



Sunday March 28th, 2021
Palm Sunday
The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Gathering & Lighting the Candle

Here we are at Palm Sunday, on the edge of our hopes and dreams and expectations of Jesus.

We light the candle ...

As the flame dances into life and brings light to us, we remember the things we have heard about Jesus through our Lenten journey.

Call to worship (based on Psalm 118)

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures for ever!

The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

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

We bless you from the house of the Lord.

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures for ever!

Acknowledging

As we gather we acknowledge the First Peoples, traditional custodians of this land and these waters. We pay our respects to their elders past, present and future, and commit ourselves to journeying together, First and Second peoples, building relationships of mutual respect and understanding.



Singing *TiS 333 All glory, praise and honour*

Words: Tr. J. M. Neale (1854); Auth. Theodulf, Bishop of Orléans (c. 820); Music: Melchior Teschner (1584-1635)
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Chorus:

All glory, praise and honour
To you, redeemer, king,
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring.

You are the king of Israel,
 and David's royal son,
 now in the Lord's name coming,
 The king and blessed One.
Chorus

The company of angels
 Are praising you on high,
 And we and all creation
 exultant make reply.
Chorus

The people of the Hebrews
 With palms before you went;
 Our praise and prayer and anthems
 Before you we present.
Chorus

To you before your passion
 They sang their hymns of praise;
 To you now high exalted
 Our melody we raise.
Chorus

Their praises you accepted;
 Accept the prayers we bring,
 Who in all good take pleasure,
 our good and gracious King.



Prayer

God of our hopes and expectations, we give you thanks as we follow the fanfare of Jesus entering Jerusalem. Like the ancients, we wonder about this strange yet radical scene - comic parody on one hand, yet amazing reframing as the power of love finds its way in.

And yet we know that like the disciples, our desire for a Messiah often lacks your divine imagination. We see 'power over' as the only solution and struggle with Jesus on a borrowed donkey.

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When our cries of welcome and praise are hollow
like the fickle crowds,

forgive us, we pray.

When we struggle to stick with you
this Holy Week

as disciples who fear, deny and flee,

forgive us, we pray.

When our idea of justice comes
in the form of might and anger,
rather than love and compassion,

forgive us, we pray.

The apostle Paul urges: 'Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus'. As we seek this and fall short of it, Jesus calls us into life beyond death. Sin is forgiven, **thanks be to God. Amen.**

Listening

Read: Philippians 2:5-11

and: Mark 11:1-11

For these words of faith

& for Jesus the Word: **Thanks be to God.**

Reflecting - Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson

Have you ever been to a street parade, maybe even been in one yourself? I love being pillion passenger on the Cranbourne to Cowes Motorcycle GP ride every year. We ride really close to the crowds lining the streets and I give the children (and adults) high fives. People come out to the roadside and wave and we toot the horn. It really is great fun. If you like the sound of revving motorcycles and the smell of fuel, of course. So, imagine a different sort of procession. A big white war horse prancing into town, with a very serious looking warrior on its back, expecting all the pomp and pageantry due to him. The troops are all around, dressed in their polished best and looking very fine, but likely also quite frightening in their demonstration of military power. Then think about this. This figure is Pontius Pilate, Roman governor out processing to show his military might.

Earlier in the day another procession happened, almost in ridiculous and subversive parody of this event. An average tradie who had ideas about teaching very subversive ideas, starting a new movement even, climbed on a silly mule. A borrowed one at that. And the people made a carpet of coats and foliage to welcome and called out to him, calling him blessed! What a strange sight! What a strange message! Perhaps even a dangerous one. Jesus again makes ridiculous the values of the powerful elites in comical and foolish images.

Prophetic and transforming images and the reversal of societal values. Turning things upside down again. In this version, the story finishes with Jesus simply looking and pondering the goings on in the Temple and then withdrawing to face the money changers tomorrow. To turn their tables upside down just as he has turned the rich and powerful upside down through the questioning and mimicking of their pageantry on this day.

