

Home Worship for Palm Sunday – Revd Debbie Hodgson

If you have a candle, I invite you to light it now as a sign of the Light of Christ being with you.

Opening Prayer

Loving God,

as I sit here in the quiet of this moment to spend time in with you;

open my inner ear to hear your voice speaking to me.

Open the eyes of my heart, that I may see your glory.

Come close that I may know your presence surrounding me.

As I sit here in the quiet of this moment may this become a holy time,

a time of worship with and to the God who has created me

and loves me beyond measure; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Enable me to lay aside all that would hinder the true expression of my heart

to offer you the praise and thanksgiving that is rightly yours.

Forgive me for the times this past week when I have thought, even for a fleeting moment, that you have forgotten or abandoned me in my deepest moments of need.

Forgive my slowness to put my faith in you,

for you are faithful from everlasting to everlasting.

Forgive my words, thoughts and actions that have denied your love in the world,

for others, and for myself.

Help me to know your grace and mercy, that speaks of forgiveness and renewal. Amen.

Bible Reading – Matthew 21: 1-11

Reflection

I have never been any good at those pictures where they tell you to look at a what quite simply looks like a whole load of random colours on a page and ‘see the picture’. Sometimes it felt like I needed to hang upside-down with my head to one side, but still all I would see was a page of random colours; what was right in front of my eyes, not what was hidden in the picture. On the other hand, I do like optical illusion pictures where at first glance you might see one image but as you look deeper at the picture there is another image that presents itself to you. For me Palm Sunday is just like that with today’s Bible passage.

The NIV gives this passage the heading ‘the triumphal entry’, (as some of you know, I do wish Bibles wouldn’t give titles to passages, as there is a danger that we look no further – as potentially in this case) of course with hindsight we understand why, but at the time Jesus was trying to convey something quite different to the triumphal entry of a new, defiant, overthrowing king that they were wanting, looking for, and hoping for. As Jesus now moves ever closer to the cross. He was giving the people a message of what Kingdom behaviour looked like. The crowd, imitating the actions of Old Testament times when a new king rode into town in victory; cutting down branches and throwing down their cloaks in honour and celebration.

They were wanting to crown Jesus as the new king then and there, maybe trying to force his hand into action, action according to their understanding, hopes and plans. Of course, Jesus *is* coming in victory, but a victory that will be accomplished through humility, insult and self-sacrifice upon the cross, shaped by total love. During this coming week we will be reflecting more deeply what that meant for Jesus, and means for us as we journey through Holy Week.

We are in a time where, as followers of Jesus especially, we are being asked to reflect on what it means to be people of Kingdom 'behaviour'; to imitate Christ Jesus, as St. Paul would put it. In these challenging, confusing and sometimes frightening times we are asked to live with the same humility and self-sacrifice that reveals our love and God's for our neighbours, our community and the world.

Today, on this Palm Sunday, we are able to shout our praises "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest" because unlike the crowd who when asked the question "Who is this?" gave the answer "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee." We have seen the deeper image and are able to answer that "This is Jesus, the Saviour of the World. The One in whom we can trust."

Hymn: Hosanna, hosanna [watch, listen, sing along]

(click on the link, or copy and paste into your browser)

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

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we pray for all who cannot see beyond today for fear of what tomorrow may hold, for those who have lost all hope in a future worth living.

We pray for those who are too fearful even to open their eyes on today, because the reality of their lives is too painful to bear; for those whose loved ones are sick, or close to death or have recently died.

We pray for those weighed down by the burden of responsibility; for all who hold authority over others, who recognise the decisions they make affect the lives of those they serve.

We pray for the invisible and ignored, for the homeless, isolated and alone; for those whose needs have been pushed to boundaries because of our current global crisis.

As we pray, we give thanks for all people who are giving of themselves to bring help, healing and love to others.

As Jesus rode into Jerusalem, bringing with him Your promise of forgiveness, hope and new life, we pray that your Holy Spirit will sweep across our world today. May your holy presence comfort, strengthen and guide us, and remind us of your promise to never leave us; now and always. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer: Our Father ...

Blessing: May God bless us and keep us as we step into Holy Week. Amen.