

Holy Trinity Sunningdale
Sunday 13 April, 2025 – Palm Sunday
Readings – Psalm 118:1&2; 19-29 & Luke 19:28-40

Today, is Palm Sunday and Christians all over the world are celebrating Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Today also marks the start of the Holy Week that began Jesus's final journey here on earth. Our Gospel reading is about Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey while his supporters laid down their cloaks and palm leaves. Jesus enters the city, hailed as the Son of David – Israel's true king.

We know the story so well that it is hard to find something new to say. Therefore, this morning may I invite you to ponder with me an alternative dimension to our understanding and our application of the events of the story by welcoming Jesus afresh into our lives by asking the Holy Spirit for humility to serve, to listen and think more of others this Holy Week.

Roman emperors would ride their finest stallions into a conquered city. Today's presidents and prime ministers travel in armoured convoys. On the first Palm Sunday people were actually proclaiming Jesus as the victorious King who would free them from bondage from the Romans! But, Jesus rode a donkey's colt into Jerusalem just as the prophets had said. The King of kings sits humbly on a donkey and prepares to die.

We read in Psalm 118, that the crowds shouted "Hosanna" meaning "Lord, save us!" As we sing Hosanna, our prayer is for God to save us from being inwardly focussed enabling us to tell the story of God's love this Easter and for God to make himself known to all our neighbours, friends and family members. We must also lift up in prayer this week, the leaders of the nations of the world for the Holy Spirit to enable their leadership be characterised by wisdom and humility.

Jesus was celebrated by multitudes as the coming king! This all happened as preparations were being made for the Passover and thousands of Jewish pilgrims were present. Jesus knows what he will face as he comes into Jerusalem. He is committed to the will of the Father to give his life for you and me. Along with all these people there were hundreds or possibly thousands of lambs brought as sacrifices for Passover. Jesus entered Jerusalem to be our sacrifice. The blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins. Jesus, the true Sacrifice, fulfilled the purpose for our salvation.

As I think about the participants present on that first Palm Sunday, I think about the people who were strong in their support for this coming Messiah. But it is ironic that the same people who waved the palm branches and shouted, "Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," on that Sunday would turn their backs and be shouting, "Crucify him," by Friday.

There was an abrupt turn of events in the days that followed. Celebration turned to condemnation and the cries of the crowd turned from Hosanna to Crucify! This chaotic, complicated story is the journey we tread together this week. We are drawn into the story as the week unfolds because this is not just the story of those who

lived in Palestine 2000 years ago. This is our story. This is the story of faith. The story of how each of one of us struggles between disbelieve and faith, between the desire to worship our Lord and God and the temptation to betray him.

We continually betray Jesus like Judas for 30 pieces of silver – seeking things instead of peace and understanding. We abandon him like the disciples, going about our daily lives as if Jesus never lived and died. Like Peter, sometimes we deny even knowing Jesus. In effect we yell, “Crucify him, Crucify him,” over and over, and again and again, we nail the Son of God to the cross with our daily lives, just like the crowds and the Romans.

Yet, the amazing part of the story is that despite our betrayals, fears, denials, abandonment and nailing the one who saves us on a cross, Jesus, riding on a donkey is still willing to suffer and die on a cross for you and me, so that we may experience the abundance of life here and now and eternal life in the world to come.

The Holy Week leads us to the garden of Gethsemane on Thursday and finally to that horrific Friday and we recognise our own voices crying out: “We have no king but Caesar.” Yet, sorrow and love flow mingled down in water and blood on Good Friday afternoon. The cross is where Hosanna and Crucify meet and are accepted, transfigured and glorified.

May we use this Holy Week to reflect on what it costs Jesus to go to the Cross for our sake. And as we think on that – let us celebrate and give thanks that we are children born of God.

Hosanna! Save Us! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Amen.

Dolapo Ogunbawo