

Sermon Palm Sunday 24th March 2024

Exodus 13:17-22 and 14:19-28

Mark 11:1-11 – ‘Freedom is coming’

How appropriate as we celebrate Palm Sunday and continue to explore Moses the title for the Service is ‘Freedom is coming.’ Freedom for the Israelites in Egypt under Moses and Aaron to lead them and Jesus entering Jerusalem as a king. I am concentrating on Marks Gospel and not the Moses reading; I’ll leave that to whoever is preaching next. However, there is a connection in that Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem was at the time the Passover celebration would start commemorating the Israelites exit from Egypt and slavery. Both events brought freedom.

We carry Palm Crosses and display them in our homes, in our case on our front door to show our faith and belief in the risen Lord.

Do you like my Palm Cross? Big and showy but heavy on the neck and the lapel of my jacket or jumper. Big it may be but it shows the risen Lord, how, because it is an empty cross and this one shows people going about their lives, under the Lord. Whatever the size of the Cross, our crosses are a reminder that Jesus died for us all and rose from the dead, it is an empty cross. Jesus could not be kept on the Cross or in the tomb, He rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven His work on earth begun but not finished; that is our job, to bring Jesus into our own lives and all the people we meet, in everything we do and speak and think. The empty cross tells us we have to have Jesus at the very centre of our lives because He died and was resurrected for mankind and our sins forgiven that is why we must continue to bring Jesus and God into the lives of all we meet and ensure we have Him in our lives.

So let us look at the reading from Mark, the first Palm Sunday. Jesus came as a gentle and peaceable king on a donkey, not a horse or chariot. He came humbly knowing full well that His trial and crucifixion would all happen this week. Why the Passover though? Verse 9 HOSANNA, BLESSED IS HE THAT COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD. BLESSED IS THE COMING KINGDOM OF OUR FATHER DAVID. HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST. Jesus was fulfilling the prophecy in Zechariah 9 verse 9. REJOICE GREATLY O DAUGHTER OF ZION. SHOUT DAUGHTER OF JERUSALEM. SEE YOUR KING COMES TO YOU RIGHTEOUS AND HAVING SALVATION, RIDING ON A DONKEY, ON A COLT, THE FOAL OF A DONKEY. HE WILL PROCLAIM PEACE TO NATIONS. The Jews would have known this prophecy hence their excitement and celebration but they did not understand where Jesus Kingship would lead Him and certainly only saw the fulfilment of the prophecy at that time in the parade and celebration. We know there was so much more to that and to come when people all people would be

liberated by Jesus all they had to realise was and still do is that Jesus brings the new law, the new way forward for a truly Christian spiritual life in God and Jesus.

We're left with a bit of an anticlimax though; after the triumphal entry He went to the Temple and looked around at everything but did not do anything, He left Jerusalem. If you read on in Mark you will come to the clearing of the Temple of money changers and merchants by Jesus. This is the new Law and way forward for mankind, not the old Law or ways of the Jews concerned more with the letter of the law rather than its meaning. Jesus changed all that for them and for us but had to suffer death, burial and resurrection for them and us. Following Jesus will mean difficulty but there is also comfort LUKE 12 VERSE 12. THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL TEACH YOU WHAT YOU OUGHT TO SAY AT THAT VERY HOUR. The very hour being when you are challenged about your faith or have doubts or are afraid. The Holy Spirit will give you the strength and answers, I know this personally as I have struggled. We need to trust in God's wisdom and guidance where and when we need it; that to me is true faith.

So, the crowds went out to meet Jesus, this man they had heard so much about, the worker of wonders. Some must have thought they were seeing Zechariah's prophecy. Yet two days later many of the same crowd would have been calling for Jesus' death. They could not change their ways. We must and see Palm Sunday as the new beginning, the new Law. As Holy Week starts, please reflect on this event and what is to come; the last supper, Jesus' arrest and death and on Easter Day His resurrection for you and me and the difference it means in our lives and the lives of all mankind. Amen.

Let us pray. Wise and loving God help us to know your presence every day. May our actions serve your glory and work for the building of your kingdom in the world. Amen