

Sunday Worship at Home, 28st March, PALM SUNDAY

If you still have a Palm Cross from a previous year you might like to use it in this service

Introduction:

God meets us in our scattered lives,

let us worship him together

Hosanna to the Son of David, the King of Israel.

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

Hosanna in the highest.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, during Lent we have been preparing by works of love and self-sacrifice for the celebration of our Lord's death and resurrection. Today we come together to begin this solemn celebration in union with the Church throughout the world. Christ enters his own city to complete his work as our Saviour, to suffer, to die, and to rise again. Let us go with him in faith and love, so that, united with him in his sufferings, we may share his risen life.

If you have one, hold up your palm cross while you say this prayer:

God our Saviour, whose Son Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem as Messiah to suffer and to die; let these palms be for us signs of his victory and grant that we who bear them in his name may ever hail him as our King, and follow him in the way that leads to eternal life; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.. **Amen**

From the Palm Gospel: Mark 11:1-11

⁷ Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. ⁹ Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, 'Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!'

From the Passion Gospel: Mark 15:1-39

⁶ Now at the festival Pilate used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. ⁸ So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. ⁹ Then he answered them, 'Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?' ¹⁰ For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. ¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. ¹² Pilate spoke to them again, 'Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?' ¹³ They shouted back, 'Crucify him!' ¹⁴ Pilate asked them, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Crucify him!' ¹⁵ So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. ²⁵ It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. ²⁶ The inscription of the charge against him read, 'The King of the Jews.'

Reflection on the reading:

What sort of king rides into the capital city on a donkey? The answer to that question is a Jewish one. Nobody in the time of Jesus actually rode on a donkey, except for new kings arriving in Jerusalem for their “coronation” ceremony. So, Jesus’ arrival is a political statement and a provocative act. At theological I had to write an essay with the title “Did Jesus consider himself to be the Jewish Messiah?” As I read and thought and wrote I concluded that the answer was actually - No he did not! My conclusion may surprise you, but this is why... There are only a few places where Jesus actually identifies himself as the Messiah, and it’s only to gentiles. He never makes that claim to the Jews. And perhaps this is because he is not the Messiah the Jews are expecting. The Messiah they are expecting is a military king who will lead them into battle, drive out the Roman occupiers and restore the kingdom of Israel. So, when he rides into town on a donkey, they think that time has come. And when he doesn’t deliver, they turn on him and demand his death. When Pilate asked him “are you a king then?” Jesus’ reply was “I am, but not of this world.” The Jews wanted a Messiah who would save Israel, but Jesus could not be both the Jewish Messiah and God’s Messiah, so instead he chose to follow the way of self-sacrifice, suffering and death. He chose to be God’s Messiah and save us all. **Amen.**

The Collect for the Palm Sunday

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. **Amen**

Be still and pray:

In your prayers, include prayers for the church, the needs of the world and our local community. Particularly pray for: Our Prime Minister, the Government and all world leaders they struggle to control COVID-19, manage vaccination programmes and plan the relaxation of lockdowns; for our front-line health workers caring for the sick and vulnerable, and administering vaccinations; for those struggling with isolation or financial hardship because of lockdown; for healing and peace for those who are ill; and for the souls of those who have recently died and comfort for those who are mourning their loss.

Finish with The Lord’s Prayer:

Conclusion

May Christ crucified draw you to himself, to find in him a sure ground for faith, a firm support for hope, and the assurance of sins forgiven;
and may the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen**

Reverend Eddie