

Jesus comes to Jerusalem as King

Hi, my name is Andrew and thanks for downloading the talk for St John's church on Palm Sunday 2020.

This is a strange time, when we are unable to gather together to celebrate the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.

This is the beginning of holy week, the festival of Christ's death and resurrection, when we remind ourselves of the greatest story ever told – of the God of love, who came to bring forgiveness and love through sacrifice, and who defeated death and the grave.

But we have to celebrate this physically apart, in our own homes, not gathered together in church.

This is hard, but we are still God's church, we are still called to be God's ambassadors, and St John's is still a home for everyone.

I am going to pray, then read our passage from Luke, and share a short talk about what it means for us.

Let us pray: Lord, as we gather in our homes, we remember that even though we cannot come physically together, we are unified by your love into one church and one body.

We pray that you will help us to understand something more about you and your will, and that we will be able to celebrate the glorious hope of your amazing plan.

Amen

Luke 19:28-40

²⁸ After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹ As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ³⁰ ‘Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, “Why are you untying it?” say, “The Lord needs it.”’

³² Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. ³³ As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, ‘Why are you untying the colt?’

³⁴ They replied, ‘The Lord needs it.’

³⁵ They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. ³⁶ As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

³⁷ When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

³⁸ ‘Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!’

‘Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’

³⁹ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, rebuke your disciples!’

⁴⁰ ‘I tell you,’ he replied, ‘if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.’

Have you ever had one of those moments where you thought, 'I'm not really sure why I expected anything different?'

Like the time a friend of ours tried to make mashed potato using a NutriBullet, and just ended up with cement potato.

Or the time Alex sieved some soup through a colander and just ended up with the burnt lumps she was trying to get rid of, watching in horror as the soup she wanted poured down the drain.

Or the time, when I was about 6 (I hasten to add), that I liberally applied all my mum's perfume all over myself and was surprised when everyone immediately knew what I had done.

Sometimes the signs are all there, but we just fail to see them.

The passage this morning is full of signs – they are signs that God's chosen king had come to Jerusalem.

But they were not understood and taken to heart by the people there.

Even though, from the borrowed donkey to the cloaks on the road, these were signs that were fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies.

Zechariah 9:9: Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous

and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

1 Kings 1:32-34: When they came before the king, he said to them: 'Take your lord's servants with you and put Solomon my son on my own mule and take him down to Gihon. There shall Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king over Israel. Blow the trumpet and shout, "Long live King Solomon!"

2 Kings 9:13: They quickly took their cloaks and spread them under him on the bare steps. Then they blew the trumpet and shouted, 'Jehu is king!'

These are just a few of the Old Testament passages that are alluded to in the account of Jesus entering Jerusalem.

This passage is a greatest hits of Jewish kings' entries to Jerusalem.

One after another – clear signs of what was happening and who Jesus was.

Our passage is Jesus finishing his journey to Jerusalem – he is coming to die on the cross, and to rise again to begin and declare a new kingdom, God's Kingdom.

He is God's promised king.

The use of Psalm 118:26 is significant here: 'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!'

This psalm, in Jewish worship, was used as a celebration of the fruition of God's plan.

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, His death and resurrection - this was the fruition of God's great plan to bring all peoples back to Him.

This passage is so rich in imagery and clear in its meaning.

Every detail of it, from the choice of a young donkey, a colt, to ride, to the crowds and even what psalm they sang, speaks of one thing – Jesus is God's chosen king, come to ransom and redeem His people.

Yet there are many who don't get it – the pharisees have studied the scriptures, yet their response is to say 'Teacher, rebuke your disciples!', verse 39.

Even in the crowd, most don't really get it – they are swept up in the excitement and fail to see what is right in front of them, the imagery that would have been all around them in their culture and upbringing.

Like someone in Liverpool seeing a football crowd singing 'you'll never walk alone' and waving flags emblazoned with the number 96, and not realising it was about the Hillsborough disaster.

Like seeing someone wearing a poppy, and not understanding.

Or someone saying 'Luke, I am your father' and not relating it immediately to Star Wars.

These are some of the things that surround us – but for the people in the crowd singing Psalm 118 and welcoming Jesus

into Jerusalem, the donkey, the cloaks, the entrance, the Psalm – these were signs that Jesus was God’s chosen king.

But they were swept along in the moment, rather than really getting the meaning of it.

Rather than trying to understand why God’s chosen king would arrive on a young donkey, rather than trying to understand why Jesus prepared for his entry to Jerusalem by teaching of love, hope and forgiveness of sins, and why Jesus’ entry was the beginning of the long, hard and painful road to the sacrifice of the cross.

They didn’t read and try to truly understand the signs that were clearly there, as Jesus says in verse 40, that ‘if [the people] keep quiet, the stones will cry out.’

Ultimately, the people who clapped and cheered the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem are the same people who shouted ‘crucify him’ to Jesus a few days later.

It is easy, though, for us to sit and judge those in the crowd, and the pharisees, for not understanding.

But how many times are we the same – when we fail to see what is before us and decide to do things our way instead of God’s way.

We say it so often in church, in the confession – that we choose to go our way, instead of God’s way.

We know what God is calling us to be and how to live, and yet we decide not to do that.

I do that, you do that, we all do that.

But God has a plan.

He had a plan on the first Easter – one which would change the world forever.

His plan to forgive our sins, to forgive the times when we reject His way.

To forgive the times we see how God calls us to live and choose to do things differently.

And God has a plan for us and for His church, His people.

And He calls us to trust in that plan.

Trust can be hard to think about at a time like this.

But it is so important, because although things are tough, when the walls feel like they are closing in and when it feels like the hope that we believe in is far off – we should trust in our God.

Because he is the God of all creation, as it says in great hymn Crown Him with Many Crowns – God is the potentate of time, literally the Lord of time – eat that Dr Who.

This is our God, he has a plan, and it isn't one He is hiding – it is there for us to see.

It is a plan to forgive his people, to show his love, and to call us all to be His church, His beacon of light in a dark world.

So, let me encourage you, in the coming week, to spend a moment each day, even just a moment, in prayer asking for

God to show you how to live, to bring a lasting change and help you to be a beacon of God's love to the world.

Let me finish with the words of Psalm 118, which was shouted by the crowd in Jerusalem:

*Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures for ever.*

² *Let Israel say:*

'His love endures for ever.'

³ *Let the house of Aaron say:*

'His love endures for ever.'

⁴ *Let those who fear the Lord say:*

'His love endures for ever.'

⁵ *When hard pressed, I cried to the Lord;
he brought me into a spacious place.*

⁶ *The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid.
What can mere mortals do to me?*

⁷ *The Lord is with me; he is my helper.
I look in triumph on my enemies.*

⁸ *It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to trust in humans.*

⁹ *It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to trust in princes.*

¹⁰ *All the nations surrounded me,
but in the name of the Lord I cut them down.*

¹¹ *They surrounded me on every side,
but in the name of the Lord I cut them down.*

¹² *They swarmed around me like bees,
but they were consumed as quickly as burning thorns;
in the name of the Lord I cut them down.*

¹³ *I was pushed back and about to fall,
but the Lord helped me.*

¹⁴ *The Lord is my strength and my defence;
he has become my salvation.*

*You are my God, and I will praise you;
you are my God, and I will exalt you.*

²⁹ *Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures for ever.*