

WINCHESTER, EASTLEIGH & ROMSEY CIRCUIT

Service at Home - Sunday 2nd April 2023

prepared by the Revd Ruth Fry

Call to Worship

We raise our voices and wave with joyful hope the palms of deliverance of God's people.

Hosanna! Hosanna to the Son of David!

Our hearts are filled with expectation as we welcome the coming king.

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

We receive into the crowded streets of our lives the one who is Saviour, not only of us, but of all the earth.

Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest heaven!

Listen, read, pray, or sing along StF 263

<https://youtu.be/Hj1H70SigEY>

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!

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!

Carl Tuttle (b. 1953)

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Prayer

O Christ, you entered the city as a poor man not in style but simply, yet still you caused uproar, and questions everywhere; you drew the expectations of a hungry crowd, and brought buried conflicts to the light.

May we, who are sometimes swayed by the crowd's approval, and who often avoid conflict for fear of its cost to us, hold fast to the gospel of peace and justice and follow faithfully in your way of compassion and solidarity with those who are poor and excluded, wherever it may lead us. **Amen.**

Read Philippians 2 v 5-11

Read Matthew 21 v 1-11

Listen, read, pray, or sing along StF 353

<https://youtu.be/u7Ce3njDnEo>

Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it, for by his power each tree and flower was planned and made.

Jesus is Lord! The universe declares it; sun, moon, and stars in heaven cry:

Jesus is Lord!

Jesus is Lord! Jesus is Lord!

Praise him with alleluias, for Jesus is Lord!

Jesus is Lord! Yet from his throne eternal in flesh he came to die in pain on Calvary's tree. Jesus is Lord! From him all life proceeding — yet gave his life a ransom, thus setting us free.

Jesus is Lord! O'er sin the mighty conqueror, from death he rose; and all his foes shall own his name.

Jesus is Lord! God sends his Holy Spirit to show by works of power that Jesus is Lord.

David John Mansell (b. 1936)

Words and Music: © 1980 Springtide

Reflection

The triumphal entry of Jesus into the city of Jerusalem was deliberate and planned. This was no attempt to slip in, quietly, unnoticed. The way Jesus came, the time and manner of his coming, when the Jewish people were gathered to celebrate the Passover feast, to remember the great story of freedom and liberation from slavery in Egypt, was highly confrontational, despite that fact that it was peaceful.

There were prophecies in the Jewish Scriptures, for example, from the book of Zechariah: *'I will remove the war chariots from Israel and take the war horses from Jerusalem, the bows used in battle will be destroyed. Your King will make peace among the nations'*.

Christians have often begun their thinking about Jesus' death with the assumption that it was all about God saving them from their 'sin' so that they could go to heaven. A revolutionary idea, for sure, but not quite the revolution the early Christians were talking about. They were in fact talking about something much bigger, something more dangerous, something altogether more explosive the significance of which is cosmic.

Paul writes in his letter to the Philippians: *'Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited'*. Throughout Lent Christians spend time reflecting on and thinking about the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness being tempted to misuse this equality with God, the power at his disposal. What a very different kind of King Jesus was. A human King and yet a human King unlike any other human King. A King who resisted all temptation and embraced an entirely different sort of power, *'he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave'*. A few days after his entry into Jerusalem Jesus will share the Passover meal with his disciples and will stop to wash their feet. No King had ever done such a thing before. Servants wash feet not Kings.

Paul goes on to say of Jesus *'he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. Therefore, God exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and in earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father'*.

The message of Philippians, and of the Gospel story of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, is that power, control, privilege must be relinquished if God's work of healing, reconciliation, transformation is to be enabled for all to see. Jesus must die if he is to complete the task to

which he has been called. There can be no escape from what is to come. A few chapters later in Matthew's Gospel, we find that Jesus and his disciples are in the garden at Gethsemane where Jesus prays to his Father pleading with him that if it is possible, he might be freed from the agony, pain, anguish of his impending torture and death. We see here a real picture of the humanity of Jesus. And yet, he concludes his prayer with the words *'yet not my will but yours be done'* Jesus is prepared to be obedient, even to death on a cross.

Letting go, giving up power and control is not something the world understands. It's not something human beings find easy to understand. But it is God's way and God's way is the only way to new life, to everlasting life. It's about gain through loss. It's always about losing, giving up. It's always about letting go, releasing power and control and being able to say, *'not my will but yours be done, O God'* But my goodness, it's not easy. The truth is that without a deep trust in God, without a total surrender and absolute reliance on God, it's quite simply impossible.

Human beings will always try to cling on to power and control. We are stubborn and slow to learn. Letting go is the hardest thing to do. It's a sort of free falling into the arms of God. For Jesus his triumphal, peaceful entry into Jerusalem on a donkey is the beginning of the final stage of his journey - of letting go, of final freefall into the arms of the Father.

Where, I wonder, do we see in the world today, in our country, in our community, in the Church - examples of the stubborn unwillingness to let go, the fear and inability to accept and come to terms with loss, the hesitancy to be willing to relinquish power and control to be able to say *'Lord, not my will but yours be done'*? We see it everywhere and it is a diagnosis which might have been terminal. Yet, thanks to Jesus in his willingness to self-empty, to relinquish control, to trust in God, there is hope, the hope of eternal life available to all.

What of ourselves. What of me and you? What are we clinging to, afraid to let go of? Is it wealth, privilege, a sense of entitlement, is it good

standing amongst our peers, being thought well of, being approved of by others? Is it anxiety about family, about situations we feel are beyond control and about which we are at a loss to know how to cope with? As we make our way this coming week through each day of Holy week, as we follow in the steps of Jesus all the way to the cross, may we learn a little more of what it means to let go, to freefall into the arms of the One who loves us more than any of us will ever know and to be able to say *'thy will, not mine be done, O God'*.

Prayers

Lord Jesus Christ,
..... over the broken glass of our world,
the rumours meant to hurt,
the prejudice meant to wound,
the weapons meant to kill,
ride on.....
trampling our attempts at disaster into dust.

Ride on Ride on in majesty

.....over the distance which separates us from you,
and it is such a distance,
measurable in half-truths,
in unkept promises,
in second-best obedience,
ride on.....
until you touch and heal us,
who feel for no one but ourselves

Ride on Ride on in majesty

.... through the back streets
and the sin bins
and the sniggered-at corners of the city,
where human life festers
and love runs cold,
ride on....
bringing hope and dignity
where most send scorn and silence.

Ride on Ride on in majesty

For you, O Christ, do care
and must show us how.
On our own, our ambitions rival your summons

and thus threaten good faith
and neglect God's people.

In your company and at your side,
we might yet help to bandage and heal
the wounds of the world.

Ride on, ride on in majesty and take us with you. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Listen, read, pray, or sing along

<https://youtu.be/g-qDQSinzH8>

Ride on, ride on in majesty!
Hark, all the tribes 'Hosanna!' cry;
your humble beast pursues its road
with palms and scattered garments strowed.

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.

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

Ride on, ride on in majesty!
Your last and fiercest strife is nigh;
the Father, on his sapphire throne,
expects his own anointed Son.

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.

Henry Hart Milman (1791–1868)

Closing Prayer

Go in joy for Jesus walks between us,
go in humble faith,
in all our humanness,
for we will be led by the Spirit
Amen.

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Resources Used

Stages on the Way, Wild Goose Worship Group 1998
Liturgies for High days, Dorothy McRae-McMahon 2006
www.christianaid.org.uk re-worship.blogspot.com