



This short act of worship has been produced for you by Revd Dan Haylett. If you are well enough and able, why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time when you would normally be sharing with others in church and pray for them as they pray for you.

Opening Prayer

Hosanna to the Son of David!

Hosanna in the highest!

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

Hosanna in the highest!

God, in love, you give of yourself as your Son comes to us.

Your purposes are made known through Jesus' life, suffering

and death. Help us in our worship and service to follow in the way of Jesus, not in word alone but through our actions. On this Palm Sunday, recalling the welcome of Jesus to Jerusalem and his suffering and rejection, let us go with him in faith and love, so that, united with Jesus in his sufferings, we may share his risen life.

Amen.

Hymn: All glory, laud and honour (Singing the Faith 262)

Sing / read / pray / proclaim the words or listen to it here

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

All glory, laud, and honour
to thee, Redeemer, King,
to whom the lips of children
made sweet hosannas ring!

Thou art the King of Israel,
thou David's royal Son,
who in the Lord's name comest,
the King and Blessed One.

The company of angels
are praising thee on high;
and mortal men and all things
created make reply.

The people of the Hebrews
with palms before thee went;
our praise and prayer and anthems
before thee we present.

To thee before thy Passion
they sang their hymns of praise;
to thee now high exalted,
our melody we raise.

Thou didst receive their praises;
accept the prayers we bring,
who in all good delightest,
thou good and gracious King.

All glory, laud, and honour
to thee, Redeemer, King,
to whom the lips of children
made sweet hosannas ring!

St Theodulph of Orleans (d.821)
translated by John Mason Neale (1811-1866)

Let us pray together:

Holy God,

In what we sing and say about welcome on a day like today, we are speaking the language of the Kingdom.

As those who travelled with Jesus as pilgrims to the feast, we welcome Jesus in our midst today. We welcome the love, joy and peace we find in troubled times. We welcome the assurance of God's generous, costly and death-defying love for us and for all.

Yet like those who were uncertain about what Jesus' coming meant for them, we sometimes offer only a cautious, half-hearted welcome. Sometimes we only tolerate the goodness of God and the implications this has for our welcome of others. Sometimes we offer a welcome to Jesus that says: "this far, and no more."

As we worship, we bring our praise. Our songs and our hearts are lifted to God. As we worship, we commit ourselves again to the ongoing pilgrimage that we are on, walking as we are in the way of Christ. As we worship, we open our lives to God's transforming and renewing power, as we recognise all that needs to change within us and around us.

We welcome Jesus among us, within us today. All glory, laud and honour be to the God of love and grace who welcomes us in the Kingdom's pilgrimage.

Amen.

Today's Reading from the Old Testament

Psalms 118: 1-4, 19-29.

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

² Let Israel say,
"His steadfast love endures forever."

³ Let the house of Aaron say,
"His steadfast love endures forever."

⁴ Let those who fear the LORD say,
"His steadfast love endures forever."

¹⁹ Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the LORD.

²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD;
the righteous shall enter through it.

²¹ I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.

²² The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.

²³ This is the LORD's doing;
it is marvellous in our eyes.

²⁴ This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

²⁵ Save us, we beseech you, O LORD!
O LORD, we beseech you, give us success!

²⁶ Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD.
We bless you from the house of the LORD.

²⁷ The LORD is God,
and he has given us light.

Bind the festal procession with branches,
up to the horns of the altar.

²⁸ You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;
you are my God, I will extol you.

²⁹ O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever.

Today's Gospel Reading: Mark 11:1-11

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ² and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. ³ If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" ⁴ They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, ⁵ some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" ⁶ They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. 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. ⁹Then 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!”

¹¹ Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Time to Reflect

“No pain, no palm; no thorns, no throne; no gall, no glory; no cross, no crown.” (William Penn)

Are you with me or not? It’s a question that Jesus might well have been asking his disciples and followers as they headed towards Jerusalem as pilgrims.

It’s a question too that is in effect asked again throughout Holy week to very different responses. On Palm Sunday we are supposed to note the difference in the response of those inside the city to that of those who had come as pilgrims with Jesus. Are you with me or not? It’s a question that, to their surprise, comes to be asked sharply of even those who were closest to Jesus on Maundy Thursday.

