

Palm Sunday All-Age Service

Thank you for joining us for our Palm Sunday all-age service. As we begin Holy Week, the Sunday before Easter is the time we remember Jesus and his friends entering Jerusalem, with Jesus sitting on a donkey. The cry of today, which we shall repeat, is Hosanna a word of praise which means "God, save us"!

For this service you will need a palm cross, either one from a previous year, or one you've made from the online instructions, or maybe if you've got a piece of paper nearby now, just rip it into a cross shape!

The Blessing of the Palms

We hold up our Palm crosses

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

Hosanna, hosanna, HOSANNA!

Blessed is the one who is obedient unto death.

Hosanna, hosanna, HOSANNA!

Blessed is the one who saves us.

Hosanna, hosanna, HOSANNA!

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

Hosanna, hosanna, HOSANNA!

Jesus, we welcome you into the midst of us today.

May our voices join together to give you all our praise.

May we honour you, King of kings in all we do and say.

Amen.

Song

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.

We come to worship

the bringer of our salvation,

the hoped-for one, who stands among us now.

We lay our lives before him,

everything we have we offer him;

may the Lord of life accept our praise today.

Amen.

A prayer of confession with palm crosses

These crosses remind us of what Jesus went through.
Let us ask his forgiveness as we recall his death for us.

We hold these crosses over our heads.

Jesus, we have sinned in what we have thought.

Cross out our selfish ideas, and fill us instead with your love of seeing the best in others.

We hold these crosses over our mouths.

Jesus, we have sinned in what we have said.

Cross out our hurtful words, and fill us instead with your concern to speak blessing into others' lives.

We hold these crosses over our hands.

Jesus, we have sinned in what we have done.

Cross out the evil we do, and instead make us channels of your peace and love.

We hold these crosses over our hearts.

Jesus, we have confessed
what comes to our minds.

**By your Word and your Spirit, pierce our hearts,
and help us to see deeper into our condition, so we can be further healed.**

We hold these crosses in our hands.

Jesus, we thank you for your promise to forgive all who repent and believe your good news. Amen.

May God who loved the world so much that He sent His Son to be our Saviour forgive us our sins and make us holy to serve Him in this world, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

People travelled to Jerusalem in groups with friends and family. Passover was a big festival, with lots of preparation. Imagine that we are going to the Passover festival and the excitement is growing as they get nearer. Picture the scene, the noise you can hear and the sight of Jesus in the distance. Let's count down from 10 to 1, building the atmosphere of anticipation...

Bible reading *Matthew 21:1-11 (NIV)*

21 As Jesus and his disciples approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying 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. ³If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.'

⁴This took place to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet:

⁵'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."

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

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

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

(children's version – with acknowledgment to Roots on the web)

Hosanna! Hosanna!' The crowds shouted and sang as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. Now who'd get excited about a man riding on a donkey? People who had read the Old Testament, that's who. Some laid their cloaks down in the road, and some cut branches from the nearby trees to mark the way, as they would do for a king.

A king? A king on a donkey? What made them think of that? Well, the Old Testament prophet, Zechariah. Years before, he'd said: 'Shout for joy, Jerusalem! Your king comes to you, riding humbly on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.' Jesus knew the Old Testament very well, of course. That's why he'd sent his disciples ahead of him to get the donkey in the first place. 'Go into Bethphage,' he'd said. 'You'll find a donkey and her foal tied up there. Bring them to me.' Just as his followers were about to go, he'd said, 'If anyone tries to stop you, just say, "The Lord needs them," and they'll let you go.'

So the disciples had gone and got the donkey, a humble animal, just as Zechariah had described it, and thrown cloaks on its back for Jesus to sit on. And that's what he was riding into the city.

'Hosanna to the Son of David!' cried the crowds, both behind and ahead of Jesus. 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven! 'who is this?' the people asked. And the singing crowds replied, 'This is the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.'

Talk

Some of us don't like crowds. They can be scary places to be, and we may have childhood memories of being lost, or as a parent, our children getting lost! We have a few stories like that ourselves, but probably best not to embarrass ourselves or our children by telling them here. If they are listening in, they will know which stories we mean.... At the moment some of us, football fans, for instance, might be longing for crowds, and for many that feeling of being isolated is an everyday reality at the moment. It's been great to make contact with many of you again this week – particularly successful was our bible study venture on Zoom on Friday afternoon. It's great being in charge of Zoom – you can mute everyone, though as a member of a church elsewhere said, yes Vicar, but when we watch your sermons on facebook live, we can fast forward. Please resist this temptation for the next few minutes if you can!

I just want to reflect briefly on two questions relating to this event.

- 1) Where's Jesus?
- 2) Who's Jesus?

