

This short act of worship has been produced for you by Revd Valentin Dedji. 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 - pray for them as they pray for you.

**Welcome and Invocation:**

**Introduction:**

Dear Brothers & sisters, today, Palm Sunday, we commemorate Our Lord Jesus Christ's last journey to Jerusalem to complete his mission as our Saviour. In doing so, he accepted to be rejected, to suffer and die upon the Cross for us, and to be raised from the dead. Let us go with him in faith so that, united with him in his sufferings, we may share his risen life. **Amen!**

**Opening Hymn:** StF 263 *'Hosana, Hosana in the Highest'*

<https://youtu.be/SKHwBamBSPk>

**1 Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest!**

**Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest!**

**Lord, we lift up your name, with hearts full of praise.**

**be exalted, O Lord my God!**

**Hosanna, in the highest!**

**2 Glory, glory, glory to the King of kings!**

**Glory, glory, glory to the King of kings!**

**Lord, we lift up your name, with hearts full of praise.**

**be exalted, O Lord my God!**

**Glory to the King of kings!**

Carl Tuttle (b 1953)

**Prayers of Repentance:**

Merciful God, today we are reminded of human unstable nature. We cry 'Hosanna' one minute and 'Death' the next. We are a hot and cold humanity; unreliable and selfish. We have allowed unjust practices and acts of crucifixion to be repeated throughout generations and across centuries. This Palm Sunday reminds us of our lack of stability in our faith.

**So Heavenly Father, forgive us for our hollow 'Hosannas'; for seeking a God to match our national dreams and private goals; for failing to look into Jesus' eyes or understand his mind and heart; for persisting in our worship of narrow horizons and exclusive attitudes.**

O Lord, ride into our tired lives, turn over our tables of prejudice, put to flight our doves of deceit, and help us to build our lives as cities of love and temples of justice, pointing to your Kingdom of liberation, peace and justice for all who belong to the only one race: the human race. **Thank you Jesus for your forgiveness. Amen!**

**1<sup>st</sup> Bible Reading:** Psalms 118: 1-2 & 19-29

<sup>1</sup> O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
his steadfast love endures forever!

<sup>2</sup> Let Israel say,  
“His steadfast love endures forever.”

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

<sup>20</sup> This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it.

<sup>21</sup> I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.

<sup>22</sup> The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

<sup>23</sup> This is the LORD’s doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.

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

<sup>25</sup> Save us, we beseech you, O LORD! O LORD, we beseech you, give us success!

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

<sup>27</sup> The LORD is God,  
and he has given us light.

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

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

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

**2nd Bible Reading:** Luke 19: 28-40

Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King

<sup>28</sup> After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. <sup>29</sup> As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, <sup>30</sup> “Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever

ridden. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>31</sup> If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it.’” <sup>32</sup> Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. <sup>33</sup> As

they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?”

<sup>34</sup> They replied, “The Lord needs it.”

<sup>35</sup> They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. <sup>36</sup> As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

<sup>37</sup> When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

<sup>38</sup> “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”  
“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

<sup>39</sup> Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”

<sup>40</sup> “I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

### Jesus, the Corner Stone

First of all, let’s thank God for the gift of this precious day on which we commemorate ‘Palm Sunday’, the day when Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time, on His way to Calvary for our salvation.

I know that we all like to sing the hymn, ***‘This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it’***. Now, I am very glad to tell you that the words of that hymn have been taken from our first Bible reading of this morning which is Psalm 118: 24. So, I invite you to tell yourself very boldly that, no matter what you may be going through right now, ***‘This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.’*** Yes indeed, a brand new day like this should not be taken for granted. But, despite all the gloomy atmosphere that the whole world is still going through, we thank God for giving us glimpses of light and hope in hopeless situations... The fact that we are commemorating today Palm Sunday, is by God’s Grace. That confirms the saying that ‘God, in good times is also God in bad times’. Our circumstances may be changing, and some of us may no longer be sure about what or who to believe. But God never changes. He renews His Mercies for us, morning by morning, summer, autumn, winter and spring: great indeed is His faithfulness to us. Whatever may come our way, may we remain stable in our faith and keep focusing on Jesus as the foundation and the Corner Stone of our life.

