**Palm Sunday act of worship – Sunday 5th April 2020**

**Thanks**

Just to say thank you for your kind words over the video service I produced for last Sunday. I have been amazed by the number of comments I received, and I want to say thanks.

Videos of the services each week will be on the Bamford Chapel and Norden URC website:

<http://www.bcnchurch.org.uk/worship/> (scroll down to see the video at the bottom and the Word document of each service in the table just above.)

**Opening Words:**

This morning starts the beginning of Easter Week. It is a week of tumultuous emotions. We recall the joy and celebration of Palm Sunday as people welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem.

We have the disciples a little confused on Maundy Thursday when they haven’t quite grasped the enormity of what Jesus is talking about at ‘The last Supper.’

And then the horror of Good Friday. The disciples and others seeing Jesus stand before Pilate and Herod as they toss Jesus back and forth not wanting to take responsibility for him.

Before we celebrate the joy of resurrection on Easter Sunday!

**Call to worship:**

As we gather,
bring your palms and branches, your shouts and praise.
Hosanna to the Son of David!
Hosanna to the King of kings!
Let us journey to Jerusalem
to worship the king who came to save us.

(From: <https://www.rootsontheweb.com/lectionary/2020/106-march-april-2020-a/palm-sunday/gather>)

**Hymn: Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest (singing through the whole hymn twice)**

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.

Carl Tuttle © 1985 Shadow Sprint Music/ Music Services/Song Solutions CopyCare ccl275793

**Prayers**

Almighty God, who gave His only Son. On this Palm Sunday we come in various places and at various times to worship you. At the start of this Holy Week we begin by placing you at the centre of all that we are and all that we do.

Help us to come with our praise and thanksgiving today as we are reminded of the words in Matthew’s Gospel of when our Lord Jesus Christ rode into Jerusalem. He being the only one who fully knew what lay ahead of him.

May we come before you today offering our praise and worship as those people did on that day we now call ‘Palm Sunday’. Challenge our preconceptions as you did when you came as a man, yet the Son of God, on a donkey to the shouts of praise from the gathered crowds.

We come as we are, we offer our praise and all that we have, and in your goodness we receive from your gracious hand.

But we also acknowledge times of weakness and frailty and we come seeking your forgiveness, knowing that when we come with hearts that are truly sorry you wipe the slate of sinfulness clean for us and we say, ‘thank you’.

Amen.

We join together saying the words of The Lord’s Prayer: Our Father who art in heaven…..

**Reflection (from ‘A most amazing man’ Nick Fawcett, p234 – 236, Kevin Mayhew, London, 2010):**

**A meditation of one of the crowd in Jerusalem**

You should have seen the crowd that day!
All round him, they were,
rushing ahead,
pushing behind -
a seething mass surging through the city gates,
shouting themselves hoarse.
They were ecstatic,
waving palm branches in welcome
and lining the way with their coats.

‘Hosanna!’ they cried.
‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’

‘Blessed be the Lord!’

And the one at their *centre?*

A guy called Jesus apparently,
from up north in Galilee.

The name rang a bell,
for I’d heard tales of signs and wonders,
a man who healed the sick,
fed the multitude,
stilled the storm -
a prophet like none other, according to some.

But you could have fooled me,
for I saw nothing special about him,
nothing to catch the eye –
just an ordinary person,
like you and me.

Yet still they cheered,
still they chanted,
as though he were the Messiah himself,
the Son of God,
a conquering king.
It’s a puzzle,
for I’d have expected a fanfare of trumpets were he that -
a chariot of gold and royal procession -
not a man riding on a *donkey,*but he must have something about him to cause such a stir,
some gift to win hearts and capture minds.
I’m not sure what,
not sure how,
but I mean to find out,
for it’s intriguing, isn’t it?

Too intriguing to ignore.

Let us pray…

Lord Jesus Christ,
save us from confusing the values of this world with your own,
from seeing your heavenly rule as one that forces itself on people -
demanding, coercing, imposing.

Teach us that, instead, yours is the way of love,
inviting a response -
surrendering, liberating, serving.
Help us, then to deny ourselves,
in order to discover who we really are;
to be last so as to be first;
to lose our life in order to find it -
to walk the royal way of the cross.

Amen.

**Bible Reading: Matthew 21:1-11 – The Triumphal Entry**

1 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, 2 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.

3 If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." 4 This took place to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet:

5 "Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.' "

6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. 7 They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. 8 A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 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!"

10 When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"

11 The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

**Reflection – “A Journey with Jesus”:**

*Prayer asking God to speak to us….*
*I am not aware that anyone watching this video or reading the script will have ever been to the Oscar Award Ceremony (although I am happy to be corrected!!) The image that is on the screen and will appear on the large screen in a moment is one taken at the Oscars – spot the jeans or the t shirt [pause] (image of smartly dressed people) I couldn’t see either jeans or a t shirt either only well-dressed/groomed women and men. It is what you expect at the Oscars it would be unusual for jeans and a t shirt to be worn on the red carpet.*

I thought about events such as the Oscars when I was reading the Matthew reading in preparation for the service today. Jesus was making a statement when he rode into Jerusalem on the donkey. He was basically saying, ‘I come as your King.’ He was fulfilling the words in Zechariah 9:9 in the Old Testament: **“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem!**

**See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”** (Zechariah 9:9)

The people witnessing this arrival, greater in number than usual, as they had come to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover. The Messiah they were expecting was a conquering Messiah. They were probably expecting a King on a stallion full of armour with an army behind him to expel those who had used and abused their positions of power.

But in Jesus, in the one who came to fulfil Old Testament Scripture, they had a man riding on a donkey with no army behind him, without any weapons or defensive armoury. He came with His words of salvation. He came to offer hope and a promise of a better future. He came to transform lives and to invite people into a relationship with him.

