

Order of Worship
St.Margaret's Uniting Church, Mooroolbark
14th April 2019 – Rev Dr Robert Stringer

Palm Sunday

THEME; Palm Sunday - Jesus' big Demo

INTROIT TIS: 724: "Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna" (V. 1)

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!

WE GATHER TO WORSHIP GOD

WELCOME

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY & ANCESTORS

We gather together on the land that cared and nurtured the people of the Kulin nation. The land where the people of the Wurundjeri language gather and celebrated their stories, songs and dances passed on by their ancestors, and the Great Spirit of the Dreaming over countless generations.

We acknowledge these ancestors and give thanks for their memory. We also acknowledge and give thanks for the foremothers and forefathers of St Margaret's Uniting Church. All those who have given their gifts to be a shining light of God for the wider community. To this community of saints, living and dead, named and unnamed we pay our respects.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

We light the Christ Candle

We celebrate God coming to us in human form bringing light to the world.

HYMN TIS 256: "The servant King"

1

From heaven you came, helpless babe,
Entered our world, your glory veiled;
Not to be served, but to serve,
And give your life that we may live.

*This is our God, the Servant King,
He calls us now to follow him,
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to the Servant King.*

2.

There in the Garden of Tears,
My heavy load he chose to bear;

His heart with sorrow was torn,
"Yet not my will, but yours", he said.

3

Come see his hands and his feet,
The scars that speak of sacrifice,
Hands that flung stars into space
To cruel nails surrendered.

4.

So let us learn how to serve
And in our lives enthrone him;
Each other's needs to prefer,
For it is Christ we're serving.

CALL TO WORSHIP (Bruce Prewer)

This is the day which the Lord has made,

We will rejoice and be glad in it.

Look ! Your King comes to you;

Humble and seated on an ass, he arrives.

Hosanna! Wonderful is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!

If we should keep quiet the very stone would cry aloud!

Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!

HYMN TIS 333: "All glory praise and honour"

*All glory, praise and honour
to you, redeemer, king,
to whom the lips of children
made sweet hosannas ring.*

1

You are the king of Israel
and David's royal son,
now in the Lord's name coming,
the king and blessed one.

2

The company of angels
are praising you on high,
and we and all creation
exultant make reply.

3

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

4

To you before your passion
they sang their hymns of praise:
to you now high exalted

our melody we raise.

5

Their praises you accepted:
accept the prayers we bring,
who in all good take pleasure,
our good and gracious king.

PSALM 118: 1-2 & 19-29 (Bruce Prewer)

O give thanks to God who is all goodness,
whose love prevails for ever!
Let all of Christ's people shout it:
God's love prevails forever.

Open for me the gates of grace and truth,
that I may enter and give thanks to God.
Here really are the gates of God,
where the true can believers go inside.
I thank you, Lord, for listening to me,
and becoming my Friend and Saviour.

The stone which the builders threw aside
has now become the true foundation stone.
We owe all this to our God's saving deed,
and it looks absolutely wonderful to us.
This new day has been made by God,
let us celebrate and be delighted with it!

We have prayed: "Save us, please God,
we beg you, give us the triumph."
Wonderful is he who comes in God's name;
in the house of prayer we praise Jesus the King is risen you!
God, our God, has shown us the true light;
join this peace march and wave the branches!

You truly are my God, and I thank you;
you are my God, I will celebrate you!
O give thanks to God who is all goodness,
whose love prevails for ever!

A WORD FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE AND CHILDREN

SONG: "We have a King who rides on a donkey" Tune: Drunken sailor

1. We have a King who rides on a donkey
We have a King who rides on a donkey
We have a King who rides on a donkey
and his name is Jesus

*Jesus the King is risen
Jesus the King is risen*

*Jesus the King is risen
early in the morning*

2. Trees are waving a royal welcome
Trees are waving a royal welcome
Trees are waving a royal welcome
for the king called Jesus.
3. We have a King who cares for people
We have a King who cares for people
We have a King who cares for people
and his name is Jesus.
4. We have a King with a bowl and towel
We have a King with a bowl and towel
We have a King with a bowl and towel
servant King called Jesus.
5. We have a King alive and with us
We have a King alive and with us
We have a King alive and with us
and his name is Jesus.

A Prayer of Confession

Lord Jesus Christ, as we praise you with heart and life and voice, not only with outward signs such as palm branches or the occasional "Hosanna" but with lives truly turned towards you, it seems such a distance from this present day Palm Sunday in Australia. We can welcome you as a king, riding on a lowly donkey, yet we know that our acclamations could easily be like the crowd and turn to against you. From this side of the resurrection, we confidently believe that we could never have been part of the jeering crowd - but would we, if we had been there?
(silent reflection)

Lord Jesus Christ, when our words and actions reflect a reluctance to confess you publicly as Lord of our lives:

Forgive us.

