

**Palm Sunday**  
5 April 2020  
**Prayers, Readings and Reflection**  
*Holy Week begins*

**LITURGY OF THE PALMS**



*Dear friends in Christ, during Lent we have been preparing by works of love and self-sacrifice for the celebration of our Lord's death and resurrection. Today we join together to begin this solemn celebration in union with the Church throughout the world.*

*Christ enters his own city to complete his work as our Saviour, to suffer, to die, and to rise again.*

*Let us go with him in faith and love so that, united with him in his sufferings, we may share his risen life.*

**GOSPEL**

**Matthew 21.1–11**

1 When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them,

2 ‘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 crowd spread 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.’



**COLLECT**

Almighty and everlasting God, who in your tender love towards the human race sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ to take upon him our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross:

grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility, and also be made partakers of his resurrection;

through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## FIRST READING

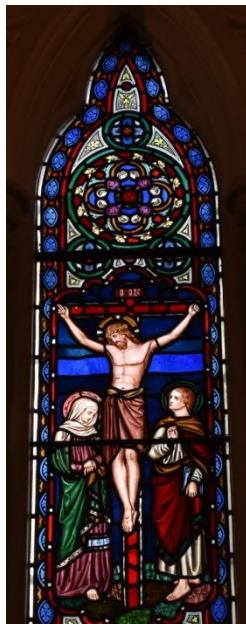
Isaiah 50.4–9a

The servant of the LORD said: 4 The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he wakens – wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught. 5 The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backwards. 6 I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. 7 The Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; 8 he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me. 9 It is the Lord GOD who helps me; who will declare me guilty?

## PSALM

Psalm 31:9-16

9 Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am in trouble; my eye is consumed with sorrow, and also my throat and my belly. 10 For my life is wasted with grief, and my years with sighing; my strength fails me because of affliction, and my bones are consumed. 11 I have become a reproach to all my enemies and even to my neighbours, a dismay to those of my acquaintance; when they see me in the street they avoid me. 12 I am forgotten like the dead, out of mind; I am as useless as a broken pot. 13 For I have heard the whispering of the crowd; fear is all around; they put their heads together against me; they plot to take my life. 14 But as for me, I have trusted in you, O Lord. I have said, ‘You are my God. 15 My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me. 16 Make your face to shine upon your servant, and in your loving-kindness save me.’



## SECOND READING

Philippians 2.5–11

5 Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, 7 but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, 8 he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

## PASSION GOSPEL

Matthew 26.14–end of 27

*Read in your own Bibles!*

## SALLY'S REFLECTION

Recently the weather has been pretty difficult to predict. It has been warm enough to sit out yet windy enough to bring down sticks and leaves from the trees. There have been blue skies and beautiful sunshine; then the sky might go black and sleet blow across the fields. There have been frosts and, in some parts of the country snow. All this in the space of a matter of days. Being British, we are used to changeable weather but such rapid and dramatic change might seem to be reflecting the changes we are experiencing caught up in this global pandemic.

I imagine that Jesus underwent similar feelings of shock and disorientation in the course of this week 2000 years ago, only magnified, of course. For he did not experience fair weather so much as *fair weather friends* and a fatal combination of fear and fury which rapidly spread and infected all around him. As he rode into Jerusalem, his followers shouted his praise ahead of him, and the crowd flung their cloaks down upon the road and even tore branches from the trees to strew his way, singing "Hosanna! Hosanna!" It was a royal welcome. In the days that followed, the people continued to gather round him, eager for his teaching, hanging upon his words. Yet even as they did so, the forces of darkness were gathering. Those who felt threatened and angered by Jesus' teaching began cold-bloodedly to plot his death. Within the space of a week, the crowd had turned against him and his closest friends variously betrayed, denied and abandoned him.

It was like those sideshows you see at fairs - where someone is trapped in stocks and people throw wet sponges and custard pies at them. In this one week, Jesus was on the receiving end of just about every emotion and reaction people wanted to throw at him. Praise, criticism, adoration, deceit. They lied to him and about him, they accused him, made fun of him, knocked him about, flogged him, nailed him to a cross and tormented him, then let him die without reason. And then, sanity seemed to return with a shock. The Roman official presiding over the execution realised and acknowledged Jesus' innocence. The crowd realised what they had been a part of and crept home, sickened and ashamed. His friends stood at a distance, watching. It was too late. Something had ended. The scapegoat was dead.

At the same time, however, something new was beginning. Something even better than what had gone before. Something strange and wonderful and difficult to grasp. New life was stirring on the other side of this death . A new world was even at that moment trembling beneath the cracked surface of the old. New hope, new possibilities, new meanings were quivering into being in the darkness. Not all would see them. Not all would receive them. Judas, for example, would turn his face away and kill himself out of his desperate guilt. Most of the leaders and officials would follow Pilate in washing their hands of the whole affair whilst allowing their souls to remain stained with their ambition and need of power and status. Many of the crowd would turn back to their own lives and grow a hard layer of cynicism and apathy over their need and shame.

But there would be others, who would stay and wait and watch and so be ready for the new thing when it came. Those friends who stood at a distance from the cross watching, those women who had followed Jesus all the way from Galilee. They

would receive this new life and they would spend the rest of their life seeking to share it with others.

And what of us? What will we do in these changeable, difficult and, for some, dangerous times? Will we chop and change? Sometimes interested, sometimes mocking? All smiles in the light, betraying with a kiss in the dark? Following close one minute, then turning away to safer options?

Or will we watch and wait and expect the new life to dawn in our own lives as the clouds part and the sun breaks through?

## **POST COMMUNION**

Lord Jesus Christ, you humbled yourself in taking the form of a servant, and in obedience died on the cross for our salvation: give us the mind to follow you and to proclaim you as Lord and King, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

## **BLESSING**

Christ crucified draw you to himself,  
to find in him a sure ground for faith,  
a firm support for hope,  
and the assurance of sins forgiven;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
rest upon you this Holy Week  
and remain with you always. Amen.



## **HYMN**

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

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.

Do thou direct our footsteps upon our earthly way,  
and bring us by thy mercy to heaven's eternal day.

Within that blessed City thy praises may we sing,  
and ever raise hosannas to our most loving King:

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