But little did they know that that would come at enormous cost for Jesus. For it would ultimately cost him his life. He came as a king and found not a throne of gold but a cross of wood.

Jesus saw and heard the crowds shouting “Hosanna” (literally “save us”) and celebrating his arrival.

Days later he would hear crowds again shouting, “crucify him!” He would be let down by those closest to him, he would be denied by one of his closest friends.

And he did it because he ***loved*** us (then). He did it because he ***loves*** us (now).

Jesus would have still arrived, as he did, knowing his fate even if you (and I) were the only people on earth. That is how much he loves you and me!!

No matter what we do…how far we stray from him…how often we turn our backs on him…Jesus’ love for is a costly love…a cross shaped love which will never, ever change.

And the cost to us is giving our lives to him. It’s saying, “Lord, I trust you.” It’s placing Jesus at the centre of our lives; it’s allowing Jesus to be part of our daily lives as we give more of ourselves to him each day.

Jesus, went on a journey into Jerusalem that day and we, too, are invited on a journey with Jesus.

A journey which is life-long. A journey that can and will change our lives if we commit to travelling with Jesus.

So as we are at the start of Holy Week as we will follow Jesus through the highs and lows of his journey may we reflect on Jesus’ love for us which showed itself in arms stretched out on the cross for *you* and for *me* and *for the whole of humanity*.

Let us take a moment or two of quiet reflection before I pray*…..(time of quiet reflection)*

Lord, some of us may have started the journey of faith and stopped…or turned back. Help us to step out again and journey with Jesus.
Lord, some of us may not yet have started that journey…help us to start that journey in prayer today.

Lord, some of us may be right behind you on our faith journey…may we help and encourage others to journey with Jesus in this Holy Week. For we ask it in the name of the journeying Jesus.

Amen.

The next song will probably be new to many of you. I invite you to listen and reflect perhaps sit with your hands open that position means you are ready to give as well as to receive.

**Hymn: I see the King of glory**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1..I see the king of glorycoming on the clouds with fire,the whole earth shakes, the whole earth shakes. I see His love and mercywashing over all our sin;the people sing, the people sing:*Hosanna, hosanna,**Hosanna in the highest.**Hosanna, hosanna,**Hosanna in the highest.* | 2.. I see a generationrising up to take their place,with selfless faith, with selfless faith.I see a near revivalstirring as we pray and seek;we're on our knees, we're on our knees*Hosanna, hosanna,**Hosanna in the highest.**Hosanna, hosanna,**Hosanna in the highest.*(instrumental section…) |
| 3.. Heal my heart and make it clean;open up my eyes to the things unseen.Show me how to love like You have loved me.Break my heart for what breaks Yours;everything I am for Your kingdom's cause.As I walk from earth into eternity. | *Hosanna, hosanna,**Hosanna in the highest.**Hosanna, hosanna,**Hosanna in the highest.**Hosanna, hosanna,**Hosanna in the highest.**Hosanna, hosanna,**Hosanna in the highest.**Hosanna in the highest,**Hosanna in the highest,**Hosanna in the highest.*  (© 2006 Sony/ATV Music Publishing Australia/ Hillsong Music Publishing ccl 275793) |

**Prayers**

Loving God we bring your our prayers for:
**The world**….we lift to you the war torn parts of our world. We pray for peace, lasting peace.
We lift to you places where people suffer because of sickness and disease. We pray especially today for those countries affected by Coronavirus. We lift to you those who are poorly at this time. We lift to you those families who have lost a loved one to the virus. We pray for the medics, scientists and specialists working on a vaccine and working on medical equipment and the sharing of expertise across the world.

**We pray for the Church…**that in these difficult times we would never cease from worship, prayer and caring for those in our communities. That even though church buildings are closed your people (church) are still meeting and gathering in scattered communities. May your church continue to be the light of Jesus in our world today.

**We pray for ourselves and those who we love…**come close to those who are vulnerable, fearful, anxious and worried. Help them to reach out and find your hand to which they can hold through their darkness.
We pray for those who we are anxious about – those in isolation who are alone who struggle with long days or long nights. Comfort them we pray and hold them in your loving embrace.

We pray for ourselves asking that you would reign in our lives as Lord and King. We pray for our needs and hopes may they be firmly rooted in Jesus. We come also with our own anxieties and worries at this time. May we find comfort in your loving embrace.

And finally, Lord, we thank you for answered prayer. We thank you for hearing our prayers. And we thank you that you never tire of hearing us speaking to you.

Amen.

**Closing Hymn: Make way, make way**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1..Make way, make way,for Christ the Kingin splendour arrives;fling wide the gatesand welcome Him into your lives.Make way, make way,for the King of kings,for the King of kings,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. Make way, make way,for the King of kings,for the King of kings,make way, make way,and let His kingdom in! |
| 3.. And those who mourn with heavy hearts,who weep and sigh,with laughter, joy and royal crownHe'll beautify. Make way, make way,for the King of kings,for the King of kings,make way, make way,and let His kingdom in! | 4..We call you now to worship Himas Lord of all,to have no gods before Him,their thrones must fall!Make way, make way,for the King of kings,for the King of kings,make way, make way,and let His kingdom in!Graham Kendrick © 1986 Thankyou Music/Capitol CMG Publishing/Integritymusic.com ccl 275793 |

**Blessing**

May God, who gave of himself in Jesus,
give you His peace, protection and power
through the presence of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

In the coming days I will be videoing the a Maundy Thursday and a Good Friday act of worship which will be on the Bamford Chapel and Norden URC website (in text and video formats): <http://www.bcnchurch.org.uk/worship/>