



Chet Valley Churches
Last Sunday Praise
28 March 2021



Welcome

Welcome to Last Sunday Praise. In this file you will find links to the songs we have chosen for our worship. Click on the links to take you to each song.

Introduction

It's Palm Sunday, so of course our theme for this service reflects the time that Jesus rode into Jerusalem. But it's also a chance to think about some of the life events that happen to us, and to ask 'Who is God in all this?' Yet we are called to worship God because of who he is, not because of our own inclination. So let's take some time to praise and worship God who loves us whatever we feel like, starting with three songs of praise.

♪♪ All the songs link to YouTube. Just click with your mouse on the link, which will take you to a song with on-screen words. You may have to skip a few YouTube adverts if we have chosen songs that are not currently on the Chet Valley Churches YouTube channel.

♪♪ **Hosanna/You are the King of Glory**

<https://youtu.be/mrBx0-wIFx0>

♪♪ **Give thanks to the Lord our God and King**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBSjxpiD2DU>

♪♪ **Praise is rising**

https://youtu.be/E4O_dw58cZ0

Pause for thought, and prayer...

We associate Palm Sunday with praise. The people waved palm branches and cried ‘Hosanna’ as Jesus arrived at Jerusalem, greeting him as a king in spite of the fact that he arrived on a donkey – a lowly form of transport. I wonder how Jesus felt about the crowd’s praises, knowing what lay ahead of him on the journey of death and resurrection. Did he want to live in the moment of joy, or did he feel sad or even cynical that the same crowd would be calling for his crucifixion?

The Collect is a special prayer written for each day. Perhaps you might read the prayer aloud, line by line, stopping to think about each line as you do so.

The Collect—A Special Prayer for the Day

True and humble king,
hailed by the crowd as Messiah:
grant us the faith to know you and love you,
that we may be found beside you
on the way of the cross,
which is the path of glory.

♪♪ **Great is the darkness**

https://youtu.be/wP_BUHwweS4

♪♪ **Lord I lift your name on high**

<https://youtu.be/nSKlJvGlc2E>

♪♪ **You are my anchor**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U4NI dcrBxFQ>

Pause for thought, and prayer...

We praise God in songs of strength and joy because we know the end of the story is not death, but glory. Yet sometimes we forget that there was a path of extreme pain and sorrow that Jesus had to walk on our behalf. In our own journey of life and faith there has been pain, and we may be at a crossroads caused by the end of strict lockdown and the gradual opening of social and church events. We need to re-focus on God who loves us so much that he sent his Son to die for us.

Perhaps you might like to ponder the following prayer.

A prayer for our lives

Heavenly Father,

Forgive us for the times when we grumble about small hardships,

forgive us for the times when we expect everything to be about joy and blame you for the times when we're sad,

forgive us for the fears and troubles that eat away at us, yet we sometimes fail to bring to you,

forgive us for forgetting how much you've done for us.

Help us to have courage, faith and the assurance that we walk with you, not only in the praises of Palm Sunday but also in the day-to-day events of our lives,

♪ I lift my eyes

<https://youtu.be/N8QSwakKNwA>

♪ **Who can know the mind of our Creator**

<https://youtu.be/t8VI06tQUG4>

Bible Reading

Mark 11 verses 1-11

¹As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, ²saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’”

⁴They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, ⁵some people standing there asked, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” ⁶They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. ⁷When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. ⁸Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. ⁹Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

“Hosanna!^[a]”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

¹⁰“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!”

“Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

¹¹Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

Talk

Jen Hayden has written this reflection.

My lovely brother in law is awaiting a diagnosis. He very much hasn't been himself for several months, but the longer it drags on, the more Parkinson's disease is the suspected culprit for his muscle pain, bouts of exhaustion and hoarse voice.

It is incredibly difficult to observe the extreme toll this is taking on my amazing twin sister, who is usually very strong and self-contained: at first her frustration that he couldn't seem to buck himself up over Christmas several weeks after undergoing a hip replacement, and then the panic at her realisation that something very life changing was actually occurring and the man who had been her absolute cornerstone for her entire adult life would never be the same again.

It has been an immense challenge attempting to support her from afar on her journey into the unknown, with all the apprehension and grief it brings, and to keep her from sinking to the depths of despair. Not only is she deeply distressed about the impact of this on her husband, but also has to come to terms with the changes this will bring to her own life, the potential that she may become a long term carer at the age of only 41, and that they will lose the independence they have maintained admirably for 25 years as a visually impaired couple, enjoying foreign travel, long walks and running a successful business together. All I want to do is have her here for a break, so we can chat over a G&T or three, but we just have to make do with the phone.

It seems to me a particularly cruel situation, and I can't pretend I haven't asked on several occasions: "Who is God in all this and why isn't he doing anything about it?"

