



ST CHRISTOPHER'S 'CATCH UP CHURCH' NEWSLETTER

Sunday 28th March 2021 – Palm Sunday

NEWS UPDATE



Holy Week & Easter

Here is a reminder of our timetable for the week ahead.



Church Finance Letter

Please read the additional letter from the churchwarden, Debra Foster, about our church finances and urgent building repairs. Our situation is critical.

BIBLE READING – Mark 11:1-11

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, "Why are you doing this?" just say this, "The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately." ' They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, 'What are you doing, untying the colt?' They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

'Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!'

Then 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.

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE – written by Jim Cam



The road to Easter begins with a donkey

It is Palm Sunday, and in more normal times we might have started our service outside church, waving palm branches whilst singing a hymn of praise. If we'd been in a rural parish we might well have arranged for a donkey to turn up, Vicar of Dibley style.



We all have a bit of a soft spot for donkeys, don't we? Happy childhood memories maybe? I don't actually remember my first encounter with a donkey but just to prove it, I found this old family photo. I think it was taken by my dad probably using a Box Brownie camera we had. I would have been around 1 year old. My mother wrote on the back, "Mablethorpe, 1955". Looking at it closely the donkey has such a kind looking face. Very gentle I think, though I seem to be more interested in hanging on to my spade!

Alas normal times are not with us just yet thanks to COVID, but we can be thankful that finally we are on our way to a more normal life, not least because of the tireless efforts of those who worked to develop and produce safe and effective vaccines, and those who are even now working hard to administering them. Their work and labour has made all the difference.

So here we are, at Palm Sunday 2021. The world around us may not know or care too much about what we are celebrating today, but for us there is something important and worth celebrating. It is a day that can also challenge us in our walk with God as we seek to follow our Lord and Saviour, remembering the events around Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

When he and the disciples were approaching Jerusalem from Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, Mark tells us that Jesus sent two of his disciples off to the village ahead of them to find a colt a young donkey that no one had ridden before. They were to untie it and bring it to him. If anyone asked why they were doing this, they were to answer, "The Lord needs it and will return it."

Unsurprisingly they found it exactly as Jesus had said, and when challenged they explained that the Lord needed it and they were allowed to take it.

On returning with the colt or donkey, they put their cloaks on it; mounted Jesus on it and set off. The people went wild and spread their cloaks on the road, others spread leafy branches cut from the fields. Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted:



'Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!'

What did people think was happening?

Now the crowd's expectations about the Messiah seem to have been tied up with the hope of re-establishing the kingdom of their ancestor David. In the past there had been a warrior leader called Judas Maccabaeus who some 160 years earlier had driven out the Syrian king, Antiochus Epiphanes. Antiochus had for a time conquered Palestine, imposed Greek religion, and desecrated the Temple. Maccabaeus had driven Antiochus out, then re-purified and re-dedicated the Temple. The Jewish Feast of Hanukah still commemorates this today.

So someone like a conquering hero and king was what they were expecting and hoping for. The crowds welcomed Jesus thinking he could be God's Messiah, and a liberating leader and king. Their cries of Hosanna were not just one of praise to God but also a prayer for him to come and save them.



As we know, things didn't work out as they expected. In Mark's version of events it is the following day when Jesus went into the Temple and cleansed it by driving out the traders and moneychangers, setting himself on a collision course with the authorities. Jesus turned out to be a very different Messiah to what they had been hoping for, or expecting.

The Significance of the Donkey



Jesus chose quite deliberately to come on a colt or donkey, a humble beast of burden, a sign of coming in peace, not on a horse like a warrior king. He came humbly, as a servant, obedient to His Father's will, even death on a Roman cross. His Messiahship would be characterised by servanthood and sacrifice. So later that same week, with preparations for Passover, a very different crowd emerged. No cheering then. Cheers turned to jeers.

So what can all this say to us today? First Jesus, the one in whom we believe and trust, is indeed to be our Lord and king. But his Lordship and kingship is not according to this world's standards or thinking. He reigns not as an authoritarian sovereign or leader might, using power, force, or threat to command allegiance. Rather it is through the power and appeal of God's love expressed supremely on the cross that he invites us to honour and follow him – to come and learn from him, to walk in the way he walked, in the strength and power of the Holy Spirit that he promises to give us.

Secondly, the way he calls us to walk in is that of humble service and sacrifice. He chose to enter Jerusalem not on a war horse but on a beast of burden. How appropriate to carry him who would in turn carry the burden

of the world's sin on himself on the cross. There God's love and grace meet our need, so that through faith and trust in him we might know forgiveness and new life in his name. Christ, in his act of amazing, costly, gracious, sacrificial love calls us to follow him and seek to serve in his name according to the Father's will.

As we come to see and grasp more and more of what Christ has done for us on the cross, we find ourselves drawn to follow him, to walk in some increasing way the path of service. It's a path that involves some degree of sacrifice. It may well be costly in terms of our time, effort, and money. It might well feel inconvenient and painful; and yet it is the way to fulness of life, and resurrection with Jesus when our race is run.



Today we receive a palm woven into the shape of a cross. It reminds us that our Lord and Saviour, in obedience to the Father's will, walked the path of service and sacrifice to the cross which led to resurrection, new life and hope. We honour him as Lord of Lords and King of Kings, the one who also humbly washed the feet of the disciples, and invited those who would follow him to serve others in the same spirit.

So may we seek to serve in the way of loving and sacrificial service, remembering the humble part played by the donkey. May we, by God's enabling grace and strength, bear Christ and his love out into our homes, our families, our communities, our neighbours, and the world, so that others too may come to know of his all-surpassing love. Amen.

Prayers – Written by Peter

Lord Jesus, we thank you that you revealed yourself as a humble, servant king, through the simple act of riding on a donkey, and we thank you for the people we have known who have also modelled loving sacrifice. May we, like them, heed your call to be the servant of others, following in the way of the cross. Make us ready to suffer in the cause of what is right, true, loving, and good.

Lord in your mercy;

Hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, help us to accept and honour you for who you are, not whom we might wish you to be. You are the suffering-servant; may we know you in our sufferings. You are the humble king; may we exalt you of our own free will, out of gratitude for all that you have done. You are the risen Lord; may we recognise and submit to your sovereign power, won through your obedience to death, and resurrection.

Lord Jesus, as we begin this Holy Week, we want to remember your journey to the cross, and your victory over the grave. Let us be moved in our hearts because you shared in the brokenness and pain of our world, taking upon yourself all our sin and shame. Deepen our understanding of these things, our appreciation, and our faith, as we journey with you towards the cross of Good Friday, and the glorious empty tomb of Easter.

Merciful Father; **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**