

# 28<sup>th</sup> March 2021 – Morning Service

## Palm Sunday

Rev Chris Watson

Today is Palm Sunday, the start of Holy Week, the week where we follow Jesus from the triumphal journey into Jerusalem accompanied by shouts of 'Hosanna' to the trial accompanied by shouts of 'Crucify', through the Crucifixion and finally, gloriously to the Resurrection.

### Call to Worship

Rejoice, my sisters. Shout in triumph, my brothers. Our king is coming, victorious and righteous, yet humbly riding on a donkey. Rejoice! Rejoice! Rejoice! **Amen.**

### StF 15 – The splendour of the king

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1) The splendour of the King,<br>Clothed in majesty<br>Let all the earth rejoice<br>Let all the earth rejoice         | 3) Age to age He stands<br>And time is in His hands<br>Beginning and the end<br>Beginning and the end |
| 2) He wraps himself in Light,<br>And darkness tries to hide<br>And trembles at His voice<br>And trembles at His voice | 4) The Godhead Three in One<br>Father Spirit Son<br>The Lion and the Lamb<br>The Lion and the Lamb    |

*Ch) How great is our God, sing with me  
How great is our God, and all will see  
How great, how great is our God*

*Br) Name above all names  
Worthy of all praise  
My heart will sing  
How great is our God*

*Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash & Jesse Reeves © 2004 worshiptogether.com songs CCL No. 515642*

### Prayers

For our opening prayers I will be referring to the Palm Cross – If you have one within reach please hold on to it and follow the unifying actions within our prayers

*Hold the cross vertically to think of the branches waved by the crowd*

We think of the crowds waving their branches to welcome Jesus. We praise God for Jesus our King, for his presence in our lives, to walk our journey with us, to protect and care for us, to love and comfort us and to be a guiding light in all we do. Praise for Jesus our King.

*Hold the cross on the palm of your hands*

We think of Jesus carrying the cross. We praise God for Jesus, the bearer of our sins, for the faith we hold in his name. We Praise God that Jesus listens, guides, forgives and does not judge. We praise God for Jesus the healer, in mental and physical struggles, the strength he gives to us, in facing the difficult journeys and situations we are bound for. He knows our journey, our suffering and our sins. We think of the indignity in carrying his own cross, the suffering and weariness in his approach to Calvary yet with his only focus – that of salvation for us all.

*Hold the cross by its horizontal bar and think of Jesus nailed to the cross*

We think of Jesus nailed to the cross, a difficult picture to visualise. We praise God for Jesus who died for us, Our Saviour, who sacrificed himself for us, a slow painful death that would give way to salvation. Even on the cross Jesus prayed for forgiveness for those left behind. We turn to God and pray for those who

may be out of our reach, that they shall know his love like us. For those not yet of faith or belief and to help us spread the word of God through Jesus' sacrifice

*Finally, hold the cross vertically again, and see it is empty*

We think of an empty Cross. The Saviour has risen. We praise God that Lord Jesus came back to us, that he stayed with us and continues to live by our side. We praise God that Jesus is here and watching, comforting and blessing us each and every day with life, with love, with passion, with purpose and with contentment. We praise God for a saviour sent to hold us all and keep us in faith.

### **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 264 – Make way, make way**

1) Make way, make way, for Christ the King  
In splendour arrives.  
Fling wide the gates and welcome Him  
Into your lives.

*Ch) Make way! (Make way!)  
Make way! (Make way!)  
For the King of Kings (For the King of Kings)  
Make way! (Make way!)  
Make way! (Make way!)  
And let His Kingdom in.*

2) He comes the broken hearts to heal  
The prisoners to free.  
The deaf shall hear, the lame shall dance,  
The blind shall see.

3) And those who mourn with heavy hearts,  
Who weep and sigh;  
With laughter, joy and royal crown  
He'll beautify.

4) We call you now to worship Him,  
As Lord of all.  
To have no gods before Him  
Their thrones must fall!

Graham Kendrick © 1986 Thankyou Music CCL No. 515642

### **Reading: Luke 19:28-39 Jesus comes to Jerusalem as king**

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!'