When we fear that humbling ourselves, would be seen by others as weakness, or some kind of defect in our character:

Forgive us.

When we have betrayed your love for us through our lack of love for you, for others, and for ourselves :

Forgive us.

When we find ourselves glossing over the events of your passion and death because we look forward to Easter as a time to enjoy holidays and have fun.

Forgive us.

Lord Jesus Christ, fix your mind in us; and remake us in your likeness; empty us of all that hinders us from following you to where pain and suffering, exploitation and injustice exist.

Gracious and loving God, empower us with the Holy Spirit so that our lives continually glorify you and our tongues forever confess Jesus as Lord. This

we pray in Jesus' name. Amen

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Hear the good news: "Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave...and became obedient to the point of death -- even death on a cross." (Philippians 6,7a,8b) Through his obedience we are therefore freed from whatever sin enslaves us.

Thanks be to God!

WE LISTEN FOR A WORD FROM GOD

From the Jewish Scriptures – The Book of the prophet, Isaiah, Chapter 50. Ve45rses 4 to 9a

The Lord God has given me

the tongue of a teacher,[a]

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 backward.

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;

From a Christian Letter - Philippians 2:5-11

Let the same mind be in you that was[a] 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.

THE GOSPEL according to St.Luke. Chapter 19. Verses 28 to 40

After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

29 When Jesus had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, 30 saying, “Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it.’” 32 So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. 33 As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” 34 They said, “The Lord needs it.” 35 Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. 36 As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. 37 As he 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, 38 saying,

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

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.”

REFLECTION

Palm Sunday – Jesus Christ Superstar

Luke 19.28-40

How many people have visited Jerusalem?

How many have done the 5 km from Bethany to the Old City of Jerusalem on a Palm Sunday? It is a great experience to do that walk knowing that it was possibly the same stretch of road that Jesus walked on that first Palm Sunday so long ago.

Another question: How many of you who have visited Jerusalem managed to see any Palm trees? I was originally told that there weren't any because Jerusalem was too cold being 2700 feet above sea level. However, a little research on the internet showed that there are lots of Palm

trees in Jerusalem. What was obvious from the pictures was that they were all very large trees and the branches were a long way from the ground.

Another question: How many of you have ever tried to cut palm branches off a palm tree? It is not easy and you need a good saw.

What were the crowds carrying?

Only John's Gospel mentions branches of palms. In Mark the disciples cut leaves from the fields and in Matthew they cut off branches from the trees. There are no branches of any kind mentioned in Luke, instead they lay garments on the road.

Whatever the crowds were carrying, waving or laying on the road the question is what did it mean? There is nothing quite like this in the OT.

Brian Stoffregen, one of my favourite Biblical scholars, suggests that the actions described by John resemble one of the standard processions of Tabernacles where the people carried twigs of myrtle, willow and palm. Originally these were used in the construction of booths (Nehemiah 8:13-18). Later some of them, at least, were bound together into a sort of festal plume, called the "*lulab*", to which a citron was also attached. The *lulab* was a symbol of rejoicing and was carried ceremonially during the daily singing of the Hallel (Psalms 113-118).

In 1 Maccabees 13:49-52 In the story about the capture of the pagan fort in Jerusalem:

The enemy troops in the Jerusalem fortress still could not go into the country to buy food, and many of them starved to death. Finally, the survivors begged Simon for peace. He agreed, then ordered them to leave the fortress, so he could remove everything that made it unclean according to their religion.

On the twenty-third day of the second month in the year 171 [141 BCE] of the Syrian Kingdom, Simon led his soldiers into the fortress. They carried **palm branches** and praised God with all kinds of songs and musical instruments. God had completely crushed their powerful enemy! Simon decided that a joyous festival should be held on this same day every year. He strengthened the wall on the side of the temple hill that faced the fortress. Then he and his troops made the fortress their headquarters.

2 Maccabees 10:1-8 We read about the rededication of the Temple [Hanukkah]

Judas (Maccabeus) and his followers made the temple an acceptable place of worship once again. They built a new altar for sacrifices and started a fire on it by rubbing flint rocks together. After this, they offered sacrifices for the first time in two years. They burned incense, then lit the lamps and brought out the sacred loaves of bread.

When all of this was done, the troops lay face down on the ground and prayed, "Our Lord, please don't let us suffer such terrible troubles again. If we should ever turn from you, don't correct us so harshly. And please, never again hand us over to these foreign savages, who insult you."

