

# 10<sup>th</sup> April 2022 – Morning Service

## Palm Sunday

Margaret Bradley

### Call to Worship

On this Palm Sunday, like the crowd who shouted 'Hosanna!', we come to offer our praise.  
Like the people who waved their palm branches, we come to offer our worship.  
Like Jesus, who rode on a humble donkey, we come with humility into the house of God.

### StF 262 – All glory, laud and honour

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|---|---|
| 1) All glory, laud, and honour<br>To thee, Redeemer, King,<br>To whom the lips of children<br>Made sweet hosannas ring!<br>Thou art the King of Israel,<br>Thou David's royal Son,<br>Who in the Lord's name comest,<br>The King and Blessed One. | 3) To thee before thy Passion<br>They sang their hymns of praise<br>To thee now high exalted<br>Our melody we raise.<br>Thou didst accept their praises;<br>Accept the prayers we bring,<br>Who in all good delightest,<br>Thou good and gracious King. |
| 2) The company of angels<br>Are praising thee on high,<br>And mortal men and all things<br>Created make reply.<br>The people of the Hebrews<br>With palms before thee went;<br>Our praise and prayer and anthems<br>Before thee we present.       | 4) All glory, laud, and honour<br>To thee, Redeemer, King,<br>To whom the lips of children<br>Made sweet hosannas ring!   |

*St Theodolph of Orleans CCL No. 515642*

### Reading: Luke 19: 28-40

After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 'Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" say, "The Lord needs it."'

Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, 'Why are you untying the colt?' They replied, 'The Lord needs it.' They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!'

'Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!'

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Teacher, rebuke your disciples!'

'I tell you,' he replied, 'if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.'

### Act of Praise

If you have a palm cross, you might like to hold this up. The crosses are made from strips of palm leaves and remind us of the day Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and people waved branches from the trees to welcome him. They are made in the shape of a cross as a reminder that this is the first day of Holy Week, the most important week in the Christian year when, on Friday, we remember that Jesus was put to death on a cross.

Great God, you are worthy to receive all worship, praise and honour.

Hosanna! **Hosanna in the highest!**

Your power in creation, your wisdom, holiness and majesty astound us.

We cry to you, Hosanna! **Hosanna in the highest!**

Your love for the world, revealed to us in Jesus amazes us.

We cry to you, Hosanna! **Hosanna in the highest!**

Your presence amongst us moves us.

We cry to you, Hosanna! **Hosanna in the highest!**

We ask your blessing upon these palms. May they help us to remember Jesus and his love, his dying and his victory over death. May we who have received them also receive your Spirit in our hearts and follow the way of Jesus. **Amen.**

### **StF 263 – Hosanna!**

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, O Lord, my God!

Hosanna in the highest!

Glory, glory, Glory to the King of kings!

Glory, glory, Glory to the King of kings!

Lord, we lift up Your name, with hearts full of praise;

Be exalted, O Lord, my God!

Glory to the King of kings!

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### **Reading: Luke 23: 13-25**

Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, and said to them, 'You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. Therefore, I will punish him and then release him.'

But the whole crowd shouted, 'Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!' (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.) Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. But they kept shouting, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!'

For the third time he spoke to them: 'Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him.' But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. So Pilate decided to grant their demand. He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.

### **Prayer of Confession**

Across the ages, two cries, conflicting, woven together. 'Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!' and 'Crucify him!' – both wanting, and rejecting, God. In a moment of history Jesus entered Jerusalem, and went to Calvary. Yet those events belong to every age.

Merciful God, we confess before you our own fickleness and lack of integrity. At the same time that we shout 'Hosanna!' our lives cry 'Crucify him!' We are sorry and ashamed of the pain and hurt that we have caused by our actions and by our lack of action. You know what we are, yet you still accept us. You reach out towards us in love.

We gratefully remember the words from the cross, 'Forgive them, Father, they don't know what they are doing.' We take heart from this, that you are forgiving us too. Strengthen our resolve to be faithful followers of Jesus and to forgive others as we are forgiven.

## The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

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.**

## StF 277 – My song is love unknown

- 1) My song is love unknown,  
My Saviour's love to me,  
Love to the loveless shown,  
That they might lovely be.  
O who am I, that for my sake  
My Lord should take frail flesh and die?
- 2) He came from his blest throne,  
Salvation to bestow;  
But they made strange, and none  
The longed-for Christ would know.  
But O my Friend, my Friend indeed,  
Who at my need His life did spend!
- 3) Sometimes they strew his way,  
And his sweet praises sing;  
Resounding all the day  
Hosannas to their King.  
Then 'Crucify!' is all their breath,  
And for his death they thirst and cry.
- 4) Why, what hath my Lord done?  
What makes this rage and spite?  
He made the lame to run,  
He gave the blind their sight.  
Sweet injuries! Yet they at these  
Themselves displease, and 'gainst him rise.
- 5) They rise, and needs will have  
My dear Lord made away;  
A murderer they save,  
The Prince of Life they slay.  
Yet cheerful he to suffering goes,  
That he his foes from thence might free.
- 7) Here might I stay and sing,  
No story so divine:  
Never was love, dear King,  
Never was grief like thine!  
This is my Friend, in whose sweet praise  
I all my days could gladly spend.

