

## Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2021 – Palm Sunday

### Mark 11:1-11 (Triumph)

Talk by Ian Baldwin, Prayers by Kemi Ogundipe

Good morning and welcome to our service. My name is Ian and today is Palm Sunday and we will be thinking about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Our bible reading is from Mark 11v1-11

We start with a prayer

Father God as we come to worship you now we ask your Holy Spirit be with us. That we might come to bring the needs of the world to you and to hear your word. Amen.

Now Kemi will lead us in our intercessions then I will read from the bible.

#### Intercession

Lord, in these few moments of stillness we bring before you our prayers.

As we journey together through the holy week, from the joyful entry into Jerusalem on today through the last supper Jesus had with his disciples to the cross, may we understand the depth of the love that sent Jesus into the world to be our saviour.

“Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow, let me hear joy and gladness, let the bones that you have broken rejoice, hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities, create in me a clean heart, o God and renew a right spirit within me, cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy spirit from me, restore to me the joy of your salvation and uphold me with a willing Spirit”

Lord in your mercy/**Hear our prayer.**

Loving God, we pray to you, for you understand us and in love you have promised not to sever anyone who come to you, so we pray for people who feel driven away from a living faith in Jesus by pressure from friends and family, those who feel pushed away by other people in churches due to gender, race, if they do not share the same kinds of ideas, or suggestions for people who are severed by those who want power, whose main love to be noticed, to have control.

Lord in your mercy/**Hear our prayer.**

Loving God, you know the need of your church, as we search for a minister, appoint us someone who will be a great commission leader and our church to be a great commission church that make disciples.

Lord in your mercy/**Hear our prayer.**

Loving God, we pray for your church that all those who trust Jesus will be by your spirit to follow his humility to imitate his servant life, to welcome and not to condemn, help your church to be like Jesus.

Lord in your mercy/**Hear our prayer.**

Loving God, we pray for our nations and leaders, give our leaders wisdom that they may be able to do things beyond their understanding help them to choose the right path when they make decisions on behalf of nations give them grace and courage to make sound decisions that align with your will for our nations.

Lord in your mercy/**Hear our prayer.**

Loving God, at the last supper, Jesus washed his disciples feet as an example of service, we pray for all those who serve at this time of coronavirus crisis, all those in NHS, social care, the other essential services all who volunteer or are good neighbours there for one, we thank you for their compassionate love and ask that you will continue to bless their work and equip them with the energy and determination they need to go on rising to the needs of the hour, help them to seek the common good.

Lord in your mercy/**Hear our prayer.**

Loving God, we pray for those in need in our church and our community, the sick, and dying, the elderly, lonely or uncertain, for people who need healing, for all finding life painful, ill and vulnerable, we ask for comfort for Keith and Barbara, Emma's family, healing and full recovery for Antony, Audrey, Alison Sister and Sister- in-law, Lorraine, Zak, Karim's Dad, Val and Will Stewart. Surround Kath and Sam with your comfort and love.

Lord in your mercy/**Hear our prayer.**

Loving God, we pray for those who have died due to coronavirus and other illness and those who have reached the natural end of a long life, we think of those we have loved but see no longer, who live on in our memories, loving God, be with all who mourn and surround them with your love, that they may not be overwhelmed by their loss, but have confidence in your goodness and strength to meet the days to come.

Lord in your mercy/**Hear our prayer.**

Let us pray for our church, and all who pray. May our homes be places of worship and prayer, where your love is shown and shared.

**Merciful father accepts these prayers for the sake of your son our saviour Jesus Christ.**

In unity we say together the prayer our saviour Jesus Christ taught us.

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,  
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.**

## Reading - Mark 11:1-11

**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.

## Talk

As we approach another Easter without a vicar and still in lock-down we have to prayerfully wait. That is not easy as time goes by and we juggle our commitments and try to keep church running smoothly. At the same time we look towards joining with Holy Trinity and becoming one church family. It is vital at this time that we do not lose heart and continue to trust in God's timing and seek his guidance.

Today on Palm Sunday we think again of the Jewish people waiting for a leader, a saviour, and we read of Jesus entering Jerusalem. Of course Jesus had been to Jerusalem many times starting as a baby presented at the temple and then for many festivals and latterly he had spoken in the temple courts. However, the people had not listened nor had the religious leaders listened to Jesus. So when Jesus was teaching in the temple courts he had given the religious leaders seven warnings or woes as recorded in Matt ch 23 he said in v37,

*'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. 38 Look, your house is left to you desolate. 39 For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."'*

Now in our reading today Jesus is coming on a donkey into Jerusalem. A visible sign of the coming king as prophesied in Zech 9v9 *"behold your king comes to you righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a colt the fowl of a donkey"*

The donkey was an acceptable form of transport for even rich people the point being a high official or king who rode a donkey was coming in peace. Jesus is also coming in humble poverty for there is no parade of carts full of gifts and possessions or a great entourage, the disciples are not in sharp suits and dark glasses talking to their cufflinks! No Jesus is entering Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey and in a few days he will be buried in a borrowed tomb leaving no possessions. The colt Jesus rode had never been ridden before thus it was befitting an animal used for a sacred purpose should not have been used for any other purpose. Here the gospel writer Mark is showing the humility and lowliness of Jesus for this is the king of hidden majesty and humble power. He is not the warrior king they wanted who would smash Rome for he was not the king of war but the king of peace. Jesus is not making a show of strength but rather he is about to demonstrate sacrificial love and this is the King we worship.

