

**Palm Sunday Sermon, 5<sup>th</sup> April, 2020**  
**Matthew 21:1-11**

**(Preached by Revd Andrea Ward)**

Good morning! It's great to join with you in your homes on this Palm Sunday.

Here we are at the beginning of what was to be a momentous week not just in Jesus's life but for all people everywhere, for all time.

And what a great day it was for all the people who had been following Jesus, as huge crowds of people joined them for His triumphant entry into Jerusalem. What joy and rejoicing. A day never to be forgotten.

Life had become really hard for Jesus's people, the Jews. They were living under occupation by the Roman Empire and all the restrictions and hardships that come with not having your freedom.

We can imagine how desperate people were for a great leader to rise up among them and lead them to victory over the Romans.

It was hundreds of years since Israel last had a king, but many people who'd heard Jesus teach and seen his amazing miracles, had come to believe that he might be the One who would save them, the promised one....

And so you imagine what excitement there must have been, as news spread that Jesus was on his way to the city at the heart of their nation: Jerusalem.

**Question:**

If you were getting ready for a king or queen to arrive, I wonder what you might be expecting to see? Just for a moment or two, think about what sorts of things come to mind when you think of a King / Queen. If you're with others in your home, have a quick chat together.

What sorts of things came to mind? Some of the following, maybe:

Crown, elaborate robes, throne, carriage and horses, pomp and majesty, servants

e.g. our Queen arriving in the State Carriage, with crown and robes for the State Opening of Parliament each year.

### **But what does Matthew tell us about how Jesus arrived in Jerusalem?**

There was no crown, no fine robes, no horse and carriage

No, Jesus chose to ride into Jerusalem on a humble donkey!

Jesus was saying something important about himself - coming on a donkey was a symbol of coming in peace, bringing peace. And for any fellow Jew who knew their scriptures, they'd have been familiar with the words of the prophet, Zechariah, who Matthew quotes:

“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.’

This would have been even more evidence for some people that yes, this was the king they'd been promised, the One who was going to save them from all their troubles.

We're told that large crowds gathered to welcome the procession into Jerusalem. For us, at the moment, at this time of social distancing, we're not able to join together in big crowds, but perhaps you can think of a time when you've been part of a large crowd of people, at an exciting event, shouting and cheering for a team, for example?

The crowds loved their new king. And to show it they lay their cloaks / coats on the ground before him, a bit like we would lay a red carpet for our Queen, and also branches from the trees.

In John's gospel, we're told specifically that people took palm branches and greeted Jesus with them.

I imagine the crowds greeting their king and rejoicing with their palm branches.....a bit like when crowds gather with their Union Jack flags to celebrate a great Royal event in our country today.

This was a day of great celebration.

“Hosanna to the Son of David!” the crowd shouted as they welcomed Jesus. Hosanna! means "Save!"

And John, in his gospel, recalls how the people also shouted, "Blessed be the king of Israel!"

The crowds believed Jesus was their Saviour and their King.

So, there was tremendous joy, excitement on that first Palm Sunday.

Jesus **had** come to save the people, but not in the way they expected; by the end of that week, Jesus would be crowned, but as we know, it was with a very different kind of crown to the one that anyone expected.

Jesus had come to save, but in an infinitely greater way than just for that crowd, large as it was. Jesus had come to save people of every nation and of every time in the earth's history.....to save us from our sins and bring us back into the loving relationship with God that we were all made for.

And on that day of celebration, Jesus knew that being our Saviour would mean dying on the Cross.

Jesus knew that the shouts of "*Hosanna! Save!*" would in a few days time be replaced with shouts of "*Crucify him!*".

Jesus knew that by the end of the week many of the crowd who hailed him as their king would deny they knew him and abandon him to the cross.

**Today, on Palm Sunday, we'd normally all be given a Palm Cross at church.**

The palm cross reminds us of both the celebrations of that wonderful day when Jesus entered Jerusalem as king, but also of the suffering that Jesus knew lay ahead of him on the Cross, in order to be our Saviour.

We may not be able to give out Palm crosses this morning, but instead, for those who'd like to, we're going to make ourselves a **Paper cross**.

All you need for this is a sheet of A4 or A5 paper.

For demonstration of making the cross see:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=7&v=df5fJuRSsTM&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=7&v=df5fJuRSsTM&feature=emb_logo)

As you hold your cross, think about the shouts of praise as Jesus entered Jerusalem. Perhaps you feel drawn to pray some words of praise to Him. As you think about the crowds letting Jesus down later in that week, you may want to pray and ask Jesus to help you to stick by him especially when following him gets tough.

If you have a pen or pencil, you may want to write a short prayer on your cross. What would you like to say to Jesus today?

**We take a few moments in the quiet.**

So, now, in our homes, let's together raise our Paper Crosses, and join together in the words of the Palm Sunday prayer:

True and humble king,  
hailed by the crowd as Messiah:  
grant us the faith to know you and love you,  
that we may be found beside you  
on the way of the cross,  
which is the path of glory. Amen.