## **Meditation**

Hello, I thought, what's going on here? And you can hardly blame me, for there I was, minding my own business, when suddenly these fellows I've never clapped eyes on appeared from nowhere and, cool as you like, started to make off with our donkey! In broad daylight, too, that's what I couldn't get over – bold as brass, without so much as a by-your-leave! Well, you can imagine my surprise, can't you? Hardly the kind of goings-on you expect in a quiet village like ours. So I asked them straight, 'What's your game?' And that's when they spoke those special words 'The Lord needs it'

Not the fullest explanation, admittedly, but it was all I needed, for straight away it all came flooding back – that day when Jesus came by and for a few wonderful moments I met him face to face. No, you won't have heard about it, for it wasn't the sort of encounter to hit the headlines – no stunning healing or unforgettable miracle needed in my case, but he touched my life as surely and as wonderfully as any, offering a new direction, a fresh start from which I have never looked back. Quite simply, he changed my life, and though I'm not the sort to shout it from the rooftops I wanted to respond nonetheless, to show Jesus how much he meant to me, how much I valued what he'd done.

This was it, the chance I'd been waiting for, my opportunity to give something back at last. Hardly earth shattering stuff, I grant you – the loan of a donkey, but that didn't matter; the fact that Jesus had need of me – it was all I needed to know. He arrived soon after, and I followed him to Jerusalem, where the crowds were waiting to greet him, wild with excitement, shouting their praises, throwing down their cloaks in welcome – and small though it had been, I knew I'd done my bit to make that great day possible. Never forget that, whoever you are, however little you think you have to offer, for some day, some time, your moment will come – a day when your contribution to his kingdom will be requested in those lovely words 'The Lord needs it'

## **StF 265 – Ride on, ride on in majesty**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 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. | 3) 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.            | 4) 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*

## **Reflection**

The events of that day, Palm Sunday, are well known to us. We know all about the donkey, the palm branches, perhaps in the past we have waved branches in church or at the very least we have held palm crosses aloft. We have sung the hymns and shouted Hosanna, or Hallelujah at the appropriate times no doubt sometimes we have been moved by it all, sometimes perhaps we have felt jaded by its familiarity. For us, with the benefit of hindsight, perhaps there is a tinge of sadness that this great day of rejoicing is so quickly followed by the baying of the mob for crucifixion. But what did it mean to the people there, to the followers of Jesus, this Rabbi from Nazareth, to the crowds, to the religious authorities, to the Romans? All four Gospels have accounts of the arrival of Jesus into Jerusalem riding a donkey or colt or both, they all place the event somewhere around the beginning of the Passover festival. In Luke's version, rather than palm branches, cloaks are spread in the road. The tradition of celebrating a new king by throwing your clothes on the path before him went back to the days of Elisha. It first appears in 2 Kings 9.13, where people spread their cloaks under Jehu when Yahweh anointed him as the King of Israel. Jehu went on to liberate Israel from the heirs of Ahab and Jezebel, he destroyed all traces of that regime and the worship of Baal associated with it, there was violence and bloodshed. Was this in the minds of the people the day they put their cloaks under the hooves of the donkey? Were they expecting Jesus to liberate them from the regime of the Romans with violence and bloodshed?

Every part of the day, every action was full of meaning and significance. The words they sang 'Blessings on the king who comes in the name of the Lord' is taken from Psalm 118 and Jesus was fulfilling the prophecies of Zechariah. It was all written in the scroll of Zechariah. How the Messiah would storm Jerusalem. Zechariah 9.9 proclaims:

*Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion. Sing aloud, Daughter Jerusalem. Look, your king will come to you. He is righteous and victorious. He is humble and riding on an ass, on a colt, the offspring of a donkey.*

*Jesus was doing his part to fulfill the prophecy by riding into town on a donkey colt.*

Not only that, but Jesus' parade route had begun at the Mount of Olives. Again, just like Zechariah said it would happen: On that day he will stand upon the Mount of Olives, to the east of Jerusalem (Zech. 14.4). The disciples led the singing and rejoicing because of what they had seen Jesus do, they had seen his generous actions, his healing, his miracles, they had heard his teachings, they had lived and travelled with him for nigh on three years. They were confident that everything had led to this day, this day of triumph. So they shouted and sang 'Blessings on the king who comes in the name of the Lord!'

