

Sunday Update
28th March 2021

Mark 11:1-11

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, 2 saying to them, 'Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 3 If anyone asks you, "Why are you doing this?" say, "The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly."

4 They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, 5 some people standing there asked, 'What are you doing, untying that colt?' 6 They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. 7 When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. 8 Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. 9 Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, 'Hosanna!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'

10 'Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!' 'Hosanna in the highest heaven!'

11 Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

The excitement of the crowd – it is what all sportspeople are missing just now! What must it be like to play in a stadium that seats 60,000 people or more, when it is empty? What is the atmosphere like? There must be something lacking when there is no crowd there to encourage you on. Lots of people will speak about the energy of the crowd giving them that extra something to pull out a better performance, to run faster than they have ever run before, or to jump further, or to put in that extra bit of effort to score a goal or a try. Teams will tell you that the crowd is like having an extra person in the stadium! The crowd will clap along in the rhythm of the run-up to the jump; they will sing the club songs or the national anthem; they will chant the players' names; there will be this great cacophony of noise that can be heard for a long way away from the stadium on match-day. Yet, for now all of that is missing and stadia are more or less empty for even the biggest sporting events. You can hear every word that the players say, or that the coaching-staff shout, and the broadcasters have to keep apologising for any "unsavoury language you might have heard!"

The excitement of the crowd – that's how Palm Sunday feels. The crowd is shouting, maybe even singing, waving palm branches, taking off their coats to make an impromptu red carpet and a saddle for the donkey, and all that as Jesus rides into Jerusalem. Palm Sunday is the beginning of the week that ends with Good Friday and Easter Sunday, the week that we call Holy Week. It is the last week in the life and ministry of Jesus, and we will mark Holy Week with a communion service on Maundy Thursday and a Good Friday service together with our friends in Currie. Next Sunday we will celebrate the resurrection on Easter Sunday and rejoice that Jesus is alive. Palm Sunday begins this week when we remember Jesus, reflect on His life and death, and celebrate the fact that He did all of this for us. It begins with the excitement of the crowd!

There was an old promise: *"Rejoice, greatly, O daughter of Zion... see your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey..." (Zechariah 9:9)* It seems to me that Jesus is deliberately making that promise happen; some five hundred years after Zechariah spoke the words, here is Jesus acting out that promise, riding into the city of Jerusalem on a donkey. The crowd recognise that! They do three things: first of all, they take their cloaks and spread them over the donkey as a makeshift saddle for Jesus to sit on; other cloaks go onto the road like a red carpet. Secondly they cut down palm branches and wave these as if this is some great festival procession to celebrate God's

salvation. Thirdly, the sing or shout in celebration of Jesus: He is the One who comes in the Name of the Lord; He is the Saviour; He is the King who comes in the footsteps of the great king David. "Hosanna" is the word forever associated with Palm Sunday; it is a one-word prayer that simply means "Lord, save us!" These three things all celebrate the coming of the King; the crowd recognises Jesus as the King, the One coming in the name of the Lord to save His people.

Palm Sunday is all very exciting; the crowd is singing and Jesus is feeling the excitement. Jesus is King! The crowd recognise that He is King. One of the traditional Palm Sunday hymns catches the flavour of that excitement:

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

He rides into Jerusalem in majesty and the crowd celebrate. But Jesus is going to be a different king; there's a hint of that in the old promise. He will be a king who is "*Gentle and riding on a donkey*" rather than a powerful king at the head of an army riding a war-horse. Here's the last verse of that same hymn; it strikes quite a different note:

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

Jesus will be a King who suffers and dies for His people.

To say that "Jesus is King" is both a strong and profound thing to say. The "kingdom of heaven" was a big theme in His ministry; many of the parables throw us an insight into what life is like when Jesus is King! He is indeed king, but in a very different way. Jesus kingship is not to be found on any map, but is to be found in the hearts and minds of the men and women who follow Him. He is King over us as we put into practice the values and standards that Jesus teaches; He is King over us as we put into practice the values and attitudes that Jesus models for us in His own life. To call Jesus "King" commits us to be the kind of people who do what He says and who walk in His footsteps. For us to celebrate Jesus as King challenges us to live our lives in Jesus' ways.

