



Palm Sunday - April 2nd, 2023 ***The Fig Tree Worship Resource***

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

from Ps.118 &; Mt.21

Tell the daughters of Zion:

**Look! Your king is coming to you,
humble and mounted on an ass.**

Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of God.

Hosanna in the highest!

When he entered Jerusalem,
the whole city was
excited and people asked : "Who is this person?"
And the crowd replied:
This is Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

Acknowledging



*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress*

As we gather, we acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land and these waters. We pay respect to elders past, present and emerging. As First and Second Peoples walking together, we commit ourselves to be people of the covenant, listening, truth telling and seeking justice for all.

Singing- The King of glory comes TiS 279

OR: *He came riding on a donkey*, by Gordon Light

You can buy the sheet music here:

<https://commoncup.com/product/he-came-riding-on-a-donkey-palm-sunday-song/>

Or listen/ sing along

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgEHDp-Qchw>

Prayer



Lord Jesus, confounding lover of all,
you ride into our experience too,
through the turmoil, in simplicity on a
donkey.

Help us to get to grips with your coming to us
in new, unexpected ways, still.

We celebrate the nature of your coming,
riding through all the clamour
and broken trust of our world.
Entering past the defences meant to confuse,
the weapons aimed to kill; ride on
and confront our tendency towards disaster
with your peaceful, transforming resistance.

Lord Jesus we look to you;
to ride into our patch, bringing hope and
dignity,
the touch of human warmth
and the impact of divine grace.

By ourselves, we often lose the path,
but by your side, amidst the roar of crowds
and clutching at branches
we might yet help to find another way
and to heal, to bring your love
and make a difference.

**In the name of Christ,
who sets us free and makes us whole. Amen**

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Psalm 118: 1, 19 – 29

OR - PSALM REFLECTION

Link to downloadable visual reflection:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/y3kpddpb088afks/Ps118opento.m4v?dl=0>

Read: Matthew 21: 1-11

For these words of faith and for Jesus the Word:
Thanks be to God.

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Reflecting - Rev. Veronica Bradley

The 'Gospel'^[1] according to Matthew. The writer of this Gospel wants to share good news. And the good news is about Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Each of the writers of the gospels has a unique picture of who Jesus is. The stories they choose to tell, and how they tell the stories give us clues as to what the writer thinks is the important thing for us to know about Jesus. Each Gospel is like a collage of stories of Jesus' life arranged around the writer's central theme.

For Matthew, Jesus is the Messiah, the promised King of David's line. Jesus is the new Moses, the promised prophet from Deuteronomy 18:15. And Jesus is *Immanuel* 'God with us.' The central theme in this gospel is that the promises of God have come to fulfilment in Jesus.

Jesus' ministry begins with the announcement that God's kingdom has come into the world. John draws a huge crowd calling out the hypocrisy of people's lives and challenging them to prepare for the coming king. Jesus announces the kingdom and calls people to follow him. Jesus and the disciples travel throughout Galilee, proclaiming this good news that God's kingdom is here.

Those who come are the sick, the ones suffering, the ones cast out and on the fringes of the community. Society's losers, fakers, and troublemakers. The riff-raff and the toxic, the kids, the dependent, the isolated, the lonely. He was the King of the ones nobody wanted, and they loved him. They followed him, they learned from him, they became his family.

These people love Jesus because he speaks their language. He understands their lives. He doesn't judge them, he is one of

them. They know he cares. They know he is who he says he is, and they trust him. Jesus gives them a voice. He gives their lives and experiences a voice. He gives their pain a voice. And he stands up for them before leaders, no matter their power and influence.

The ones who were the movers and shakers, the king makers, those with too much to lose, well for them, he just wasn't good news. What he said just didn't make sense, in fact it was blasphemous. He was dangerous, they thought; his life and teaching were scandalous.

And the tension rises and rises as we travel through Matthew's good news.

What is greatness? That's a question asked a few times in Matthew's gospel. What does the writer want us to know about greatness? Who are the great ones in our society today? What do the Kings of sport, society, arts, culture, fashion, media look like today? Who and what springs to your mind? What I love about Palm Sunday's gospel reading is that it shows greatness in two worlds at the same time. It shows what different people think greatness is and what God knows true greatness is.

Jesus goes to Jerusalem, God's city. He is riding a donkey (or two depending how you read the verse). Jesus, the voice for the people who are on the fringes of society, (the leftovers, the spares, the ones who don't get a say). He is surrounded by his followers calling out praise, laying their garments on the road to make the way smooth for him, waving branches in salute to him.

And where is the very first place Matthew has him go? To the temple. To the place where God was said to reside with God's people. And what does he do? He cleanses it. He drives out those who are corrupting the worship of God. He makes way for the temple to be a "house of prayer". And the blind and



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the lame come for healing to him there, and the children cry out in praise in the temple. The son is coming home.

The movers and shakers don't like it one bit. But Jesus is the voice for the ones who have no voice. Jesus speaks truth to power all the way through Holy Week. Jesus speaks truth to power right up to today. He has given this mission to his followers. To clear the way to give a voice to the voiceless. To allow those who are pushed aside to come right in and be seen and heard and valued as God's beloved children. Jesus is Immanuel – God with us to the end of the age. This is good news that everyone needs to know (Matthew 28:19-20).