The dedication of the temple took place on the twenty-fifth day of the month of Chislev - the same day of the same month that the foreigners had made the temple unfit for worship. We celebrated a joyful festival for eight days, and it was just like the Festival of Shelters. In fact, while our people celebrated, they kept remembering the recent Festival of Shelters, when they were forced to roam the hills and live in caves like wild animals. But now they walked around carrying **sticks** decorated with twisted ivy and holding up **branches**, including some from **palm trees**. They sang hymns and thanked the Lord for making our holy temple clean again. Afterwards, everyone decided to make this a yearly festival for our whole nation.

Again according to Brian Stoffregen, the use of palm branches in the story in Maccabees was related to military victories. So we need to ask what were the people expecting from Jesus? or had Jesus had more of a say in it and was he using this as a way of demonstrating what he was planning to do in going to Jerusalem?

When they shouted "Hosanna" which means "Save us" (note that this is not mentioned in Luke); did they consider that "salvation" to be like that of the Maccabees -- driving out the occupying forces from Jerusalem? It is obvious that this was not what Jesus had in mind.

What about the animal? What does it symbolize?

Only Matthew and John make reference to Zechariah 9:9. In John's Gospel he refers to Jesus riding on a donkey and uses an Old Testament quote that refers to "A king sitting on a donkey's colt". In Matthew, who is always trying to show how Jesus' actions fulfill OT texts, he has Jesus riding on a colt. Looking back from a post Easter point of view, we have tended to emphasize the "humble" aspect of the king who comes riding into town on his donkey as depicted in the Old Testament quotes from Zechariah. However, looking at the context of Zechariah in ch.9 it is interesting to note that the context was the "defeat and destruction of foreign nations and return and restoration for Israel".

Given this context, of Zechariah's humble King riding into town and the use of palm branches followed by the cleansing of the temple, then the reference to the Maccabean forces defeating the foreign forces and rededicating the temple makes sense.

I have always liked the depiction of the scene in Andrew Lloyd Weber's *Jesus Christ Superstar* of Jesus coming as a Messiah King with similarities to what we would call a superstar. Someone who attracts the attention of the crowd as a pop star but one where you have to listen to the underlining lyrics in order to really understand what the singer was really singing about. A Jesus who by choosing the way of suffering and death shows us that there is life on the other side of pain and suffering. Maybe this is the message that we need to proclaim on this Palm Sunday as a message to make sense of the coming Easter events.

CHOIR HYMN TIS 348: "Ride on, ride on in majesty"

1

Ride on, ride on in majesty;
hark, all the tribes hosanna cry!
O Saviour, meek, pursue your road
with palms and scattered garments strowed.

2

Ride on, ride on in majesty,
in lowly pomp ride on to die;
O Christ, your triumphs now begin
o'er captive death and conquered sin.

3

Ride on, ride on in majesty;
the winged squadrons of the sky
look down with sad and wondering eyes
to see the approaching sacrifice.

4

Ride on, ride on in majesty;
your last and fiercest strife is nigh;

the Father on his sapphire throne
awaits his own anointed Son.

5

Ride on, ride on in majesty,
in lowly pomp ride on to die;
bow your meek head to mortal pain,
then take, O God, your power and reign!

WE SHARE OUR COMMUNITY LIFE

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

OFFERING and OFFERTORY PRAYER

Hosanna! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna! Bless these gifts and our lives, O God, for we offer them in
the name of Jesus, our Lord. He emptied himself that we might be
filled. He humbled himself that we might be lifted up. We pray that
these gifts be used to proclaim the gospel which fills lives that are
empty and lifts up those who need help. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

SONG: "Come into the streets with me"

1 Come into the streets with me!
Come to where the crowds will be,
see a strange and gentle king
on a donkey travelling.

*Come and follow my leader,
come and follow my leader,
Jesus Christ is riding by,
come and follow my leader!*

2 All the people shout his name,
waving branches, sing his fame,
throw their coats upon his road,
glad to praise the Son of God. [Refrain]

3 If the soldiers draw their swords,
will we dare to sing these words,
be his friends for just a day,
cheer him on, then run away? [Refrain]

4 Jesus goes where things are rough,
Jesus knows when life is tough,
always comes to us, his friends,
so his story never ends. [Refrain]

SENDING OUT (Bruce Prewer)

In sunshine and shadow, joy or grief,
this is the day which the Lord has made,

We will rejoice and be glad in it.

Step gratefully into this holy week;
tread softly for many things are already bruised;
go reverently for holiness is found in unlikely places;
walk lovingly for the love of the Crucified One
is the key to all things on earth and in heaven. **Amen!**
Even with our small faith, may Christ live and rule in our hearts.

ASCRPTION TIS 724: “Glory, glory, glory....” (verse 2)

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!

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