So, in this sermon, I will be sharing with you on the theme:  
**‘JESUS, THE CORNERSTONE OF OUR LIFE’**

Let's start by putting our Gospel reading from Luke 19: 28-40 in its context. Not only Jesus knew about his imminent violent death, He also knew about all the tragedies that were awaiting to happen to Him as He started his journey towards Jerusalem for the last time. Yet, He was determined to go ahead. My crucial question here is: Why? Let's think about it:

The Romans were determined to silence Him, Herod wanted to kill Him, Pilate washed his hands of Him, religious leaders felt threatened by His divine power and authority, His own town-people wanted to stone Him, Thomas doubted Him, Peter denied Him, Judas betrayed Him, soldiers beat Him, the crowds shouted for His crucifixion and His closest followers ran out on Him. All those people had a completely different expectation about Jesus as the awaited Messiah and Saviour of Israel.

But on those final days as Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time, the expectation of the crowds went cold: they saw Jesus through the image of the humble donkey He was riding. Let's pause here and observe that the fact that Jesus chose a low key and humble animal like a donkey to ride in Jerusalem, was a powerful symbol that He deliberately chose to include in His salvation mission, the humble, the vulnerable, the marginalized and all those who were at the fringe of society.

Unfortunately, the crowds had a completely different view. They were expecting Him to give them a show of power and strength by riding the most powerful war horse or chariot, not a humble donkey. Therefore, they turned their Hosannas (*Hoshiana*) into angry and violent calls for His crucifixion.

In other words, in the blink of an eye, the crowd rejected Jesus.

Writing many hundreds years before Jesus, King David wrote in our first Bible reading in Psalm 118:22-23: '***The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes***'.

In the Gospel according to Matthew, Jesus confirms to the crowds that the said passage from King David applied to Him. So, in Matthew 21:42-43 we read: '***Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures:***

***'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone?***

Having said this, let's now reflect on the Biblical symbol of Jesus as the Cornerstone of our life.

## Thoughts on cornerstone

So, the key question here is: What is the purpose of a “cornerstone?”

In Jesus’ day, for a building to be solid in order to stand against all sorts of storms of life, a “cornerstone” and a “capstone” were the two most important, because they were the first and the last stones to be installed.

The cornerstone was larger than the other stones because it was the starting point and from this large stone every other stone was perfectly aligned and built up. And the capstone was often the very last stone installed on a building. If all the stones didn’t align from the cornerstone to the capstone as expected, the structure would be ruined. Therefore, a good builder never let this happen!

In many parts of the Bible, we read that Jesus is the ‘Rock of Ages’, ‘The Alpha and the Omega’, ‘The beginning and the End’. When people are confused, or going through difficult times their shaky faith may lead them to abandon Jesus. It is because, there is a big difference between being a fan of Jesus and being a true disciple of Jesus. Fans are mostly fanatics. They can be very vocal as they show their support. They can go as far as to kill to demonstrate their fanaticism. However, as

soon as things do not go exactly as they want, they would be the first to quit.

The crowds that followed Jesus as He entered Jerusalem for the last time were like a group of fanatics who just wanted a leader who would serve their national interest.

In Luke 19: 37-40 we read: ***‘As Jesus was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, <sup>38</sup> saying,***

***“Blessed is the king  
who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Peace in heaven,  
and glory in the highest heaven!”***

As spectacular as those marching crowds might seem, the reality was that, their praises were purely emotional and lacking faithful foundations.

The good News was that, Jesus did not seem to be worried about the swing of allegiance from the crowds.

In Luke’s Gospel, we read:

***39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” 40 He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.”***

### **Key Spiritual Lessons**

The Key lesson here is that, the spiritual meaning of Jesus as the Cornerstone is that God is building His plan for us, based on His Son, Jesus Christ who is the beginning and the end. So, there are some personal questions that we may need to ask ourselves: Has my personal relationship with Jesus got so strong that I can affirm that my life is aligned on Him as my Cornerstone? Or, am I still lukewarm, searching for my spiritual identity? The danger of a prolonged spiritual indecisiveness is that, we may be a risk of being ‘drowned’ in the crowds. That was exactly what happened when, those same people who saw Jesus performing miracles and who flocked from everywhere to see Him, were the same who suddenly turned against Him and demanded that He should be crucified.