So for me, this festival of Palm Sunday, when we would normally be singing praises to Jesus the King, waving our palm crosses and taking part in processions to remember Jesus' entry into the city of Jerusalem, is tinged with sadness this year, only compounded by the loss of contact with my physical LSP community, which had become like a family, marking out the last Sunday of every month as special, and the general constraints of lockdown. I'm sure I'm not the only one who feels like this.

Palm Sunday has always appeared to me rather a contrary festival, both a celebration of Jesus as King and a reminder that waiting round the corner is the next fateful part of the story. The crowd who cheered Jesus as king as he entered Jerusalem was the same crowd who turned on him when they discovered that he was not the military conqueror they expected. In hindsight and with the benefit of the Bible, the people at the time should have had an inkling, as the King arrived into Jerusalem on a donkey, not a war horse, and as the crowd waved their palms and shouted "Hosanna", expecting Jesus to fight their battles and liberate them from the Roman Empire, they actually got a different sort of king - infinitely more powerful, yet vastly more humble. And in just a matter of days, Jesus would be executed as a criminal, silent before his tormentors humiliated and tortured.

Lent gives us an opportunity to ask, what is our mental or emotional picture of God?, and to consider our expectations of him. Difficult personal circumstances like mine, provide a perfect reason to ponder this.

We might not be anticipating a warrior king, but we may want God to make our loved ones better, take the pain of uncertainty away and put life back to normal again. If we are honest with ourselves, we can want God to be like a fairy-godmother, to wave a magic wand and take away all the pain and suffering in the world. I know I do.

As the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby reassures us: “These are very human responses. We find them in the Psalms. They are not sinful, even if they are the wrong picture. The Psalmist in Psalm 44 gets quite personal with God. He tells God that God is a rubbish businessman – he has sold his people, and not even done a good deal. He suggests God is asleep, and tells him to wake up.

Prayer should always be honest – but it also goes far beyond just honesty. It’s a meeting with God himself, whom Jesus says we can address as father, as Lord, as healer and redeemer, life and truth, creator, and many more ways.

Palm Sunday confronts us with God being disruptively different. God the revolutionary. We see God who takes on the pain, who walks the journey of Holy Week, deeper and deeper into a darkness we cannot enter. God in Jesus lets his friends deny and betray him. God, in Jesus, suffers rejection and abuse, and the ultimate desolation of a lonely yet innocent death. All the worst of human experience is heaped on Jesus.”

Let’s take a moment to consider the things we’re praying for and what we’re expecting God to do about them. The one thing we can be sure of is that God, being infinitely loving and generous, comes to meet us wherever we are because he knows and understands our pain and suffering and will never turn anyone away, not even seeking to silence the jubilant crowd on that 1st Palm Sunday, despite knowing that before long, they were to betray him.

As Justin Welby reminds us: “Because of the life and death of Jesus, we can trust in the forgiveness of God and his victory over death. But here is the challenge of Palm Sunday: in trusting in Jesus, the Servant King, we are set on a path of following his life and pattern, right to the cross, so we too might experience the glorious resurrection.

Resurrection requires that we carry a cross. And that means turning away from what is wrong and putting our selves, our self-obsession and our selfishness on the cross. Putting self on the cross leads straight to resurrection.”

♪♪ **From heaven you came**

<https://youtu.be/E4963QPHAIM>

Time for prayer...

Let's take time to pray for:

- The people we live amongst – family, neighbours, friends far or near, acquaintances
- Our national leaders who make decisions that directly affect all of us
- Our church leaders seeking to find a way to enable the church to reconnect face-to-face and yet to preserve the lessons we have learned during lockdown
- Members of church congregations tackling their own decisions about life and faith
- People we know who are still struggling as a result of Covid, either socially or economically or because of long term effects on their health

- Those who are ill, or who have lost touch with society following isolation and are afraid to venture out
- Those who are fearful of the future
- Ourselves, that we might be brave enough to stand out as people of faith and not fall into discouragement

And a prayer about Palm Sunday:

In the praises of Palm Sunday,
Lord, let me worship you wholeheartedly.
In the challenge of Holy Week,
Lord, teach me to trust you.
In the pain of separation or uncertainty,
Lord let me know that you care.
And in the glory of Easter,
Let me follow you to the end.

You might want to pray aloud the prayer that Jesus taught his first disciples. Use whatever version or language you wish!

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory
are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

♪ Here is love vast as the ocean

<https://youtu.be/MbZeHNkT9Ic>

♪ O Church Arise

www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=OXNO-OGUGyU

♪ Bless the Lord O my soul

<https://youtu.be/rDQn9cWC4Yc>

A blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.

Amen