding services in the building on Sundays at 8am and 9.30am, and are live streaming the 9.30 service. This Paper Service will continue for the moment and is generally available the week after the service.

- Tea and Chat: 20th April at 2pm, Church Hall.
- Coffee & Questions: 27th April at 11am, Church Hall.
- COGS Tots: 2nd Mondays. COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.
- Next Tea and Praise: To be advised.