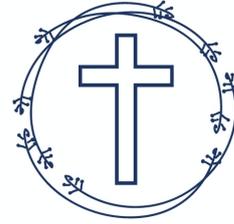


LORDSBRIDGE TEAM OF CHURCHES



The Church's prayer for this Sunday

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

Bible readings and reflection for Sunday 28th March 2021

A reading from Psalm 118: 1-2,19-29

Psalm 118

- ¹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.
- ² Let Israel say:
"His love endures forever."
- ¹⁹ Open for me the gates of the righteous;
I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.
- ²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD
through which the righteous may enter.
- ²¹ I will give you thanks, for you answered me;
you have become my salvation.
- ²² The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
- ²³ the LORD has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes.
- ²⁴ The LORD has done it this very day;
let us rejoice today and be glad.
- ²⁵ LORD, save us!
LORD, grant us success!

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²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.

From the house of the LORD we bless you.^[a]

²⁷ The LORD is God,

and he has made his light shine on us.

With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession

up^[a] to the horns of the altar.

²⁸ You are my God, and I will praise you;

you are my God, and I will exalt you.

²⁹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;

his love endures forever.

For the word of the Lord, thanks be to God.

A Gospel reading from the Gospel of Mark, chapter 11:1-11

11 Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus^[a] sent two of his disciples ² and said to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. ³ If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'" ⁴ And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. ⁵ And some of those standing there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" ⁶ And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. ⁷ And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. ⁸ And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. ⁹ And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"

¹¹ And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

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A reflection from Revd David Newton, lead minister in Comberton, Toft and Caldecote.

"I came up to Jerusalem to mark the Passover Feast along with thousands of others. The streets thronged with people. I greeted old friends and strangers alike with the festal words, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'. It was our way of saying well done for making it to Jerusalem, of making it to the Temple.

I had heard that Jesus was on his way as well. There was a buzz around the place, an energy and excitement. I, along with most other people, had heard of this man Jesus and what he had been doing. We wanted to see him. We'd all been wondering if this could be the one we'd be waiting for...

As word spread that he was on his way from Bethphage, I – along with most others in the city – flocked out of the gate and on to the road that leads up to the Mount of Olives.

I was one of the first to catch sight of him. And I said to the guy next to me, 'hey look – he's on a donkey; what is he doing?' Some guy behind who thought he was smart piped up something about a prophet telling of a king coming 'gentle and riding a donkey'.

The next thing I knew people started shouting. They began with the festal shout they knew well: Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Then a few started laying their cloaks on the street. I had heard that the ancient kings had been welcomed into Jerusalem in the same way. And now, centuries on, people all around me were taking their cloaks off and lining the street. The Roman Soldiers must have understood what it meant... they just shifted around nervously hoping things would stay under control.

I ran to the nearest tree and ripped a branch off and threw it down in front of the colt. Then the guy behind me got really excited and started shouting 'Hosanna'. Did he really think this was the one who was going to save us? God was going to liberate us through this gentle character?

Then someone else chimed in 'blessed is the coming kingdom'. That really got the crowd going. 'Here comes the king', shouted others.

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It was all over in about ten minutes. I followed with the rest of the crowd wondering what Jesus might do next. He went up to the Temple, took a look around and left again.

We were all a bit bemused. We thought 'something' might happen. But nothing. Not that day anyway. That week things did start happening though... Jesus started to really cause a storm. He turned the tables in the Temple. He told people to pay Roman taxes. He got up the noses of the Temple Officials. I even heard he let a woman pour perfume over his feet.

Things started to turn ugly. I'm not sure I want to tell you what happened after that. Or my part in it all...

It certainly wasn't what we expected to happen when we shouted hosanna. It was not what we expected to happen at all."

One of the important things to do as we enter the most Holy Week of the Christian calendar is to make sure we pause at each step and pretend, for a moment, that we don't know how the story ends. We place ourselves in it – walk through it – with the people and with Jesus.

If we do that today one of the things that might strike us is the uncertainty of what is to come. We simply do not and cannot know what might happen next. Might Jesus use the momentum he has got to start a rebellion against Roman tyranny? Might he heal every person in sight? Might he teach and draw crowds at the Temple? All these things might have been thinkable.

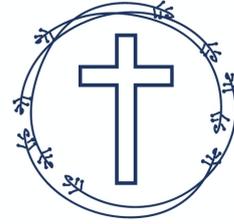
What actually happened probably lay outside of the purvey of most people's imaginations.

From this juncture, we simply do not know what will happen next. The uncertainty that surrounds us at this moment of the story is acute. Yet, it is only a more intense version of the uncertainty that pervades our lives and that is a fact of living.

We cannot control the future. We do not know what lies around the corner. We do not know what might happen around us or even within us. We do not know how we might respond to events as they unfold on the morrow.

Most of the time – for most of us – that sense of 'uncertainty' lies dormant. We think of life as fairly predictable and mundane – and most of the time it usually is. But

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occasionally of course, something happens which reminds us that we can never really know what tomorrow might bring. Illness, job loss, a lucky break, a chance encounter that leads to unexpected places.

And, in these days, if we're thinking about unpredictability, we cannot but think of Covid. I write this on the anniversary of the first lockdown. As the PM addressed the nation a year ago, we were rocked by uncertainty. Things were happening which most of us could not have imagined a few months earlier.

Whilst some of life has become more predictable and mundane than ever (!), we all continue to be rocked by a pervading sense of uncertainty. We do not and cannot know what lies around the corner. Through all of this we might well have learnt to live with less control, we might have learnt to 'let go' and somehow grown through the experience. In one way or another we have all learnt to live with such uncertainty. Palm Sunday is a day of maximum uncertainty. We could scarcely imagine the week that was to unfold.

Yet knowing the story as we do, we can speak of something other than simple 'uncertainty' and unpredictability. Even though the story takes us into hell we know that this is not the final word. There is a resource of life and love that can sustain Christ – and so also sustain us – through anything and everything that might lie around the corner. This is the wonder of Easter viewed from Palm Sunday.

As we stand here today we do not know what is coming. We do not know what trial or tribulations lie ahead. We do not know whether we will stay faithful, or whether our hosannas will turn to hate-you's.

But something certain lies under all that. The chief cornerstone! The power and love of God in Christ which remains solid and stable whatever tomorrow brings. How we need that in this day.

Amen.