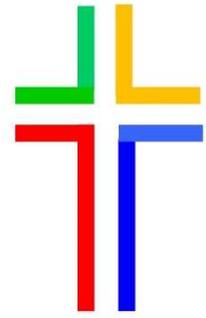


Week St Mary Methodist Church – Sunday 5 April Palm Sunday



This is the third Sunday of worshipping remotely. Whilst social distancing is difficult, we are consoled and encouraged that we worship a God who is never remote. Indeed, Jesus is as alongside us this day, as he was to the disciples and crowds on that first Palm Sunday.

PRAYER

Almighty God,
We thank You because today
We celebrate a God who comes to us.
We think of Jesus, riding into Jerusalem,
Close enough to be touched,
And to hear the voices of those around
Him.

As we offer You our prayers, help us to
remember
That in Jesus, You first drew near to us.
May we offer You our worship in
thankfulness, knowing that You hear the
words on our lips, and the thoughts of our
hearts. For Jesus 'sake. **Amen**

READING FOR TODAY Matthew 21:1-11 (NIV)

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, 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. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.' This took place to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet:

'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.'"

The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 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 heaven!'
When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, 'Who is this?' The crowds answered, 'This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.' prophet from Nazareth, but what they think is going to happen next and what does happen next are two very different things. The crowd who wave their branches and shout their hosannas will be the same people who in less than a week will be shouting for his crucifixion. They expected him to come and save Israel, to make them great again - perhaps they expected him to drive out the Romans (the Zealots certainly expected a Messiah who would do just that). Perhaps the clearing out of the Temple encouraged them in their mistaken expectations. This was a Messiah who came to go, not to a battlefield nor a throne, but to a cross.

REFLECTION

What a welcome! What a celebration! Crowds, cheering, waving palms, shouting hosannas - at last, it looks as if people have recognised Jesus, and are welcoming the Messiah into their midst. Of course it was true - Jesus was Messiah, and Matthew has overlaid signs and symbols for us to make it obvious. Yes, Jesus rode into town on a donkey, but Matthew puts both the

donkey and its colt into the picture, to make clear that the crowd saw what he explains to his readers by quoting the relevant prophecy (Zech.9:9).

However, the crowd are welcoming the wrong Messiah. They haven't understood it at all - yes, they acclaim him as the prophet from Nazareth, but what they think is going to happen next and what does happen next are two very different things. The crowd who wave their branches and shout their hosannas will be the same people who in less than a week will be shouting for his crucifixion. They expected him to come and save Israel, to make them great again - perhaps they expected him to drive out the Romans (the Zealots certainly expected a Messiah who would do just that). Perhaps the clearing out of the Temple encouraged them in their mistaken expectations. This was a Messiah who came to go, not to a battlefield nor a throne, but to a cross.

PRAYER FOR OTHERS

In our mind's eye,
Let us think of Jesus riding into Jerusalem,
A busy, bustling city,
Teeming with life.
Let us bring God our prayers for His
bustling, busy world.
We pray today for those with power over
the lives of others. We think of the leaders
of our own country and of other countries
in these challenging times.

We remember those who would not have
been there to welcome Him, because they
were not well enough, Or because their
troubles were too great.
We think of those who are sick today,
Especially any from our own church
Who are ill at home or in hospital.

We remember the disciples who laid their
cloaks on the donkey's back
And walked with Jesus.
Lord, may we be like those disciples,
Rejoicing in the presence of Jesus,
And walking with Him,
Not just today, on Palm Sunday, but
always. Lord God, heavenly King, **Amen**

HYMN

*Verses from a very old hymn written in
1664 (H&P 173 STF 277)*
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 blest 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.

BLESSING

The crowd shouted,
'Blessed is the one who comes in the
name of the Lord.' As we go, may we go in
God's name and with His blessing.
And the blessing of God, Father Son and
Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with
you always. Amen.

*"We are told to let our light shine, and if it
does, we won't need to tell anybody it
does. Lighthouses don't fire cannons to
call attention to their shining- they just
shine". Dwight L Moody*