**Palm Sunday service 2020**

**Welcome**

Welcome to the Service for our third Sunday in Isolation

Today is Palm Sunday

You will need a palm cross, or greenery from your garden, or another cross which you use as an ornament, wear round your neck, or hold.

**Call to worship**

We meet in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

**Introduction**

On Palm Sunday we welcome Jesus as King, crowned and coming to us on a donkey.

With the crowds we cheer and applaud as he comes near

Recognising him as the one who heals, the one who saves us.

And yet, knowing that before the end of the service, we will move into the story of the passion, we recognise even at this point that Jesus’ crown is a crown of thorns.

**Litany from Psalm 118**

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever.

**Hosanna to God, Hosanna in the highest!**

Let Israel say, “His love endures forever!” and all who fear God say, “His love endures forever!”

**Hosanna to God, Hosanna in the highest!**

With the Lord on our side, what can we fear? What can humankind do?

**Hosanna to God, Hosanna in the highest!**

We shall triumph over those who surround us and stand in confidence in the Lord, our God!

**Hosanna to God, Hosanna in the highest!**

The Lord is our strength and our might. The Lord has become our salvation!

**Hosanna to God, Hosanna in the highest!**

Hosanna to God, Hosanna in the highest!

—adapted from Psalm 118

**Hymn - Make Way Make Way**

**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.’

**Hymn - Ride on Ride on in Majesty**

**Blessing of the palms, or branches or crosses**

We come on this Palm Sunday ready with the crowds in our Gospel scene to make anew our commitment to Jesus**.**

We love him.

We adore him.

We believe in him, and we trust him.

We come to him eagerly awaiting his embrace, his healing.

In a moment of quiet we bring ourselves before him in our minds. We thank him for his presence, and we speak to him, making ourselves his, confessing our sins, ready again to walk hand in hand with him.

Time of silent prayer

We pray the prayer that Jesus gave us together:

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

Forever and ever

Amen.

Take up the cross.

Lord as we take up the cross, we bring the Palm Sunday celebrations to mind.

We see ourselves shouting and rejoicing

Loving you, embracing you,

Shouting our alleluias, convinced and trusting in you.

Then our minds flit to the future

The Passion

The suffering

The cross.

Lord it is easy to take up the cross when things are good.

When we celebrate your presence together

When loving you brings pleasure and joy

When our lives are easy and rewarding, full of life.

Help us so to hold onto your cross that it will carry us not just through the good times, but the difficult ones too.

We remember the pain of the passion

We acknowledge the pains and difficulties of today.

Bless our palms,

And bless us

That we may hold fast to you

As you do to us

Through the joys and celebrations of our own Palm Sundays

Through our own loneliness, isolation, suffering and pain

To the resurrection which will surely come.

**In Jesus name**

**Amen**

**Hymn - Be still for the presence of the Lord**

**Address**

Usually on Palm Sunday I find myself urging people to remember Holy Week

I urge them not to move straight from the Palm Sunday celebrations to the joy of Easter day without reflecting on the events that happened in between

The last supper

Gethsemane

Judas’ betrayal

The arrest

The trial

Jesus’ sense of grief and isolation throughout

His death.

This year is different.

A real Lent of being isolated in the wilderness, troubled by fear, anxiety, grief

A Lent for some spent in lonely isolation, for others squashed into small spaces with large families

For all – being confined when freedom is desired.

This year we will not be with the fickle crowds, dropping their palms at a whim, when trouble threatens and running off to follow someone else

This year we will be with Jesus. Grieving terribly for the state of the world, afraid for ourselves and for others, yet just simply living our part in it all because we know that that is the person we are.

In the centre of our beings we can know God, and we can know that He is with us.

It is sometimes said that in holy week Jesus – the human Jesus – lost all of those protective layers which all people hide behind for security and protection

He lost the company of his friends

He lost his trust in religious and political leaders as a result of unjust trials

He was betrayed … by one friend… Judas

And disowned by another – Peter.

He even lost his security in His father -

My God, My God why have you forsaken me

And he lost his life itself

Into your hands I commend my spirit.

This year there are those who will have lost their layers of security too

Freedom and choice

The ability to meet for worship

The security of work

Security and safety at work

The fellowship of loved ones

Loved ones themselves

Jesus lost all of his layers of security.

Margaret Silf once pictured this as like losing the shells of a Russian doll – the doll inside becoming smaller and smaller as more and more layers of security are removed -

What is left at the centre – the core?

The unbreakable solid doll

At the core of Jesus’ being was that unbreakable core – he knew that he belonged to God, that he was God, and he knew what he must do.

With this at his core he was able to do all that was required of him. To save us.

Palm Sunday is a choice

We take up our cross (or not)

We acknowledge jesus as King and saviour.

We choose to put him at our core, and to follow him.

We will not ALWAYS succeed

We will fall under the weight of both the world, and our world

But if Jesus – God – is at our core

We can constantly stand up …brush ourselves down – and start again

Knowing that he is with us.

As you pick up your cross – let it be for you a symbol of God’s presence, through Jesus, at the core of your being.

Try and find times to sit with him this Holy Week in honest conversation, telling him what you are feeling and thinking, and knowing him, feeling his loving gaze upon you, wherever you are, and whatever you are doing.

And know that, in time, our current “Lent” will pass, and the resurrection WILL take place.

**Matthew 27: 11-54**

**Pilate Questions Jesus**

Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ Jesus said, ‘You say so.’ But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. Then Pilate said to him, ‘Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?’ But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

**Barabbas or Jesus?**

Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, ‘Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?’ For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. While he was sitting on the judgement seat, his wife sent word to him, ‘Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him.’ Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them, ‘Which of the two do you want me to release for you?’ And they said, ‘Barabbas.’ Pilate said to them, ‘Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?’ All of them said, ‘Let him be crucified!’ Then he asked, ‘Why, what evil has he done?’ But they shouted all the more, ‘Let him be crucified!’

**Pilate Hands Jesus over to Be Crucified**

So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, ‘I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.’ Then the people as a whole answered, ‘His blood be on us and on our children!’ So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

**The Soldiers Mock Jesus**

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor’s headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

**The Crucifixion of Jesus**

As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, ‘This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.’

Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, ‘You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.’ In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, ‘He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, “I am God’s Son.” ’ The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way.

**The Death of Jesus**

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o’clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, ‘This man is calling for Elijah.’ At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, ‘Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.’ Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, ‘Truly this man was God’s Son!’

**Prayers**

Let us pray for the Church of God throughout the world . . .

Lord, hear us.
**Lord, graciously hear us.**Let us pray for those who have power and influence and for all who govern the nations

Lord, hear us.
**Lord, graciously hear us.**Let us pray for the powerless, for all victims of famine and war, and for all who strive for justice and peace ….

Lord, hear us.
**Lord, graciously hear us.**Let us pray for the afflicted and sorrowful and for all who need our prayers ….

Lord, hear us.
**Lord, graciously hear us.**Let us remember before God those who have passed from this life in faith and obedience ….

Lord, hear us.
**Lord, graciously hear us.**Eternal God,
through the self-offering of your Son
you have filled our lives with your presence.
Help us in our sufferings and trials
and strengthen us in our weakness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Meekness and majesty**

**Blessing**