Where's Jesus? Well, the bible reading makes this clear. He's in Jerusalem, the capital city and a busy, bustling place as people gathered together for the great Passover festival. But where is Jesus? Have a look sometime today at famous art works of this scene – where is he? He's there, in the middle of the crowd. Not at the front, not at the back but in the middle of the people. Traditionally a king in procession would be on a majestic horse, and it would be clear where he was, heralded by fanfares. Here is Jesus riding a donkey, among his people. The King of All is called to serve. The crowd, effectively, were clapping. Just as NHS and other vital workers have been clapped this week, praised for what they are doing, so did Jesus friends as he entered Jerusalem. He was where the people were. This is always what God's people are called to do. To praise Jesus, and to serve him wherever we are. For some, at the moment, this involves personal challenge and sacrifice, and they need our prayers and support.

Who's Jesus? Did you notice that question in our reading? All four gospels contain the event of Jesus coming into Jerusalem, but all in subtly different ways. It's well worth reading them all this week, take one each day and read through the last week of Jesus' life on earth. Only Matthew contains this question from

the people – who is this? To which those praising Jesus in song answer – ‘This is Jesus, the prophet, from Nazareth’. We need to put the whole scene together to get a fuller answer. This is your King – looking back long ago to the prophet Zechariah through whom God promised to send a king – but not just any king, a king who comes to us. A king whose name ‘emmanuel’ means God is with us – God is on our side. This king is also God’s prophet – he shows us the way to live and as we follow his example and obey his command we can grow closer to God in the challenges that life throws up. Finally he’s the one that causes his followers to shout ‘hosanna’ – literally ‘help me, save me, rescue me’ – the people following Jesus had little idea what this would mean by the end of the week, as Jesus dies on a cross. In his death he becomes our helper, our saviour, our rescuer.

So, while at this time being in a crowded place is not possible, we can still imagine the scene of Palm Sunday, hear the crowds, see the palms being waved. But more important still is to see this man riding on a donkey. None other than the king of all, gentle with us, who is able to be alongside us, and who will save us as we put our faith and trust in him.

A prayer of response:-

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. *Zechariah 9:9*

Merciful God, as we enter Holy week, turn our hearts again to Jerusalem, and to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Stir up within us the gift of faith that we may not only praise him with our lips, but may follow him in the way of the cross. **Amen.**

The Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Song

**Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning,
Give me oil in my lamp, I pray,
Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning,
Keep me burning ‘till the break of day.
*Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,
Sing hosanna to the King of kings!
Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,
Sing hosanna to the King.***

**Give me joy in my heart, keep me singing,
Give me joy in my heart, I pray,**

Give me joy in my heart, keep me singing,
Keep me singing 'till the break of day.
Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,
Sing hosanna to the King of kings!
Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,
Sing hosanna to the King.

Give me love in my heart, keep me serving,
Give me love in my heart, I pray,
Give me love in my heart, keep me serving,
Keep me serving 'till the end of day.
Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,
Sing hosanna to the King of kings!
Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,
Sing hosanna to the King.

Give me peace in my heart, keep me resting,
Give me peace in my heart, I pray,
Give me peace in my heart, keep me resting,
Keep me resting 'till the end of day.
Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,
Sing hosanna to the King of kings!
Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,
Sing hosanna to the King.

The prayers

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. Lord in your mercy..

Hear our prayer.

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

Hear our prayer.

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. Lord in your mercy..

Hear our prayer.

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. Lord in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

After a moment of silence for our own prayers, we join together as Jesus taught us to pray:

**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**

Closing responses

We hold our palm cross...

**Lord, I have received my palm cross today.
I have seen you ride into Jerusalem,
heard the hosannas, seen the crowds.
But Lord, I do not really understand
why you have to suffer and die;
help me during this week to understand better.**

Let us be still for a moment,
as we prepare to follow Jesus
on his Holy Week journey to the cross.
As we cheer today,
as we are sad on Good Friday,
and as we celebrate Easter,
let us be true pilgrims together.

Amen.

Focus on your palm cross. As we move from Palm Sunday to Holy Week, let us commit ourselves to walk with Jesus the way of the cross, sharing together on Maundy Thursday, thanking God for Jesus and his death for us on Good Friday, and being ready to celebrate Jesus offer of New Life next Sunday – Easter Day...

Song

**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?**

**He came from His blessed throne,
Salvation to bestow;
But men 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.**

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.

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.

Blessing

May each day bring you opportunities to be thankful,
each night bring you rest and sleep,
and may this Holy Week draw you closer
to God the Father and to his Son, Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Thank you for following our service today. Full details of services for Holy Week and Easter are found on this week's notice sheet and on the website pcd.org.uk