

Bible reading: Mathew 21:1-11

Jesus comes to Jerusalem as king

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.' This took place to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet:

'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 disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

'Hosanna to the Son of David!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! 'Hosanna in the highest heaven!'

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, 'Who is this?' The crowds answered, 'This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.'

As I speak, here in the UK, there are over 38000 had tested positive to this virus over and 3600 have lost their lives. As we have been told by the authorities many more will test positive and some may lose their lives.

This is a scary and quite unbelievable if we think of where we were as a society at Christmas!

I don't know about you, but everywhere I look death seems to be a subject of discussion. This has led many of us to desperation and anxiety, and this has an impact on our mental health as a nation and as individuals.

It has made many to become resigned to what the French will call "laissez faire" or an attitude of "*what's going to be is going to be*"

But as people of hope, as followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to be different. Our difference is not about us but about whom we follow. Our difference should be the hope, the trust we have in God that with Him by our side, with His promises to never leave or forsake us, then all will be well.

There not a better time to remind ourselves of this than, than during this Holy Week, starting today with Palm Sunday and ending on Easter Sunday? Especially as we continue our Lenten fast as we travel with Christ into Jerusalem.

In what would have been our Bible reading for today, Matthew in chapter 21 of his gospel, recorded how Jesus entered into Jerusalem, riding on the back of a donkey with the crowds going ahead of him and others following, all shouting

Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the Highest heaven!

Many of us of course know the story, if you don't please do read it.

For those who don't know, Jesus entered into Jerusalem during the celebration of the annual Passover Feast.

The Passover Feast as you may recall is that great event, recorded in Exodus when God set the Israelites free by passing over Egypt hence the name Passover. And ever since, the Israelites have gathered yearly to commemorate this important event.

Jesus entered Jerusalem during this period, the whole of Jerusalem was stirring, there was tension in the air, the place was jam-packed and many were there with a sense of expectation. One can almost imagine the atmosphere at the time with so much excitement and expectation.

Why were they excited? Was it because of the excitement of Passover feast and the eating and drinking? I want to suggest that their excitement is not just about the feast but more about the man that was coming to town!

Why you may ask? Well because they have heard about the miracles he had performed.

In Matthew's account, verses 29-34, of chapter 20,

As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they shouted, 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!' The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!' Jesus stopped and called them. 'What do you want me to do for you?' he asked. 'Lord,' they answered, 'we want our sight.' Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.

Jesus had given sight to two blind men and these men were following him.

In Mark's account of the same event, Mark chapter 10: 46-52

they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means 'son of

Timaeus'), was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him.' So they called to the blind man, 'Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you.' Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. 'What do you want me to do for you?' Jesus asked him. The blind man said, 'Rabbi, I want to see.' 'Go,' said Jesus, 'your faith has healed you.' Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

Jesus entered Jerusalem after restoring Bartimaeus sight. These two restorations of sight were amazing and they are miracles no one else had ever done.

As if these were not enough, John in chapter 12 of his gospel placed this story after the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

It is thus no wonder that people were filled with excitement and expectation. I don't know about you but if I hear of such a man coming to town, I will be one the first to rush out and meet him.

Hosanna: save us, rescue us, our saviour

It is no wonder that their cries were that of hosanna. Which literarily means save us, rescue us, saviour.

The people were not just laying down their clothes or palm branches.

They are begging, they were asking to be saved. They wanted to be saved from all that inhibits their lives. The wanted to be saved from all that prevents them from living their lives to the fullest!

What a cry! But as we know with crowd effect, when the crowd dispersed, they forgot what they were asking for, they went back to their former ways.

Like their forebears, they have forgot what God can do. They forgot that He is the El Shaddai, the Lord God Almighty. They forgot that Adonai.

At times, I find myself wondering how on earth they could so easily forget who Jesus was and is! How could they forget all he did and allow him to be crucified?

But I often realise that we are not much different. Often we forget what God has done. Often we limit our imagination of what he can do.

But now is the time for us a people of God to remember that our God is mighty to save. Now is the time to remember that He is the one, who was, who is and who is to come. Now more than before, we need to proclaim His glory.

Now more than ever before, we need to shout hosanna, Lord save us right from the bottom of our hearts. Now as a nation, now as a community, we need to rend our hearts and cry for his protection and healing touch.

Shout Jehovah-Rapha: Lord our healer

Now we need to shout to Jehovah Rapha, the Lord our healer.

Friends, our land, our countries, our communities, our families, and our lives need His healing touch. Now is the time to call on the name of the Lord.

Remember his promise not to leave or forsake us.

This Palm Sunday lets join our voices together with our brothers and sisters al around the world and shout Jehovah-Rapha, the Lord our healer come and save us. Amen

Activity

- Why not make a cross paper or wood and place it on your front door.
- Or make a cross and write the name of a friend or neighbour on it, committing to pray for them especially this week.
- If you are feeling brave, make a cross each day for a new person, country or situation and ask God to heal them and be with them at this time.

Reflections Questions

- What was the most surprising part of the story and why?
- Have you ever been part of a big crowd watching an event?
- If you saw Jesus on the street, what word might you shout and why?
- What might you have thought if you were one of Jesus' disciples?
- What may the crowds have anticipated happening straight after this incident?

HOLY WEEK

Evening prayers on the Stations on the Cross on Zoom at 6pm

Good Friday 12: Noon Midday prayers
 3pm Prayers.