**Worshipping God Together : Apart**

**Sunday 10th April 2022 at 10.30am**

**Church; Physically Distanced but Spiritually United**

Worship Prepared by Rev. Janine Atkinson

**A Reflective act of worship for Palm Sunday**



**A Call to Worship God**

Welcome, Lord Jesus, to my home; to my heart.

I give thanks to you, Lord God, for you are good.

Your love endures forever.

I say, at this time and in this place

‘Your love, Lord God, endures for ever’.

So, let all those who love the Lord say:

‘His love endures for ever’

*(Inspired by Psalm 118: 1-4)*

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

I bless you from *this* ‘house of the Lord’

*(Inspired by Psalm 118: 26)*

When being *together* still isn't possible for some of us, ‘*togethering*’ still is.  So, here we are, a Church still ‘*togethering’ -* meeting together in spirit, though still apart

In ‘*togethering’*, we can still *find* each other and *connect* and *hold* each other's hearts in many different ways.

So, we are ‘together’ as we sing (or say) hymns

**Hymn – R&S 192: MP 697:** *Emily E. S. Elliott (1836-97) altd.\**

Thou didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown

when thou camest to earth for me, but in Bethlehem’s home

there was found no room for thy holy nativity:

*O come to my heart, Lord Jesus!*

*There is room in my heart for thee*.

Heaven’s arches rang when the angels sang,

to proclaim thy royal degree; but of lowly birth

cam’st thou, Lord, on earth, and in great humility:

*O come to my heart, Lord Jesus!*

*There is room in my heart for thee.*

The foxes found rest, and the bird its nest,

in the shade of the forest tree; but thy rest was found

on the stony ground in the deserts of Galilee:

*O come to my heart, Lord Jesus!*

*There is room in my heart for thee.*

Thou earnest, O Lord, with the living word

that should set thy people free; but, with mocking scorn,

and with crown of thorn, they bore thee to Calvary:

*O come to my heart, Lord Jesus!*

*Thy cross is my only plea.*

When heaven’s arches ring, and her glad choirs sing,

at thy coming to victory, let thy voice call me home,

saying, ‘Yet there is room, there is room at my side for thee!’

*And my heart shall rejoice, Lord Jesus,*

*when thou comest and callest for me.*

**Praising and Thanking God in Prayer**

Lord God, your love has drawn me to worship you, and to praise you.

Even apart from my Church family today,

you draw us together by your Spirit.

Generous God, with our hearts, and prayers,

and voices united in spirit, we give you our thanks,

we celebrate and we welcome you afresh into our lives.

Great God you are the Lord of all that *has* been

all that is here and now, and all that is next - all that’s yet to be.

On this Palm Sunday we give thanks for the generosity

of the owner of the donkey,

for the joy of the crowd as they glimpsed the Kingship of Jesus,

and for the humility and courage of Jesus himself.

May we give the best of all we have in your service,

may we recognise and accept your kingship with joy

and may we, likeJesus,

know when the time is right to take risks, to make sacrifices for the sake of others, whatever the opposition

and however fickle the support of others may be.

We ask for the courage to serve you in the world that *you* fashioned out of love.

We ask our prayer in the name of Jesus who taught us the true nature of authority and service. Amen

**Saying Sorry to God in Prayer**

Now move on in prayer to say sorry to God, and to ask for forgiveness.

Lord God, for the times I have been silentand not praised you,

when I have been distracted and not noticed you,

let alone welcomed you,

when I have been complacent, and not acknowledged your presence either in my life, or in the world,

when I have felt defeated and not trusted you,

when I have not laid my cloak at *your* feet,

but have laid it at the feet of *others* instead,

forgive me and equip me with *your* humility, compassion and wisdom,

with *your* courage and with the companionship of others.

I ask all my prayers in Jesus’ name, the King who taught us to pray simply and humbly

*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.*

**Thanking those who care**

The last two years have brought home to us with great clarity that the health of all of us depends on the health and well-being of each and every person, and that we are all inextricably, inseparably linked to each other.

John Bell (the Scottish hymn writer) speaking at a conference said this: ‘For the healthy to be whole, they have to be ‘touched’ by those who are sick’. I think we have found truth in that. How can we be ‘whole’ when so many are ‘broken’ by sickness, and loss, and war, and grief?

Many have given themselves selflessly these last 2 years to care for us and our loved ones in many ways. Many have tried to make us ‘whole’ when we have been ‘broken’.

*Think of a time when you were grateful for someone who cared for you, perhaps someone who makes you feel whole, even though you feel broken, and write about it here...*

**

The Bible tells us about an occasion when Jesus was praised and thanked by a crowd for all that he was doing for them. The writer Matthew wrote about it, so ‘listen’ out for God’s word as you read about Jesus arriving in the City of Jerusalem.

**Gospel Reading - Matthew 21: 1-11 *-*** *New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised (NRSVA)*

**Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem**

**21**When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, **2**saying to them, ‘Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. **3**If anyone says anything to you, just say this, “The Lord needs them.” And he will send them immediately.’ **4**This took place to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

**5**‘Tell the daughter of Zion,  
Look, your king is coming to you,  
    humble, and mounted on a donkey,  
        and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’

**6**The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; **7**they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them.



**8**A very large crowdspread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. **9**The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

‘Hosanna to the Son of David!   
    Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Hosanna in the highest heaven!’

**10**When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, ‘Who is this?’

**11**The crowds were saying, ‘This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.’

***Keep a Silence...........................***

Now, you can sing the story - a song written more than a thousand years ago.

**Hymn - R&S 208: MP 9:** *Theodulph of Orleans (d. 82l) tr. J. M. Neale (l8l8-66)\**

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 flesh 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 accept 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!

