

East Durham Methodist Circuit:
On-line Service for Palm Sunday: 28th March 2021

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Theme: Journey to Jerusalem

Call to worship:

Good morning everyone. Let us begin our worship today with a simple entreaty, expressed in our opening Hymn: to "Come", just as you are.

Hymn: Come, now is the time to worship Brian Doerksen StF 24

Come, now Is the time to worship
Come, now is the time to give your heart.
Come, just as you are to worship
Come, just as you are before your God... Come

**One day every tongue will confess You are God
One day every knee will bow
Still the greatest treasure remains for those
Who gladly choose You now**

Repeat

Prayers of adoration and confession:

While so much around us is still locked down we ask that You open the gates of Your righteousness, so that through our prayers we may enter and give thanks to You.

We thank You Lord as we know that every good gift comes from You. May we praise You for everything whether it be joy or sorrow as we know it brings us closer to You.

As we see the signs of Spring, we thank You that all creation reflects Your glory. You breathe life into places where there is fear and increase our understanding of things hard to comprehend. We lift our voices as one now in gratitude and praise. We don't always find this easy to do and sometimes turn from Your promises in despair.

Gracious Heavenly Father release us from our negativity so we may turn again to You in hope.

As we prepare for that glorious Easter morning we know that there are many who still doubt. We ask today that though this may be the case that like Thomas we will all still be prepared to "Go along and see". May eyes be opened, forgiveness received and jubilation seen on all those faces as Your wonders are once again revealed to us. Amen

We ask this prayer in the name of Jesus who taught us to say:

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done - on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory,
For ever and ever.**

Amen

Reading: Psalm 118: 1-2 & 19 - 29

New International Version

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 marvellous 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! ²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord we bless you. ²⁷ The Lord is God, and he has made his light shine on us.

With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up 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.

Hymn: All glory, laud, and honour St Theodulph **StF 262 / H&P 160**

1. All glory, laud, and honour to thee, Redeemer, King
To whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring
Thou art the King of Israel Thou David's royal Son
Who in the Lord's name comest the King and Blessed One

2. The company of angels are praising Thee on high
And mortal men and all things created make reply
The people of the Hebrews with palms before Thee went
Our praise and love and anthems before Thee we present

3. To Thee, before Thy passion they sang their hymns of praise
To Thee, now high exalted our melody we raise
Thou didst accept their praises accept the love we bring
Who in all good delightest Thou good and gracious King

Reading: Mark 11:1-11 Jesus comes to Jerusalem as King New International Version

¹ As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, ² saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'"

⁴ They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, ⁵ some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" ⁶ They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. ⁷ When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. ⁹ Those who went ahead and those who

followed shouted, “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 heaven!”

¹¹ Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

Drama: **Caught up in celebration** a version of Mark 11:1-11 for three voices

The arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem.

John & Sarah are standing together looking up the road. They are excited and occasionally grin at each other. Ben comes up from behind them and squints in the direction they are looking. He looks confused...

Ben: Hey, guys, why are you out on the roadside?

Sarah: The king is coming!

Ben: The king! Oh, I love a bit of pageantry. What’s the occasion?

Sarah: What do you mean, ‘What’s the occasion?’ – the king is coming!!!

Ben: (after a brief pause) Which king?

John: The new king! I think

Ben: You think? When did we get a new king?

Sarah: We didn’t get him, not yet. But everyone says a new king is coming. Like the prophets talked about.

Ben: The prophets? When did you start studying the Scripture scrolls?

John: Look, the kings we have now are under the Roman thumb – right? Herod would never fight against Caesar. So, if we want to be a free country again, we need a new king. One like David. Someone who can lead us in battle.

Ben: Lead you in battle? You get a nosebleed if anyone looks at you in a funny way!

John: Well, not me – but us. Israel. Get us back to being a free country again.

Sarah: This is our first chance to see him for ourselves – to see what he looks like.