Jesus said: ‘I am the Way, the Truth and the Light of the world’. As such, He wanted people and religious leaders of his time to “build their lives” on the true cornerstone of a strong faith, a reliable trust and a resolute obedience to Him. Today again, like over 2000 years ago, Jesus is still pleading with us: Choose to align your life on my teachings, and I will restore your life and grant you the inner Peace that you so desperately need.

Elsewhere, Jesus warned us against self-deception by saying: ***“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who follow me to the end and those who do the will of my Father in heaven.’***

Yes indeed, we live in a world where we face a lot of opposite winds; we live in a world where we face so many tests and temptations. But our most **valuable** prize and our biggest blessing would come from remaining faithful to Jesus Christ as the Cornerstone of our life and following Him to the end. It is then and only then that we would hear the voice, come in you faithful servant. Come and take your crown of Glory that has been reserved for you. What a joy that would be! **Amen!**

### **PRAYER OVER PALM CROSSES**

(For those who have got their Palm Crosses, we hold them in our hands)

**O Heavenly Father, as your Son Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem as Messiah to suffer and die for us, may these palms be for us a sign of Jesus’ victory; may we who carry them ever hail him as King of kings and Lord of lords.**

**May we continue to follow Jesus Christ in the way that leads to eternal life. With all the faithful, may we enter the New Jerusalem in triumph; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is**

**alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession: (Inspired by H&P 413)

WE pray for peace, but not the easy peace built on complacency

And not the truth of God; we pray for real peace, the peace that God's love alone can seal.

Here we think of all people living under persecution and in war zones. We pray especially for people in Ukraine, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Mali, Burma, DRC...

We pray for peace, but not the cruel peace leaving God's poor bereft,

and dying in distress; we pray for real peace, enriching all humanity. Here, we pray for all vulnerable people: men, women, children, refugees who are victims of people trafficking...

We pray for peace, and not the evil peace defending unjust laws,

And nursing prejudice, but for the real peace of justice, truth, brotherhood and sisterhood.

We pray for peace, and, for the sake of peace, we look to the risen Christ,

Who gives the grace we need to serve the cause of peace and make our own self-sacrifice.

God, give us peace; if you withdraw your love, there is no peace for us

Nor any hope of it. With you to lead us on, through death or tumult, peace will come. **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.**

**And 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.**

**Concluding Hymn: StF 185 'Sing we the King Who is coming'**

**<https://youtu.be/PvAOt4Q8p3o>**

**1. Sing we the King who is coming to reign;  
glory to Jesus, the Lamb that was slain!  
Life and salvation his empire shall bring,  
joy to the nations when Jesus is King:**

***Come let us sing: praise to our King,  
Jesus our King, Jesus our King:  
this is our song, who to Jesus belong:  
glory to Jesus, to Jesus our King.***

**2. All shall be well in his kingdom of peace;  
freedom shall flourish and wisdom increase;  
justice and truth from his sceptre shall spring;  
wrong shall be ended when Jesus is King:**

***Come let us sing: praise to our King,  
Jesus our King, Jesus our King:  
this is our song, who to Jesus belong:  
glory to Jesus, to Jesus our King.***

**3. Souls shall be saved from the burden of sin;  
doubt shall not darken his witness within;  
hell has no terrors, and death has no sting;  
love is victorious when Jesus is King:**

***Come let us sing: praise to our King,  
Jesus our King, Jesus our King:  
this is our song, who to Jesus belong:  
glory to Jesus, to Jesus our King.***

4. Kingdom of Christ, for thy coming we pray;  
hasten, O Father, the dawn of the day  
when this new song thy creation shall sing;  
Satan is vanquished, and Jesus is King:

*Come let us sing: praise to our King,  
Jesus our King, Jesus our King:  
this is our song, who to Jesus belong:  
glory to Jesus, to Jesus our King.*

Charles Silvester Horne (1865-1914)

### Blessing

May Jesus Christ, the King who is coming to reign, lead us out in Peace. May Jesus, the Prince of Peace transform us into Peace makers for the sake of His Kingdom of Peace among us. And may the Holy Spirit help us to be rooted on Jesus as the Cornerstone of our life. **Amen!**

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