

**Matthew 21: 1-11**

**Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem**

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, "The Lord needs them." And he will send them immediately.' This took place to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

'Tell the daughter of Zion,  
Look, your king is coming to you,  
humble, and mounted on a donkey,  
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

'Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!'

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?' The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'

**Psalm 118 A Song of Victory**

- <sup>1</sup> O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
his steadfast love endures for ever!
- <sup>2</sup> Let Israel say,  
'His steadfast love endures for ever.'
- <sup>19</sup> Open to me the gates of righteousness,  
that I may enter through them  
and give thanks to the Lord.
- <sup>20</sup> This is the gate of the Lord;  
the righteous shall enter through it.
- <sup>21</sup> I thank you that you have answered me  
and have become my salvation.
- <sup>22</sup> The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the chief cornerstone.
- <sup>23</sup> This is the Lord's doing;  
it is marvellous in our eyes.
- <sup>24</sup> This is the day that the Lord has made;  
let us rejoice and be glad in it.
- <sup>25</sup> Save us, we beseech you, O Lord!  
O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!
- <sup>26</sup> Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.  
We bless you from the house of the Lord.
- <sup>27</sup> The Lord is God,  
and he has given us light.  
Bind the festal procession with branches,  
up to the horns of the altar.
- <sup>28</sup> You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;  
you are my God, I will extol you.
- <sup>29</sup> O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,  
for his steadfast love endures for ever.

## Palm Sunday Morning Reflection

Palm Sunday, a morning normally spent in church shouting and singing “Hosanna’s”, waving palm crosses, palm leaves, flags or whatever.

This Palm Sunday it will be very different, sitting calmly in your favourite chair, maybe on your own or with your household members present.

For those with young children may there still be shouts of Hosanna and a bit of running around, waving what can be safely waved! God will see the full picture and recognise our remembrance of the beginning of what we call Holy Week.

What is the biggest crowd you have ever been part of? Was it quiet or noisy? Was it a celebration or a protest? Was it planned or instantaneous? Were you a participant or an observer?

In 2012 I was on the street of Cleveleys, by the Methodist Church, getting soaked as the Olympic torch came by. There was cheering and singing and a delayed procession caused by the wetness.

On 28<sup>th</sup> May 1982 I was on the streets of Canterbury, it was the eve of Pentecost. I had been invited to be inside Canterbury Cathedral as part of a Celebration of Faith to Welcome Pope John Paul II. Now there is name-dropping – I still have my ticket.

After the service I met up with a jealous Roman Catholic friend. We found ourselves outside the back gates to the Cathedral from where the Pope Mobil was due to be coming out. So we waited. Just before the appointed time there was some rapid movement of barriers and we found ourselves on the front row. One of the best views as the Pope was driven from the Cathedral grounds. There was cheering and shouting, waving and dancing.

Sadly those who had been on the High Street for 6 hours saw nothing as due to a gas leak the route was changed last minute.

I look back and remember such occasions.

I wonder what the crowds, on what we call Palm Sunday, made of what was going on. They had not gathered to watch a parade but to be part of a procession into Jerusalem as pilgrims for the Passover Festival. Suddenly it was not like previous years when they had made the same journey. Yes the Psalms they sung were the same, the people they walked with were the same, but there was something different a man called Jesus was riding a donkey in the midst of them, cloaks were thrown on the ground in front of him. Palm branches carried up the hillside, used as parasols, were waved. Some might have heard of Jesus or seen him before, for others it was a first encounter. What did it mean this donkey-riding rabbi?

Who else was in that crowd? In Matthews gospel the previous thing that is recorded was Jesus restoring the sight of two blind people. In Marks’ gospel it is the healing of Bartimaeus. “He followed Jesus along the road” (Mark 10:52). The road was into Jerusalem – Bartimaeus was on that journey to Jerusalem. I wonder what he did on the following days, where was he on Friday, on the following Sunday?

Where would you have been? What will you be doing in the following days? How will you mark this year’s journey through Holy Week? It won’t for many be like any other Holy Week, like any other Passover Week.

(This year Passover Festival begins on 8<sup>th</sup> and ends on the 16<sup>th</sup> April.)