Ben: But who’s minding the market stall? This is your busy time, isn’t it? You could be making some money instead of standing here waiting until who-knows-when!

John: It’s a king, Ben. Our king. The stall can wait – we’ll live without one day’s cash.

Sarah: What if no one were here, Ben? What would our king think of us? We *had* to turn up.

John: (excitedly) Look! Look, look! He’s coming! They’re coming now.

Ben: (as if about to leave) Excellent. Job done. He’s here. You’ve seen him. Now, let’s go.

Sarah: (excitedly) I’m going to throw my cloak on the road, to make a way for him.

John: Great idea, me too. Ben?

Ben: What? you want me to throw my cloak on the road? My new cloak? Do you know what this cost?

I’m not throwing that among the dust and camel droppings, thanks very much.

John: (jumping up and down) This is amazing! I need to wave something. This needs to be bigger.

Sarah: (pointing off-stage) Look, someone over there has a palm branch. Go and grab a couple from that tree.

Ben: Hang on. What happened to being eco-friendly? We’re tearing trees down now, are we?

John and Sarah: (shouting and waving their arms) Hosanna! Praise God! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Praise the Lord!

Ben: (getting frustrated) Look, this guy hasn’t done anything yet. You don’t do a victory parade until after the battle is won. You guys have lost the plot!

Sarah: It doesn’t matter if he hasn’t done anything yet – we have hope. God hasn’t left us. We can either become part of it, join in & give everything we have to it, or sit on the side lines watching & waiting to see what happens. I want to see what God is doing, I want to be part of it – the view is much better from here.

John: They’re going into the city – let’s go with them.

Sarah and John head off, shouting and waving. Ben looks sulky and slouches off in the other direction.

Hymn:

Make Way

Graham Kendrick

StF 264

1. Make way, make way
For Christ the King
In splendour arrives
Fling wide the gates and welcome Him
Into your lives

**Make way! (Make way!)
Make way! (Make way!)
For the King of kings
(For the King of kings)
Make way! (Make way!)
Make way! (Make way!)
And let His kingdom in**

2. He comes the broken hearts to heal
The prisoners to free
The deaf shall hear, the lame shall dance
The blind shall see **Make way...**

3. And those who mourn with heavy hearts
Who weep and sigh
With laughter, joy and royal crown
He'll beautify **Make way...**

4. We call you now to worship Him
As Lord of all
To have no gods before Him
Their thrones must fall! **Make way...**

Message:

Journey to Jerusalem

As a child born into a mining family, I recall a special event in the early 1960s. The Durham Miners Gala with the excitement of the procession of Colliery banners, the local brass bands, the march across Elvet Bridge, the crowds gathered to hear a politician, the union leader... and that is when my interest waned. Perhaps you also remember a similar occasion.

The three voices in the drama reflect different responses to the procession in Jerusalem. The account we have is from Mark's gospel, but you might also read Luke's version too in chapter 19 or Matthew 21. We all have different perspectives of an event... So, beginning with Thomas.

Thomas knew that Jesus intended to make his way to Jerusalem. The disciples were far from eager to head there. There was opposition, there was danger. They were aware of the threat from both the Pharisees and the Roman authorities. But Thomas said to the other disciples 'Let us also go that we may die with him' (John 11 vs 16). Was he brave or foolish? Nevertheless, Jesus and his friends journeyed to Jerusalem.

In 2013, I was part of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Our first full day began in Bethany and the Mount of Olives. We looked down towards the city of Jerusalem...almost 2,000 years on from the time of Christ.

The sight of Jerusalem from the top of the Mount of Olives is impressive even in its ruins today. But as Jesus makes his approach, he weeps - for he knows that he will be rejected (Luke 19 vs 41). He weeps not for himself but for the people; for what will be lost; the temple destroyed; the defeat of a nation and without hope in God.

We pilgrims continued down towards the City and before we crossed the Kidron Valley we met with a local man in traditional robes with a donkey tied nearby. Zechariah (9 vs 9) says, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold your King comes to you: triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." The disciples believe that Jesus will ride into Jerusalem as the long-awaited Messiah.