^[1] *Euangelion* is the Greek word translated 'gospel' which means 'good news'

Singing - Ride on, ride on TiS 348

Offering

Jesus comes amongst us, riding on a donkey, offering his love, his presence and his life.

Bless these offerings we bring; money, food, time and our lives. Let them carry a message of resistance and hope to where these voices need to be heard.

Hosanna. Hosanna. Hosanna. Amen

Notices

Today there will be many marches happening, maybe in your town or city, maybe not. How can you lend your presence to embody Jesus' entry into the injustices of our time? Is your church joining an ecumenical walk? Do you have a Uniting Church banner to display, or put outside your church? What is on your noticeboard today?

Today is also World Autism Understanding Day. Here's a link to find out more:

<https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/waud>

The final page of this week's Fig Tree Worship Resource is our last offering in the Wild Fig Tree Lenten Resource. We hope you have enjoyed the journey through the wilderness of Lent and that you find challenge and meaning in the readings and songs suggested for Holy Week.

Prayers for World & Community

Good God, our world is still full of clamouring voices, competing for our attention, crying out in the marketplace of contested values and forgotten needs. We are sure of what works and what is most needed and how to get there, ... until your Christ arrives on a donkey. Into our conflicts and our wars, you turn up unarmed and ask us to follow you.

We pray for peace, still a little unnerved that your way to achieve this was a path that went through betrayal, rejection, and the cross.

So, bring your peaceable ways to Gaza and the West Bank, to Ukraine and Yemen. Ride on into these places and into our families, our communities and even our church and turn expectations on their heads; bring new life and hope even out of strife and endings.

You came into the capital, from a more simple life in the regions. From healing and teaching ordinary folk you came to where power was wielded and interests were well established, to where the seats of state and religion had their base. You came to where decisions are made, but you came without powerful friends and still tried to make a difference and you call us to follow your way.

We pray for people in our places of power to make wise and compassionate decisions and for ourselves to have the courage to get involved where Jesus on a donkey is needed today.

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We pray for the people without homes, refugees and victims of violence. For those sick, suffering and dying ones, may the humble arrival of Jesus present in us, make a transforming difference still.

You surprised your friends, going along with the commotion and failing to avoid the risks. Give us, in our time, wisdom, loving God. Wisdom to know where compromise should be made and peace be sought and wisdom to know when not to bend, to speak with clarity and walk your way, as your people. Come into our conflicts, our problems and deepest needs, turn up unarmed and transforming still.

We pray together then 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 forever. Amen.

Singing - All glory, praise and honour TiS 333

Blessing

Know that some crosses should not, and sometimes cannot be avoided, then may we see in Christ that even the worst can be transformed by God's silent power - go into the world in peace with a challenge for the indifferent with encouragement for the timid assistance for the weak and patience for them all. And the blessing of God, ringing with Hosannas be your comfort and your guide. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord, **in the name of Christ. Amen**

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Wild Fig Tree Lenten Resource - Holy Week April 3-8, 2023

Holy Week Invitation:

Here's the final week in our Wild Fig Tree Lenten Resource. Find a quiet place. Come with an open heart, mind, ears and eyes and let the Spirit lead you.

Monday April 3rd

Matthew 26:17-18 On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?" He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.'"

*I am your true shepherd / I will lead you there
Beside still waters
Come and meet me in the middle of the air
I will meet you in the middle of the air
I will lay you down / In pastures green and fair
Every soul shall be restored
I will meet them in the middle of the air
Come and meet me in the middle of the air
Through the lonesome valley
My rod and staff you'll bear
Fear not death's dark shadow
Come and meet me in the middle of the air*
Paul Kelly, from Psalm 23

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g34-nB3oym4>

Tuesday April 4th

Matthew 26:20-25 When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve; and while they were eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me." And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another, "Surely not I, Lord?" He answered, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born." Judas, who betrayed him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" He replied, "You have said so."

*Just like a wave on the ocean
There's forces that run so deep
I'm falling into the temptation / To let it wash all over me
Come and wash me clean...*

Bernard Fanning, Wash me clean

<https://genius.com/Bernard-fanning-wash-me-clean-lyrics>

Wednesday April 5th

Matthew 26:26-28 While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."

Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

*Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come
'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far
And grace will lead me home,*

John Newton, Amazing Grace

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVORrx9jiiE>

Maundy Thursday April 6th

Matthew 26:36 Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me."

*Stay with me, the night has come,
stay with me, the night has come,
stay with me, the night has come
and soon it will be morning,
and soon it will be morning.*

David Biorlin.

<https://www.giamusic.com/store/resource/stay-with-me-the-night-has-come-pdf-d1010135>

Good Friday April 7th

Matthew 27:35 And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him.

*Don't be afraid, my love is stronger,
my love is stronger than your fear.
Don't be afraid, my love is stronger,
And I have promised, promised to be always near*

John Bell ...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7e-c8NP7cY8>

Saturday April 8th

Matthew 27:65 Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can." So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.

Listen

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