

Bulletin for Palm Sunday 28th March 2021

Good morning! As the pale green leaves start appearing on the trees, Spring is well and truly here; and as we celebrate Palm Sunday we can look forward in hope.

Our churches will gradually be opening for worship - see the end of this Bulletin for details. Some people will be very happy to take part, but others will prefer to wait longer. That's fine, and Zoom services, both morning and evening, as well as the order of service in the Bulletin, will continue for the time being.

Let's pause as we come before God..... and then praise God as we sing:

Hymn: All glory, laud, and honour (R&S 208)

Prayer: Loving God

as Holy Week opens before us, and we approach Easter,
we give thanks for Jesus who meets us, riding on a donkey.
May we catch the joy and the hope
of the crowds who threw down palms and cloaks!
And may this indeed be a holy week for us....
We ask your blessing on everything we do,
and everything we give in your service,
today and every day. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Reading: Psalm 118 verses 19-29 and Mark ch. 11 verses 1-11

Reflection: For us, Palm Sunday may be a day of mixed emotions - even as we shout Hosanna! today, we know that on Friday we will be remembering Jesus' death.

For those crowds on the road going up to Jerusalem two thousand years ago there was no such shadow. They were in full party mode, immersed in the celebration, and thrilled that their Messiah might (they hoped) finally be arriving. The cloaks they spread before him were valuable items, not to be lightly thrown away. Their generosity - their willingness to sacrifice vital garments to the cause - is clear proof of their commitment to Jesus. Psalm 118 was used at festivals, considered a prayer for the restoration of David's kingdom. So Jesus entered Jerusalem with these prayers and prophecies ringing in his ears - and in the ears of the crowd. They must have gone home absolutely thrilled.

This is the high point from which a week of ups and downs begins. If we want to follow that road with Jesus, we will read chapters 14 and 15 of Mark's gospel later in the week, in preparation for next Sunday.... For now, let's shout Hosanna! as the Messiah arrives!

Hymn: Make way, make way for Christ the King (R&S 141)

Prayer: Compassionate God
As we praise you for the green shoots and Spring flowers,
we pray for the farmers and growers who feed us...
As we give thanks for the vaccination programme,
we pray for the scientists and the NHS making it possible...
And as we praise you for Jesus' message of hope and encouragement,
we pray for all those who are anxious or troubled...
We hold before you those in need or in pain,
grieving, alone or in despair...
Compassionate God, show us how to be compassionate too;
and hear all our prayers, spoken or unspoken,
in Jesus' name, Amen

Hymn: Ride on! Ride on in majesty! (R&S 209)

Blessing: May we follow Jesus as he rides into Jerusalem this week...
and may the blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us and with all those we love
this week and always. Amen

As we return to our buildings for worship, please remember that we need to wear masks, maintain a distance from each other, and not chat inside the buildings or congregate outside them. Singing is sadly still not possible, services must be short, and extra ventilation may make it chilly.

Crucially, space is limited so you **must** contact your Church Secretary to let them know you want to attend.

In our Billingshurst and Petworth buildings worship will begin again this Sunday (28th).
In Pulborough it will begin outside on the lawn, first on Easter Sunday. All at 10.30am.
For those who prefer to continue worshipping from home for now, I will still be leading services on Zoom (including hymns!) at 10.30am and at 6.00pm.
And for all of us there is a chance to chat at the 11.30am 'After Church Coffee' Zooms.

The final Lent Group session will be on Tuesday at 7.30pm; all very welcome.

Anne Lewitt