*Samuel Crossman CCL No. 515642*

## Reading: John 19: 16-18 and 25-30

Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). There they crucified him, and with him two others – one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing near by, he said to her, 'Woman, here is your son,' and to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, 'I am thirsty.' A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

## Reflection

According to the account of Jesus' crucifixion in the fourth Gospel, the last word that Jesus said before he died was the Aramaic word 'Tetelestai', which translates into English as 'It is finished.' If you were a film director, like Mel Gibson, who made the epic biblical drama film 'The Passion of the Christ' in 2004, how would you want this word to be said? One possibility is, in a tone of thankfulness and relief that the agony, the suffering was now all over. When someone we love has had to endure pain and indignity prior to their death, there's a part of us which can't help but be relieved that it's now finished for them. We say that it was a blessed release - 'Tetelestai'.

The Gospel writers are very restrained in their descriptions of the crucifixion and don't dwell upon its horrors. But it doesn't take much for us to imagine the nightmare and trauma of being unfairly accused and put on trial. Then Jesus was subjected to appalling physical and mental abuse. He was beaten with whips until his flesh was exposed and lacerated. He faced a howling mob baying for his blood. He was mocked and taken out to face the most brutal form of execution that could be devised. The bodily pain would have been extreme, with additional tortures of heat, thirst, and insects, all endured in conditions of rigid immobility. The stripping of his clothes emphasised the shame of nakedness at a time when his bodily functions would have been out of control. It would have been foul.

But what Jesus suffered, horrific as it was, wasn't what made him unique. Others at the time suffered the same fate. We're told that another two were crucified alongside him. And, tragically, thousands of people today are experiencing similar degrading acts. Some churches send their Good Friday collection to the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture. This is the only organisation in the UK dedicated solely to therapeutic care for survivors of torture who seek protection here. It's a registered charity that refuses to accept any government funding so that it can maintain its independence as it deals with cases of abuses of human rights. Since it was established, 27 years ago, over 57,000 people have been referred to the organisation for help in rebuilding their lives. The West Midlands area is served by a centre at Birmingham. I give you one illustration from the cases they've treated. A man was imprisoned for three years, during which time he had his toes cut off, was stripped naked, beaten and turned upside down from a bar on the ceiling while he was cut, burned, stifled, urinated upon and bled. He had his teeth pulled out with pliers and was subjected to a mock execution before being locked up with five corpses. In 2000 years we have not learned to be less cruel to one another. Our Parliament is currently in the final stages of passing a Nationality and Borders Bill, sponsored by the Home Office, which will treat refugees as criminals when they arrive here, adding even more pain and fear to everything they have been through. They are doing this because they think that this is what the public wants, although the House of Lords has suggested significant amendments. You can be part of an opposing wave of kindness and compassion, by raising your voice in support of welcoming survivors of torture and by showing solidarity with people who have been forced to flee unimaginable horrors like the war in Ukraine. Jesus' death took many hours, and when it was finally imminent, it would have been natural for him to whisper, 'Thank God, it's at an end. It's over. It's finished.' But John's Gospel sees Jesus' final word as more than this.

Another possibility is that the word could be cried out in a tone of despair, as all that Jesus had been working for had come to nothing. All the hopes he'd cherished had been crushed. In the same way that when a national football team is knocked out of the World Cup in the early stages, the team and supporters say, 'Well, that's it now. We've been defeated. We're finished. 'Tetelestai'.

For three years Jesus had given himself wholeheartedly to the task of an itinerant preacher. He taught people about the nature and purposes of God. He demonstrated God's healing compassion for all people, but particularly for the most vulnerable and excluded members of society. He appealed to everyone to change their life-style and to start living righteously, according to God's values of loving generosity, demonstrating social justice and being peaceful in their actions. He enacted what it was like to live under God's uncontested rule. Some people had responded and started living hopefully. But most were fearful of making changes that made demands on them, and so they decided to eliminate Jesus.

It seemed that his mission had failed and his crucifixion was the awful finality of the moment of defeat. But the writer of John's Gospel is aware that all the negative reactions to Jesus are NOT final. This was not a moment of defeat, but a creative moment giving glory to God.

Because a third possibility is that Jesus' final word was uttered with a note of confident satisfaction. When a research scientist discovers a vaccine for a disease, when an artist finishes a commission, when we put the last piece in a jigsaw puzzle, the last answer in a crossword, or the last number in a Sudoku, when preachers put the final full stop to their sermons, there's a sense of 'Yes! That's it. It's complete. I've accomplished what I set out to do. Tetelestai!' John's Gospel doesn't see Jesus as a suffering victim, but as one who acts and is totally in control right to the very end. Unlike Mark's Gospel, which was written earlier, here Jesus carries his own cross rather than relying on Simon of Cyrene to do it for him. Here there is no confusion, no distress, everything is calm and orderly. Jesus even deliberately chooses the moment of his death by restricting his breathing through bowing his head rather than holding it upright. 'It is finished' is seen as an acknowledgement that Jesus has accomplished his work. And what a work it is! It is a work of divine love.