The crowd respond to him and they do and say all the right things proclaiming him the son of David but did they understand what was happening? Before we judge them it is good to remember that, unlike them, we know the end of the story. We too can do things in church like whizzing through the words of a service or communion without stopping to take in the significance of what we are part of and what we are celebrating. Ps 118v26 *'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, from the house of the Lord we bless you'*. We say the words and we miss the meaning, just like the crowd.

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is full of meaning for those who can see. How often we can see or hear something and understand it when someone else cannot and vice-versa. Jesus spoke to many but sadly few understood. Hearing and understanding the gospel is no different now as I am sure those on the Alpha course would agree. However because of the gift of God's grace and the Holy Spirit it is possible to understand the truth of who Jesus is.

After the triumphal entry into Jerusalem Jesus does not go storming into the temple nor does he go to teach in the courts but rather he goes to view all that was happening so that he could prepare himself for what is to come. Then in the evening he returns to Bethany a village outside of Jerusalem. Jesus is going back to a quiet place to be with God before he does something very important. It is an approach we should always seek to copy. Mark is again showing that Jesus was peaceful not combative. Jesus could have come to Jerusalem quietly for he was already in trouble with the religious authorities and the people still did not understand him but instead he came in a way that everyone would know about and could not ignore. However it was not so disturbing to the authorities as they chose not to mention it during his questioning and trial later that week.

Despite their confusion the disciples stay with Jesus and are loyal even though they didn't understand what he was about to do and if they did they probably would have thought him mad or committing political suicide. So they await the events of the next day.

Let us now return to what the crowd cried out as Jesus entered the city.

The words quoted are mostly from Psalm 118 which is a psalm about the majesty and power of God. The waving of myrtle and willow branches and laying down of palm leaves was common for celebrations. They were used specifically at the feast of Tabernacles and Passover so the crowds would be familiar with this especially as they were there for the Passover.

Hosanna means 'save now' which is an exclamation of praise to God.

And the phrase 'Blessed in the name of the Lord' was cried out to pilgrims and by pilgrims as they reached the end of their pilgrimage to the temple. It demonstrated a desire to be blessed by God. So when the crowd cried out in v9 *'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'* it makes sense because another way of saying the messiah was to say 'The one who is coming' or 'He who comes'. So, there was a connection being made and the heart felt cry of v10 *'Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David, Hosanna in the highest'*. It is a cry for a messiah, blessed by God, to rescue them but what kind of rescue and what kind of messiah?

Jesus came in love and they welcomed him like a conqueror but they did not realise he was actually tearing up their hopes and dreams of Rome being crushed. That is a brave thing to do to an excitable crowd! Jesus would save them but not through the death of Rome but by his own death on the cross as a sacrifice for sin.

After all the excitement the end of the day is almost an anti-climax as there is clearly much more to come but we must wait as things must be done in Jesus' timing not the crowds timing. We must not miss the fact that while the crowds are excited and maybe getting carried away Jesus is calm and in control of everything because he is the initiator of the events. This is another thing the crowd didn't understand.

Events are moving towards the conclusion of Jesus mission on earth and the momentum is with him and he is at the centre of all that is going on. Indeed in a short time Jesus will become the centre of history.

The crowd are in a festive mood and ready to celebrate but for most the meaning is hidden. It is easy to shout 'save now' but who are you calling to? Will you carry on calling or maybe not bother the next day?

To become a disciple of Jesus is to shout out at the festival 'Save now' and then follow the man on the donkey all the way to the cross and still be calling out as he dies and is raised from death. But the difference is you will have understood who he is and seen your need of him and so you will not be shouting in mere excitement but in the assurance that he is not just the man on the donkey but he is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Listen to some words from Ps118v19-21

*'Open for me the gates of the righteous; I will enter and give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter. I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.'*

For now we see who Jesus is and what he has done and our shout is not 'save now' but because of Jesus our shout is 'I am saved'.

It can be that in crowds like a church fellowship, or Christian festivals, we can be kept safe in our early belief and they can help us in difficult times but our own understanding of Jesus and our own commitment to Jesus is the only way our faith will be real and long-lasting.

Our spiritual growth and service must not be dependent on group experiences and celebratory highs. Of course these events can be encouraging and give us a lift or a boost. However our faith is based on a personal relationship with the living Jesus enabled through the power of the holy Spirit. We have to move from spectators like the crowd to followers like the disciples. No longer cheerers but worshipers.

Jesus knows why we do things, whether that be acts of service or personal prayer, for he sees not a palm branch or arm waved or a voice raised in praise but what the heart is like and whether it changed from a hard heart of stone to a heart of flesh with Gods law written on it and it will be changed if Jesus has entered our life as Lord and Saviour. Then we can say with the psalmist 'You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, and I will exalt you. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures for ever.

Amen

A closing prayer from Romans 15v13

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy spirit.*

And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all.

Amen

Thank you for reading this and may God bless you this coming week