

Luke 19:28-40 Palm Sunday 10th April 2022

Compline 6pm

I wonder if we can image the scene in Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday.. the excitement... the atmosphere.....

It was Passover ... the biggest and most important Festival in the Jewish Calendar.

A historian called Josephus estimated there were around 3 million people in Jerusalem each Passover.

Now ..on the day that Jesus rode into Jerusalem many in the crowd were on his side ... cheering...waving ... singing....pushing for the best view, and excited not just with Jesus as a hero... but as a turning point for their country. They shouted.

“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

In Matthew’s Gospel we are told that they also shout out....

“Hosanna to the Son of David!”

“Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

The word ‘Hosanna’ .. a word which we often use in praise.. but is a translation of the Hebrew meaning ‘Save us, Lord’..... ‘Save us now’

It is used in the Old Testament on occasions where people are asking for help and protection from the King.

Many of the crowd who welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem would have been expecting or hoping for a conquering king, someone who would free them from the Roman Occupation and establish himself as their real leader. Many people were looking for someone who could make their lives better, give them independence saving them materially and physically.

But Jesus had not come as a military, conquering king.

Jesus came as a king of a different kind.

Jesus chose to ride into Jerusalem on a humble donkey.

He did something that scripture said would happen... (Zechariah 9:9)
“Say to Daughter Zion,
‘See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’

The donkey was used to carry everyday loads ... but it was not a despised beast of burden... but thought of as a noble animal.
In Jesus’ time, a horse or a donkey could be ridden by a king.
When a King went to war, he rode a huge battle horse, but when he came in peace, he rode a donkey.
The horse and donkey each giving a different message.
So the fact that Jesus wanted a donkey to ride on meant that he was coming as a king.. but as a one who came in peace.

But let’s remember.... the crowds were thinking in terms of conquest, hoping that Jesus would lead the revolt against the Roman’s.they were welcoming him as a conquering king ... as they had done with Kings in the past...waving palm leaves and spreading garments on the ground for him to walk on...
but the crowd never dreamt of what kind of conqueror he wished to be.
He would conqueror with Love...

Yet within days their shouts of joy and celebration and welcome had evaporated ...how quickly they changed their tune..... the fickleness of human nature often friendship and loyalty can depend on what is in it for us.....

As days past and events became ugly ... the mood of the crowd changed the voices which had been raised in welcome now called for his death..

Jesus was rejected... abandoned by his disciples and the crowd ..and they weren’t singing ‘Hosanna’ anymore. They were shouting,
.....`Crucify him.`

The times when we reject or forget Jesus... is ... when we are like that crowd shouting `Crucify....Crucify`

Palm Sunday is a day that challenges us.... concerning our loyalty... asking ourselves the question ... how ready are we to follow Jesus when faith is demanding..... when life doesn't go as we had hoped when we need to move outside our comfort zone

Thankfully it is also about the one.... who ... however often we may change our tune.... stays faithful to us .. to the point of death...

As Paul wrote ... While we still were sinners, Christ died for us.....

On Palm Sunday, traditionally we receive a palm cross during the service... sadly I cannot give you one in person this evening.... but instead let's close our eyes and imagine receiving that cross.....and remember that we are followers of Christ .. today and every day and indeed can shout

`Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!`

Let us pray...

Lord, the palm cross is a sign of our expectant hope in your resurrection, as a symbol of our thanks for your death for us and as a promise to seek your will in the year ahead. Lord, you commanded us to take up our cross and follow you. Bless us, that we may find comfort and strength to carry your cross in our lives day by day.
Amen