**Reflection**

The story goes that Sir Walter Raleigh placed his cloak over a puddle for Queen Elizabeth 1st, as an act of chivalry so that she wouldn’t get her royal feet wet.

The Galilean crowd threw their cloaks in front of Jesus’ riding a colt. Imagine the hoof prints, not to mention what the colt’s hooves would be squishing the cloaks into! Their cloaks might be ruined or lost, and most of them wouldn’t have had spare ones.

 *Why do you think they would do that?*

This crowd of people were as good as sacrificing their precious cloaks in celebration of the long-awaited Messiah. The ‘anointed one’ who would save them.

This practice has everything to do with ‘*kingship*’. In the Old Testament - the Book of Kings *(2 Kings: 9)* Elisha is sent by the Lord to anoint Jehu as King. When Jehu’s officers hear this, they quickly take off their cloaks and spread them under Jehu on the bare steps.

So, the crowd’s gesture was about acknowledging a King. To sacrifice a precious cloak to a king, to leave yourself with nothing to cover you at night for *his* sake was seen as a privilege, the cost of which was not to be counted.

So, the crowd acknowledged Jesus as King!

But Jesus is no ordinary king!

And the difference between a King’s or a Roman Emperor’s ‘triumphal march’, following victory in battle, with manacled prisoners paraded in his wake, and this ‘alternative’, *contrasting* version with donkey, cloaks, and palm branches, cannot be underestimated.

Jesus seems to have planned his entry into Jerusalem very carefully.

He could have just walked in like all the other pilgrims. To ride in as he did was a self-conscious symbol of his purpose. Jesus is deliberately drawing on the story of King David’s return to Jerusalem after the death of Absolam, when he rode on a humble donkey as a gesture of peace. Jesus is deliberate and determined and aware of fulfilling prophecy.

Although Jesus comes in peace, his peace is not only of this world but of God’s kingdom. And God’s peace surpasses all other peace. It’s *God’s* peace that we need - not only the peace that is an absence of violence – no matter how longed for and urgent that is.

The crowd spread palm branches and their coats in Jesus’ path. So why not get one of your coats, and spread it out in front of you and imagine Jesus making his way towards you.

Welcome Christ as King of *your* heart, and welcome his peace.

***Keep a Silence...........................***

The crowd put their coats out before Jesus. What can you put at Jesus’ disposal, what can you offer in sacrificial love to Jesus? To bring His Kingdom in? What can you do to pave the way to honour Jesus and welcome Jesus into your heart? *Write it here if you like....*

**Hosanna!**

Hosanna! in Hebrew means ‘*Come and save us’*. You may, or may not have known that. The Galilean crowd welcomed Jesus, because they needed saving and they believed that Jesus was the one who could save them (from Roman occupation)

What would you like to ask Jesus to save you from?

*Write it here if you like...*

We know that the world is hurting and needs saving, so lift before God in prayer a hurting and grieving world.

**Holding the World in Prayer**

Jesus knowingly made his journey into a dangerous future in Jerusalem.

Lord God, we are all on a journey,

a journey into the unknown – every day.

**Hosanna! Lord, save us!**

So Lord God, we pray for and say thank you for all who give of themselves sacrificially.  
We pray for those whose lives are dedicated to caring for

and serving others:  
parents, carers, foster carers, doctors, nurses, home carers and care home staff, those caring for disabled or elderly relatives.  
**Help us to travel with them in prayer.**

We pray for those who work in war-torn countries around the world:  
those who bring food, shelter and healing to those in need,  
sometimes putting their own lives on the line.

We pray especially now for the people of Ukraine,

whose plight breaks our hearts.

**Help us to travel with them in prayer.**

We pray for those in our own communities

who need our unconditional love:  
those hurting from broken relationships, abuse, bullying, domestic violence, those cooped up with their fear  
children and adults whose lives are bereft of love and hope.  
**Help us to travel with them in prayer.**

We pray that we might be Easter people,   
laying down our lives to serve others,  
bringing hope to hopeless situations –

the hope of the cross through the resurrection of Jesus –

your beloved Son.  
**Help us to travel with them in prayer,**

**and with you, Lord Jesus, this Holy Week.**

In faith, we lift our prayer to you, Lord God.

These are the prayers of your faithful people, together in faith and love

Amen

**Hymn - R&S 141: MP 457:** *Graham Kendrick. Copyright © 1986 Thankyou Music.*

Make way, make way, for Christ the King in splendour arrives.

Fling wide the gates and welcome him into your lives.

*Make way! (Make way!)*

*Make way! (Make way!)*

*for the King of kings.*

*(For the King of kings.)*

*Make way! (Make way!)*

*Make way! (Make way!) and let His kingdom in.*

He comes the broken hearts to heal, the prisoners to free;

the deaf shall hear, the lame shall dance, the blind shall see.

*Chorus…*

And those who mourn with heavy hearts, who weep and sigh,

with laughter, joy and royal crown he’ll beautify.

*Chorus…*

We call you now to worship him as Lord of all,

to have no gods before him, their thrones must fall!

*Chorus…*

Lord Jesus, to whom else shall I go?

You, Lord, have the words of eternal life. And I have believed and come to know that you are indeed Holy and to be praised *(John 6)*

**Closing Words and Blessing**

As I welcome you and walk with you this week

Christ be a light to illuminate and guide me;

Christ be a shield to protect me;

Christ under me; Christ over me;

Christ beside me, on my left and my right.

This day be within me and surround me - lowly and meek,

yet all powerful.

Be in my mouth as I speak; be in my heart as I care.

Christ as my light, Christ as my shield

Christ beside me, on my left and my right. Amen.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

the love of God

and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

be with us all, evermore. Amen

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