Because this isn't like the defiant call of Millwall supporters, 'Everybody hates us. Nobody likes us, but we don't care!' We look at the cross and see there that God cares very much. So much that God is prepared to go to the very uttermost for us. Throughout history people have persistently cut themselves off from the divine energy that could transform their lives and the life of the earth itself. But God hasn't abandoned us to our fate. In Christ God came as one who freely accepts pain and suffering in order to draw us into a relationship with him and so release all the life-giving possibilities this offers. God desperately wants you to respond to Divine Love, with the whole of your heart, now. Not when you have fewer commitments, not when you've sorted yourself out, but now. Can you turn aside? Jesus said, 'It is finished'. The pain has been endured. Physical life is extinguished. God's work has been accomplished. We are invited, not to shed our tears, but to bow our heads before the wonder of this momentous event and to give our lives in adoration and service. Jesus has been glorified and exalted and those who would follow him will celebrate and share this good news.

### **StF 361 – Man of sorrows**

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| 1) Man of Sorrows! What a name<br>For the Son of God, who came<br>Ruined sinners to reclaim!<br>Alleluia! What a Saviour!               | 4) Lifted up was he to die;<br>'It is finished!' was his cry;<br>Now in heaven exalted high:<br>Alleluia! What a Saviour!               |
| 2) Bearing shame and scoffing rude,<br>In my place condemned he stood;<br>Sealed my pardon with his blood:<br>Alleluia! What a Saviour! | 5) When he comes, our glorious King,<br>All his ransomed home to bring,<br>Then anew this song we'll sing:<br>Alleluia! What a Saviour! |
| 3) Guilty, vile, and helpless we;<br>Spotless Lamb of God was he:<br>Full atonement - can it be?<br>Alleluia! What a Saviour!           |   |

*Philipp Paul Bliss CCL No. 515642*

### **Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession**

We thank you, God, for the world you created and for our place in it. We thank you because, out of love for us, Christ accepted death and, lifted high on the cross, drew the whole world to himself. The tree of shame became the tree of glory; where life was lost, there life has been restored. We thank you that you have sent your Holy Spirit to bring us to freedom and to new life in Christ. And we thank you for the many different ways that you have blessed our lives over this past week.

In hope, people cry 'Hosanna!' In fear they shout 'Crucify!'

We pray for those in the world who act in hope – seeing conflict, they encourage peaceable attitudes, especially for those trying to restore a just peace in Ukraine; seeing suspicion of others, they work to promote understanding; seeing need, they look for ways that we can help one another.

And we pray for those who, in fear, crucify all that brings glimpses of hope – those whose words and actions stir up discord rather than create harmony; those who want to shut out foreigners; those who are reluctant to share their own good fortune with others who are less privileged.

We pray for those in the church who act in hope – those who are setting up projects to enable outreach and service; those who seek to communicate the Gospel message in a way that is relevant to modern thought-forms and culture; those who look for ways of working together with other Christians, other faiths and community groups.

And we pray for those in the church who, in fear, shun all that brings glimpses of hope – those who are afraid to take risks in faith; those who are set in their ways and resist change; those who are intolerant of others' beliefs and life-styles.

We pray for those in our community who act in hope – as they respect and value the contribution that each individual is able to make. And we pray for those, who, in fear, scape-goat and exclude those who are different. We pray for those who, in sickness, pain and distress, live in hope of restoration.....

And we pray for those who live in fear of death.

### **Collect for Palm Sunday**

Eternal God, in your tender love towards the human race you sent your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ to take our flesh and to suffer death upon a cross. Grant that we may follow the example of his gracious humility and share in the glory of his resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **StF 265 – Ride on**

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| 1) Ride on, ride on in majesty!<br>Hark, all the tribes, Hosanna cry;<br>Your humble beast pursues its road<br>With palms and scattered garments strowed. | 4) Ride on, ride on in majesty!<br>Your last and fiercest strife is nigh;<br>The Father, on his sapphire throne,<br>Expects his own anointed Son.  |
| 2) Ride on, ride on in majesty!<br>In lowly pomp ride on to die:<br>O Christ, your triumphs now begin<br>O'er captive death and conquered sin.            | 5) Ride on, ride on in majesty!<br>In lowly pomp ride on to die;<br>Bow your meek head to mortal pain,<br>Then take, O God, your power, and reign. |
| 3) Ride on, ride on in majesty!<br>The winged squadrons of the sky<br>Look down with sad and wondering eyes<br>To see the approaching sacrifice.          |  |

*Henry Hart Milman CCL No. 515642*

### **Benediction**

May the blessing of God, who creates, redeems and sanctifies all life, be with each one of us, every day of this Holy Week, and always. Amen. Go now, to follow Jesus, on the way that leads to the cross.