

Hailsham Methodist Church
Worship at Home
Sunday 28th March 2021, Palm Sunday

Hymn: Ride On, Ride On In Majesty (StF 265)

Opening Prayer:

Loving God, at this time, we remember that going up to Jerusalem cost Jesus his very life. So we come before you, conscious of the way religious words and holy phrases can so easily slip from our lazy lips and our hardened hearts.

What do we really know of your mountainous truth, your rock-hard integrity, the depth of your suffering for love of us all?

Forgive us for the shallowness of our faith, and the timidity of our following.

Forgive us for the ready excuses we make for going our own way and claiming it as yours.

Turn us round again, we pray, by your Holy Spirit, active within us and among us. Show us how to be open again to your faithfulness and to your freedom, that we may live new lives and be again bearers of the seeds of the Kingdom of Jesus.

Amen.

New Testament Reading: Philippians 2:5-11

Hymn: At The Name Of Jesus (StF 317)

Gospel Reading: Mark 11:1-19

Reflection: *"Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!'" (v 9-10)*

Today is Palm Sunday, when Christians recall Jesus' ceremonial entry into Jerusalem a few days before his crucifixion, riding on a donkey and surrounded by cheering sightseers.

A few years ago the BBC broadcast the story of the passion, making a very noticeable contrast between the arrival of Jesus on a humble donkey, and the arrival of Pontius Pilate the Roman governor, who came on a war-horse surrounded by heavily armed soldiers to make sure there would be no disturbances in Jerusalem over the Passover festival.

Jesus was clearly quite intentional about what sort of entry he made into the city, and had made arrangements ahead of time (v1-3). And while a donkey was not a high-status method of transport, his actions will have had a big symbolic impact because they seemed to act out the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. Matthew's account (Matthew 21:4-5) of the event makes this clear: "This took place to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet, saying 'Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey.'"

The meaning was not lost on the crowds, who greeted Jesus as if he was a king of the royal line of David, come to deliver the city from its occupation by the Romans. They laid both palm branches and their own cloaks under the feet of the donkey in tribute, as if Jesus had been anointed by God as their king. (Compare the story of Jehu, 2Kings 9:13, where people similarly laid garments on the ground before him).

So, Jesus was claiming to be a very different kind of king from Pilate or the arrogance of Rome - but it was still a highly provocative act to stir up popular sentiment like this. He certainly wasn't slipping into Jerusalem discreetly, but deliberately making a bold claim aiming at controversy, so his arrival couldn't be ignored by the authorities.

To Ponder:

Have you or a group you have been involved with ever made a visible political stand about something? What have been the problems in communicating the right message?

Can you recall a time when you were part of a crowd, and got caught up in its mood? What happened? Did you enjoy the sensation or find it worrying - at the time, and afterwards?

Prayer:

Ride on, ride on, Lord Jesus Christ,
...over the broken glass of our world, the rumours meant to hurt, the prejudice meant to wound,
the weapons meant to kill
Ride on ...trampling our attempts at disaster into dust.

Ride on, ride on in majesty.

...over the distance which separates us from you, and it is such a distance, measurable in half
truths, unkept promises, in second best obedience
Ride on ...until you touch and heal us, who feel for no one but ourselves.

Ride on, ride on in majesty.

... through the back streets and the sin bins and the sniggered-at corners of the city, where
human life festers and love runs cold,
Ride on ...bringing hope and dignity where most send scorn and silence.

Ride on, ride on in majesty.

For you, O Christ, do care and must show us how.

On our own, our ambitions rival your summons and thus threaten good faith and neglect God's
people. In your company and at your side, we might yet help to bandage and heal the wound of
the world.

Ride on, ride on in majesty and take us with you. Amen.**Hymn: All Glory, Laud, And Honour (StF 262)****Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intersession**

Loving God, we offer you our thanks for all that stirs our hearts with joy, for the astonishing
beauty of your creation and moments of sheer awe and wonder. We give thanks for the love and
companionship of friends and family.

As we journey through Holy Week, **Hold us in your love.**

Loving God, we reflect on your broken world, for those places where human betrayal, greed and
injustice destroy life, breakdown relationships and communities. We pray today for the people of
Myanmar, of Yemen, and for all those who are suffering unseen but never beyond your gaze.

Be with all those who are hurting, those who have been bereaved, those who have been unable
to hold the hands of those they love for many months, those who long for healing, those broken
by their circumstances. Grant wisdom, integrity and justice to all those who lead others.

As we journey through Holy Week, **Hold us in your love.**

Encouraging God, challenge our expectations. May we know you as God who confounds us and
leads us into transformed lives. Grant us deeper humility as we reflect on your sacrifice for us.
Be with us this Holy Week, that we may offer all that we are, strengthened by faith, inspired by
hope, directed by love, for the work of your Kingdom.

As we journey through Holy Week, **Hold us in your love. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

We pray together as Jesus taught us: Our Father

Hymn: My Song Is Love Unknown (StF 277)**Gospel Reading: Mark 14:1-15.1****Blessing:**

The almighty and merciful Lord, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us,
now and always. Amen.

Reflection by Janet Morley, taken from 'A Word In Time', Methodist Church website

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