The story has the flavour of the court jester about it and brings to mind the foolishness themes of recent weeks in the lectionary. And then we go to the very deep places of the Philippians reading. Jesus, the Christ, chose to empty himself and take on the form of broken, enslaved humanity. He chose this not instead of his Divinity. But rather this is the form his Divinity took. Vulnerability, humility, death, ridicule. When I look foolish, I choose denial, cover up, hiding, humour, whatever will let me save face. Embarrassment and humiliation are hard. But Jesus' message here is of the long and difficult path of vulnerability, of choosing the hard ways and finding the shoots of life that push relentlessly through the more rocky and encumbered paths. The humble walk which leads us into the discovery of truth and authenticity, to reconciliation and the lifting of those on the outer edges and bringing them into the centre.

It is in the midst of this foolishness we find life. It is here that Jesus is exalted above all, given the name that is Life itself and life is again



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transformed. The values of the Kingdom, the justice, the forgiveness, the generosity and grace, the compassion and mercy, lead to healing and peace. They lead to life. Can we also be this foolish or do we need to 'win', to be 'in the right'? I like this understanding of the Palm Sunday story because it tells me I don't need to be afraid of looking foolish. It is OK. It also tells me that Jesus had a great sense of humour, of the ridiculous. And in this topsy turvy Kingdom where the unexpected is to be expected, I am refreshed to find life and love all over again.

Responding:

Prayers for World & Community

We pray for those who are powerless against exploitation and slavery; for those who are humbled or oppressed due to gender, race, social status or family situation.

Save us, we beseech you, O LORD (Psalm 11: 25)
Hosanna to the Son of David! (Matthew 21:9)

We pray for those who are not free to gather in a crowd to protest against unjust powers; for those whose voice is suppressed; for those who are isolated or eliminated through wars and propaganda.

Save us, we beseech you, O LORD (Psalm 11: 25)
Hosanna to the Son of David! (Matthew 21:9)

We pray for those impacted by COVID-19; for those grieving, fearful, and those whose mental health has suffered due to the pandemic. We pray for those working on the frontline of the pandemic, and for those in power and authority with a say about safety and who gets a vaccine.

Save us, we beseech you, O LORD (Psalm 11: 25)
Hosanna to the Son of David! (Matthew 21:9)

We pray for those who are further pushed to the margins as church leaders profess to speak the truth of God; when that 'truth' seems a long way from the love and compassion that Jesus offered his life for.

Save us, we beseech you, O LORD (Psalm 11: 25)
Hosanna to the Son of David! (Matthew 21:9)

We pray for those who face courts or trials but can never hope for justice; we pray for those who cannot let go of power and privilege that the light of Christ may shine in.

Save us, we beseech you, O LORD (Psalm 11: 25)
Hosanna to the Son of David! (Matthew 21:9)

And we pray for ourselves, for our hopes for a just and loving world; for our families and friends; for those who are grieving; for those longing for hope ...

(silent prayer)

And we pray now as Jesus taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name,
 your kingdom come,
 your will be done,
 on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,
 as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial
 and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory
 are yours
 now and for ever. Amen.

Passing the peace

May the Peace of God
 dwell with you:
and also with you.



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Offering

Bless these gifts, God of the journey. Bless us as we wonder, be by us as we stumble.

Be our guide, companion and hope, as we seek the same mind that was in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Notices

Are you planning to go to an Easter Dawn service? Ask around or email the editor if you don't know where to find one.

What does the celebration of Easter mean for you?

Singing Ride on ride on the time is right

From Iona (Enemy of Apathy), words by John Bell
Can be sung to TiS 348, TUNE: Winchester New (Ride on, ride on in majesty) [Verses 1-3, 6]
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Ride on, ride on, the time is right
The roadside crowds scream with delight;
Palm branches mark the pilgrim way
Where beggars squat and children play.

Ride on, ride on, the critics wait,
Intrigue and rumour circulate;
New lies abound in word and jest
And truth becomes a suspect guest.

Ride on, ride on, while well aware
That those who shout and wave and stare
Are mortals who, with common breath,
Can crave for life and lust for death.

Rise on, ride on, God's love demands.
Justice and peace lie in your hands.
Evil and angel voices rhyme:
This is the man and this the time.

Blessing

*Our time of worship does not conclude today with a blessing
as this worship continues through Holy Week.*

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