

2nd April – Morning Service

Palm Sunday – Who is this?

Rev Chris Watson

Call to Worship

Hosanna, hosanna, welcome your King.

Hosanna, hosanna, we welcome him!

Hosanna, hosanna, welcome your Saviour.

Hosanna, hosanna, we welcome him!

Hosanna, hosanna, welcome your God.

Hosanna, hosanna, we welcome him!

StF 44 – Come on and celebrate

Come on and celebrate

His gift of love, we will celebrate

The Son of God who loved us and gave us life.

We'll shout Your praise, O King,

You give us joy nothing else can bring,

We'll give to You our offering in celebration praise.

Come on and celebrate,

Celebrate, celebrate and sing,

Celebrate and sing to the King.

Come on and celebrate,

Celebrate, celebrate and sing,

Celebrate and sing to the King.

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Prayers of approach

Thank you God for your triumphal entry into our world each and every day. The slow motion explosion of buds on the trees proclaim "Hosanna!" Rushing water, falling from heaven, gurgling to the sea, proclaims "Hosanna!" The fragrance of spring in the morning air proclaims, "Hosanna!" And the beauty of a baby's fingers, the softness of their cheek proclaims your praise! We long to join this chorus, giving you thanks and praise for who you are, for all you have created, all you are creating.

Thank you for sending Jesus, who showed us your love for all creation, your love for us. He opened our eyes to see your kingdom come here on earth. Forgive us for the times where we have gone about our own business, concerned with many things, oblivious to the needs of those around us, oblivious to the call of your love in our heart. God of grace, equip us to be your servants, listening, eager, ready.

Thank you for your presence in our world, even in war-filled places. We hear of bombs dropped, children killed, the needy betrayed. We are tempted to despair, and to think that you have forsaken us. We are tempted to think that you are powerless. Give us a vision of your entry into our world as the Prince of peace, changing hearts, changing our hearts, one by one, creating an army of peacemakers who say no to violence.

God of great deeds, open our hearts to be your hearts, our hands to be your hands, our arms, to be your loving arms for all who need your presence. We ask all these things, in the name of Jesus, our Lord, **Amen.**

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.
 - 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!
- 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.*

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Reading: Psalm 118.1-2,19-29

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let Israel say: "His love endures forever." Open for me the gates of the righteous; I will enter and give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord through which the righteous may enter. I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation. The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes. The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad.

Lord, save us! Lord, grant us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord we bless you. The Lord is God, and he has made his light shine on us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, and I will exalt you. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.

StF 265 – Ride on, ride on in majesty

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

Henry Hart Milman

Reading: Matthew 21.1-11

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.' This took place to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet:

‘Say to Daughter Zion, “See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”’

The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’ ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ‘Hosanna in the highest heaven!’

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, ‘Who is this?’ The crowds answered, ‘This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.’

Sermon

Throughout his life and ministry Jesus was a paradox. In the birth stories he was born, as the Son of God, with an earthly father. He, the Messiah, whose birth was announced in the heavens, was found by the wise men, not in a palace but in a stable. He became a refugee, an asylum seeker, not a prince. He comes as if in fulfilment of messianic prophecy and yet he has come from Nazareth, from where nothing good was imagined to come.

His first recorded miracle had the wedding host giving the best wine last. In his teaching he condemned the educated and religious folk, he put the outcasts and the dregs of society before the elite and respected teachers of the law. He taught that a rich person would find it harder to enter his kingdom than a poor person. He taught that to enter his kingdom one needed a new birth, that we needed to become like children.

Basically he took all the accepted teachings, customs and social norms and turned them upside down and inside out, he even had women as disciples and followers. He taught that all have the same worth in God's eyes, whether they were slaves, children, women, men, Jew or Gentile.

Before the Passover Jesus travels to Jerusalem, he sends the disciples to collect the donkey. He rides into Jerusalem in a triumphal procession, a proclamation of his kingship. As he rides into the city cloaks are thrown onto the road. This recalls the second book of Kings chapter 9 verse 13, when Jehu is acclaimed as king. In a poor society a cloak might well be someone's most valuable possession. Most bystanders would possess only one, and it served as both coat and blanket: a lifeline so precious as virtually to represent its owner. Throwing it down is an act of submission. So again the paradox, Jesus enters in triumph but what sort of revolution is he going to lead, on a donkey without an army? The people see before them a paradox and ask, ‘Who is this?’ Is he the promised Messiah? If so where is the army to evict the Romans? Where is the military might, the warhorse the soldiers?

Here the cloaks are used as signs of submission and acclamation: later Jesus is robed as a way of mocking him (Matthew 27.28). Here he is acclaimed as King by the crowd: the soldiers put a sign on the cross of shame ‘The King of the Jews’ (Matthew 27.37). Here the crowds cry Hosanna: later they cry crucify – a sentence of death. There is a very short timescale between the cries of hosanna and crucify, was it the same crowd or were the second crowd recruited by those determined to see an end to this troublesome Rabbi from Nazareth? Why was there such a radical change? In one breath, so it seems, the cry is ‘Good news – the Messiah has come!’ And the people acclaim him. But they wanted a conquering monarch, a military leader, not a peacemaker riding on a donkey, on the way to a cross.

Expectations can distort vision, so for many – those who want quick solutions rather than the revolution of the heart – Jesus is a disappointment. In a culture that worships power, celebrity and heroes, Jesus is seen as a failure. How do you see Jesus? Are you still asking the question ‘Who is this?’

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.
- 6) In life no house, no home.
My Lord on earth might have;
In death no friendly tomb
But what a stranger gave.
What may I say? Heaven was his home;
But mine the tomb wherein he lay.
- 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

Prayers of Concern

Lord Jesus, we pray for all who give of themselves sacrificially, for those whose lives are dedicated to serving others: parents, carers, foster carers, doctors, nurses... those caring for children or elderly relatives.

Let us travel together and lighten the load.

We pray for those serving in war-torn countries around the world: medics, those who work in missions, the media, and charities...who bring food, shelter and healing to those in need, sometimes putting their lives on the line.

Let us travel together and lighten the load.

We pray for those in our communities who need our unconditional love: those hurting from broken relationships, abuse, bullying, domestic violence... children and adults whose lives are bereft of love and hope.

Let us travel together and lighten the load.

We pray that we might be Easter people, laying down our lives to serve others, bringing hope to hopeless situations – the hope of the cross and resurrection.

Let us travel together and lighten the load. Amen.

Offertory

Gracious God, Source of all life and love, with deep thanks we offer to you: our fumbled change, church envelopes, and direct debits; our energy, talents, and time; our prayers, our hopes, our lives. Receive and grace these offerings, that they may be used to bless your Church, your people, your creation. In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

StF 487 – You shall go out with joy!

You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace,
And the mountains and the hills shall break
forth before you.
There'll be shouts of joy
And the trees of the field shall clap,
shall clap their hands,

And the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
And the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
And the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
And you'll go out with joy.

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Blessing

Lord God, today we have travelled with you, both humbly and triumphantly. Send us out now to travel in your presence and to love and serve you in all the circumstances of our lives. **Amen.**