Some of the Pharisees asked Jesus to check his disciples, why? Was it that they didn't agree, that they were miserable people just trying to spoil the atmosphere? Jerusalem was part of a land under a foreign rule and as Jesus and his disciples were coming in from the Mount of Olives through the eastern gate of the city, the Roman governor Pilate would have been riding into Jerusalem from the western gate, with a battalion or two of Roman forces with him. Every year, hundreds of thousands of worshippers came into Jerusalem for the Passover, from every corner of the known world. It was the festival that every faithful Jew had to attend. It was difficult to ensure safety and security in such conditions so the Romans were their in force.

Passover had and has huge significance for the Jewish people. Passover was the Jewish holiday that celebrated the time their God had liberated them from another empire—Egypt. A time when their God had defeated the ruler of Egypt who had enslaved them, now they were under the rule of Rome could it happen again? The Jews believed it and the Passover brought all the simmering resentments and hopes to the surface, it would only take a spark for a riot or rebellion to begin. The Pharisees and other religious leaders would be held accountable by the Romans for any trouble, so they asked Jesus to control his followers.

To keep the occupants in their place Pilate rode in with pomp and ceremony riding a war horse, there would have been chariots and weapons on display. Look at the contrast, Jesus as so often turns things upside down, there is no war horse for this king but a donkey, a farm animal, this is what a king who comes

in peace looks like, his followers are on foot, they come from the lowest stratas of society, they are the rowdy peasants, the ordinary everyday folk people like us.

Pilate rode into Jerusalem with a show of force to remind people that Ceasar was in charge, his tactics were to use violence and intimidation. Jesus rode into Jerusalem with humility on a donkey, his tactics are to show love, to show generosity in love and forgiveness, to give us a choice. God has been generous to us - John 3 (16) proves it when it says ' God loved the world so much that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life.' The owner of the donkey repaid Jesus in a simple way by loaning his animal, we too can serve Jesus can show our love and gratitude in simple ways, by loving others by spreading his kingdom values in how we live, how we react to the world and circumstances around us. Amen

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Lord Jesus Christ, you entered Jerusalem in quiet humility, taking the form of a servant, even to the point of death on a cross, emptying yourself so that we might be filled.

Come afresh to our troubled world with all it's needs, its tensions, we think especially of America, its problems, here we think of the pandemic, and we think of all the worlds evils, of injustice and inequalities, of misused power and of oppression.

Come afresh, bring healing where there is division, love where there is hatred, hope in place of despair, joy in place of sorrow, strength where there is weakness, healing where there is sickness, life where there is death.

Lord Jesus Christ reach out to your world so that your will may be done on earth even as it is in heaven.

Come again now and establish your kingdom, for in your name we pray. **Amen**

### **StF 247 – I danced in the morning**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1) I danced in the morning<br>when the world was begun,<br>And I danced in the moon and the stars<br>and the sun,<br>And I came down from heaven<br>and I danced on the earth:<br>At Bethlehem I had my birth. | 3) I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame;<br>The holy people said it was a shame.<br>They whipped and they stripped<br>and they hung me high<br>And they left me there on a cross to die.        |
| Ch) <i>Dance, then, wherever you may be,<br/>I am the Lord of the dance, said He<br/>And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be<br/>And I'll lead you all in the dance, said He.</i>                           | 4) I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black;<br>It's hard to dance with the devil on your back.<br>They buried my body and<br>they thought I'd gone,<br>But I am the dance and the dance goes on. |
| 2) I danced for the scribes and pharisee,<br>But they wouldn't dance and<br>they wouldn't follow me,<br>I danced for the fishermen, for James and John,<br>They came with me and the dance went on.            | 5) They cast me down but I leapt up high;<br>I am the life that will never, never die.<br>I'll live in you if you live in me;<br>I am the Lord of the Dance, said He.                                   |

Sydney Carter © 1963 Stainer & Bell Ltd CCL No. 515642

### **Closing words and blessing**

Step lightly into this Holy Week. May you be ready to find holiness in unexpected places, and walk lovingly,

for the love of our crucified Saviour opens the door to all things on earth and in heaven.

May the blessing of God, who resides in our hopes and our dreams, grant you peace.

May the blessing of Jesus, who rides to wild acclaim and waving palm branches, grant you peace.

May the blessing of the Spirit, who holds you through the fears and nightmares of this world grant you peace.

May the hopes and dreams of the dawning of an Easter Morning come to you, me and to all.