Of course, it comes to us too today. Jesus asks of us, are you with me?

We are now a year on from when we were seeking to keep Lent and Holy Week in the first lockdown. Then we found connections between our experience of being isolated and cut adrift from that which was familiar with Jesus’ experience of these days.

Now, a year later, we are still living with some of those challenges but our focus has changed as we have become used to using the language of “roadmaps”.

Palm Sunday itself provides us with a sort of roadmap for those who would seek to answer Jesus’ challenge: are you with me? On Palm Sunday we see what happens if we are prepared to travel no longer just as tourists, but as pilgrims. William Penn’s observation tells us that the pilgrims’ route necessarily has to take in the hard steps on the difficult road.

The roadmap of Palm Sunday tells us more too about the purposes of God being worked out. Palm Sunday is not the “rags to riches” story that it might at first reading promise to be. It is not that the itinerant rabbi who has won over a rural crowd is suddenly acclaimed by those who lived in the capital. Neither is it a story about the pain and suffering that Jesus had spoken of being negated, as we might secretly have hoped for. It is another step on the path of a true pilgrim, as Jesus comes to keep the feast as One of many pilgrims and yet as the promised One of God who transforms all expectations.

The roadmap of Palm Sunday sets out a pathway that Jesus invites all would be pilgrims to follow. There is an acceptance at the heart of the story, as Jesus asks his disciples to trust in the preparations that have been made for them that are well beyond their control. There is a sign for us that everything we experience is somehow preparation for us, part of shaping us for the next step. Pilgrims are changed by their experiences on the journey, only tourists remain isolated from the events of real life on the way.

The roadmap of Palm Sunday also implies a purpose too. Notice in the readings how Jesus is the one person who seems undistracted by the events going on around him. The claims of his fellow pilgrims and the uneasy welcome are met more or less with little reaction by Jesus. What Mark notes instead is Jesus' immediate trip to the temple courts and withdrawal to Bethany. For those who seek to answer positively to the challenge of Jesus who asks "are you with me?", there is a deep need to take seriously the reality of what trust in God means and feels like despite the chaos of living through troubled times.

Finally, on Palm Sunday it's perhaps what Jesus doesn't do that really underscores the roadmap. He doesn't enter Jerusalem in the sort of show of power and might that Pilate will enter the city in for the festival. Jesus doesn't get caught up in the grand claims of the pilgrims and seek to provoke conflict to prove his own worth.

Rather he puts one foot in front of another, seeking to follow cooperatively and faithfully in the path set by God. This week our roadmaps are laid open before us too. Will we be found to be in step with Jesus by the end of the week? Will we see and realise how we have been shaped and prepared by all we have experienced for the kingdom? Will we be like tourists looking on to life around us or like pilgrims, intimately bound up in the life of heaven here and now?

A time of prayer

Eternal God, in your tender love towards the human race you sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ to take our flesh and to suffer death upon a cross. Give us humility to follow the example of Jesus that we might share in the glory of his resurrection.

In our praying today, we pray with those who are finding the going hard. We pray for those who live with pain or sickness. We pray with all who seek to walk alongside others – in giving and receiving care, in giving a listening ear, in supportive and generous living.

In our praying today, we pray for all around the world who welcome the kingdom in the way they live. We pray for the Church around the world, seeking to offer faithful witness and obedient service as we follow the Servant of all.

In our praying today, we offer the needs of the world to God. We pray for those who are neglected and rejected, and for

people for whom violence is a daily reality. In this week we pray for God's transforming of all that denies good.

In our praying today, we pray for those on our hearts as we remember those who have asked for our prayers. We offer our own needs to God too as we seek to follow faithfully as pilgrims in the way of Christ. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Hymn: When I Survey the Wondrous Cross (Singing the Faith 287)

Sing / read / pray / proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MF9tVfTMXs>

When I survey the wondrous cross,
on which the Prince of Glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
save in the death of Christ my God;
all the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to his blood.

See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled down;
did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were an offering far too small;
love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

A prayer of blessing

To you who belong to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, may God give you grace and peace (1 Thessalonians 1:1c).