In our Church Wednesday conversation on the Bible, we were discussing some of Jesus' teaching about values and what is important in life. As I was preparing for that conversation, I came across this quote from Tom Wright. He said: "*this is what God is like... If you lived in a society where everyone believed in this God, there wouldn't be any violence. There wouldn't be any revenge. There wouldn't be any divisions of class or caste. Property and possessions wouldn't be nearly as important as making sure your neighbour was all right*". (N.T. Wright) That needs to be thought about over and over again; this is what life is like when Jesus is King. Our attitudes and values need to be shaped by Jesus' teaching and by His example! When Jesus is King, then our values change, what matters most to us is different, and our attitudes are changed. Then the world becomes a better place.

Palm Sunday is an exciting day! The story is full of the excitement of the crowd. But what makes it a lasting celebration is the notion that Jesus is King. Let's celebrate Jesus the King who came to be gentle and to save us. He rode in majesty, but on a donkey; He rode on majesty, but to suffer and to die – a different kind of king. Let us be people whose lives are shaped by that different kind of king.

Prayer: Father, we thank you for Palm Sunday, for the excitement of the crowd, singing, waving palm branches, laying their cloaks on the ground, welcoming Jesus as their King. We thank You that Jesus is still King, gentle and riding on a donkey, and that He is the King who came to save us by His death on the cross. Help us to make Jesus King of our lives again this Palm Sunday and be the kind of people that He wants us to be.

*Day by day, dear Lord of you
Three things I pray:
To see you more clearly,
To love you more dearly,
To follow you more nearly,
Day by day.*

Please take time during the week to pray for the people referred to in these topics:

- For people who are looking for something of value in their lives, something that gives them a sense of purpose and direction, a sense of being loved; help them to find that purpose and value in Jesus and in Christian faith.
- For Holy Week, as we journey through the days leading up to Easter; help us to understand these days as they were for Jesus and as they are for us; make our faith deeper and our love for Jesus stronger.
- For people who have contracted Covid and are in hospital, that they make a good recovery; those NHS staff who are caring for them, under pressure by the numbers of people in hospital and trying to manage the care they provide.
- For people who mourn because a loved one has died; help them to find comfort and peace.
- For the roll-out of the vaccine to be efficient and effective, reaching the people who need it most; for those waiting for the letter; for the vaccine to make people safe, as promised.
- For people who are isolated again by lockdown, spending time on their own again and feeling lonely; for people in care homes, again cut off from family and friends, and the staff who care for them.
- For schools: pupils at home and some in schools; for families trying to manage their children and helping them to take part in learning however it is delivered; for teachers working in new ways and finding that very demanding.
- For businesses that are shut: the pubs and hotels, hairdressers, and others; for those who own these businesses and it is their livelihood; for those who work and are again on furlough; for the gaps left in the social interaction of many people, adding to their sense of isolation.
- For Churches, with buildings again closed; help them to care for all of their people; may the technology be a lifeline for lots of people; help churches across Scotland to be a light in their community and share the light of Jesus with others.
- For people we know...
- This week, take time to think about these words and pray them into your own heart: *"Since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful..." (Hebrews 12:28)*

Here are some links to hymns you might know and love.

Ride on, ride on in majesty	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MD9rMkIS1yw
Come Christians join to sing	"Come Christians, Join to Sing" - Hymn 10 - YouTube
Hosanna, hosanna	Hosanna - Vineyard [lyrics] - YouTube
Meekness and Majesty	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXggFYQQTJ0
Hear the call of the Kingdom	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WL-UdwB0Qvc

Remember the prayer e-mail line at prayerjgpc@gmail.com

Some other resources:

- Each Sunday at 10.30am, we will have a short time together using Zoom; a link has been sent out in the e-mail with this update which should enable you to join in.
- This reflection is available on our own church website under the “sermons” tab and there is an archive of sermon material there for you to read and links to the video reflections – www.jgpc.org.uk
- If you have a smartphone, a tablet or an i-pad, the Bible2020 app will give you a short bible reading each day (from the Scottish Bible Society)
- Scripture Union daily bible readings can be found at <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive>
- The Church of Scotland website has prayers and reflections from the Moderator and details of lots of on-line streamed church services - <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/>
- Claremont Church in East Kilbride are making services available over a phone line: here are the contact details which you can share with people who are not on line: **Sunday Services @ 10:30 - same details every week** 020 3937 2973; PIN: 352 598 857#

DAILY BIBLE STUDY MATERIALS - New issues of “**Word For Today**” and “**Word For You Today**” Booklets for February, March and April are now available. Please contact Michael Merriman who will be delighted to arrange copies. Other Bible Study materials are also available with Ian Aitken. **Let the Bible feed you.**

Try Praying: Try Praying is designed to help people who have never prayed before get started. The booklet is a 7-day guide to help people get started on the journey of faith. Over the past year, 100 of these booklets have been taken from the box outside our Church building. Over Easter, we are asking people to consider giving some money to support **Try Praying**; if you would like to contribute, either give to the church bank account online (Sort Code 83-19-15; Account 00184681) or give cash to Douglas Buchanan or the minister.

Celebration

These resources are designed to help you explore the Bible as a family together at home while we can't go to church. Be as creative as you want to be and enjoy spending time with each other and with God.

Prepare yourself...

Let us come with enthusiasm to meet the Lord today.

Let us pour out our love and our praise and bring the best we can offer to our generous God.

Amen.



Challenge...

Give each person some sticky notes or small pieces of paper.

Write a compliment for each person present on individual notes and give it to them.

Question...



Have you ever met anyone famous?

What was it like?



Read the Bible...

Today's verses are found in Mark 11:1-11. You can read them in a Bible or find them [here](#).

You could try reading the verses in different versions to see if it adds to your understanding of the passage. Have fun re-enacting the story in your home or garden. This is a good animation of the story too: [The Story of Easter \(The Triumphal Entry\)](#)



Talk together...

- Can you think of a time when you had a visit from somebody important or exciting? What happened and how did it make you feel?
- How does it feel to be celebrated? How does it feel to celebrate someone else?
- What makes a gift special? Is it the amount it cost? The brilliant skill it took to make it? Who it came from?

In Jesus' day, a cloak was a treasured possession. By throwing their cloaks over the donkey's back and laying them on the road, people were extravagantly showing their appreciation and rejoicing at God's rescue plan in action.

- Think about if this story was taking place in the modern day (though you might want to imagine a restriction free setting!) How would Jesus have been welcomed? How would people show their appreciation? What things of value might people lay down? What would you be willing to give up?
- How do you see Jesus? Is he a good person from history? A celebrity from the past? Or something else? In our life, how do we show that Jesus is someone who has meaning for us?
- Can you think of one way you could be extravagant this week (in terms of money, time, possessions or anything that comes to mind)

Play together...

Island game: find some old clothing/pillowcases/towels that you don't mind standing on.

Using just two or three pieces can you get your whole family from one side of the room/garden to the other? You can only stand on the fabric and not touch the floor. You will need to work as a team standing on one piece while you move the other.

Pray together...

Sometimes when life is hard or things are difficult, we feel sad or worried, it can be a struggle to be glad. But every day there are things we can be thankful for.

Make a list of all the things you can be grateful for and say a big thank you to God for all He has provided for you and your family today.

Make something...

In your garden or if you go for a walk collect some leaves to make into a collage at home.

The people in the story were so excited to welcome Jesus that they grabbed whatever they could find to worship him.

What other items could you find to make some worship art from? Arrange what you find into a picture of celebration.



Praise together...



[Give thanks to God](#) by Allan McKinlay

[Make way, make way](#) by Graham Kendrick

[We have a king who rides a donkey](#)

[Hosanna in the highest](#)