In fulfilment of the prophecy, he sends for a donkey, then rides it down the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem while the disciples shout praises and lay their coats in the path. And so, the excited

followers shouted hosannas and cut down branches and flung them to make a royal path for the king.

When the crowds gathered, they use the familiar words of Psalm 118 vs 26 to hail Jesus. They are saying 'In the name of the Lord our God you are blessed as you come'. This is what they would have said to the king in the old processions, and what they expected to say to the Messiah whenever he came. (the word 'Hosanna', in verse 25, is translated 'save us').

The crowds around Jesus specifically link him to the central figure of the psalm, the one they had come to interpret as the Messiah-King they longed for. They not only praise God, they bless Jesus in God's name - but the Pharisees reacting to the praises of the crowd were ready to find fault, to criticise.

As C.S. Lewis wrote, "A man who was merely a man and who said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would be a lunatic – the disciples certainly thought it folly to go to Jerusalem. Was he inviting trouble? It was a huge risk. The Pharisees were ready to quell his popularity. ("Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse.")

Jesus knew that His ministry was not yet complete, and His mission would not be successful unless and until He took His gospel message from the small towns of Galilee in the northern part of Israel and declared it in the great Temple in Jerusalem.

He came to celebrate the ancient Passover with his friends. This was a dangerous move, but Jesus was determined. Jesus had set his mind to see things through. No turning back! Yet, there's no trace of arrogance in Jesus. He comes without the trappings of power. He has healed the sick, raised the dead.

But for now, Jesus is welcomed into Jerusalem as the king, and the challenge for us today is that we should welcome Him into our lives as king too. But what kind of a king? A man many were calling King riding into town on a little donkey that probably was not much bigger than he was! Not even a saddle on the thing, just coats for a cushion. This is not a Royal cavalcade, with a guard of honour. This is not like a Roman general on a prancing white stallion.

"Your King comes to you humble on a donkey's colt." His kingdom is hard for us to see, easy for us to miss, because God comes humbly. Some of the most powerful revelations don't come with great gestures.

There are people in our circuit, our community, who do things without fanfare. They see you sitting alone and come and sit alongside you. They surprise you with their generosity. They don't talk too much, but when they do, you remember what was said. They do things most of us don't know about - because they do them humbly. But these little acts of love are in the service of the King - in the name of Jesus and for his sake.

The King comes on donkey, but He's still the King. God comes humbly - but He's still God. Jesus is a man . . . but a man quite comfortable with being worshipped.

Today we gather at the gates of Jerusalem. We will follow the triumphal entry of Jesus and look ahead to the events of the coming Holy Week. Like those who gathered on the streets, who waved palms and shouted hosanna, we gather to worship and praise. They laid their coats before the king on a donkey; we lay before our King all that belongs to us: those we have encountered, whom we have brought to mind during this past week and throughout not only this period of Lent, but all we have encountered this past year. We lay these down and join the crowd in the praise of Christ.

We welcome You as we worship, Lord: come, make it a place of prayer.

We welcome You within our fellowship, Lord: come, fill us with joy and praise.

We welcome You into our hearts, Lord: come, teach us your ways of peace.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord

Lord Jesus, come to us today, so we may be transformed, showing Your glory to our neighbours and bringing Your kingdom to the world. **Amen**

Hymn: **Brother, sister let me serve you** Richard A. M. Gillard **StF 611 / H&P**

1. Brother, sister let me serve you.
Let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

4. I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've seen this journey through.

2. We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

5. When we sing to God in heaven
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

3. I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

6. Brother, sister let me serve you.
Let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

Prayers of Intercession:

O God so many of us are frightened at present of what we continue to see happening around us. We are afraid to look into the future as we see all that was once known to us crumbling away. Remind us of Your promises Lord, remind us that You are on our side and that we do not need to be afraid when we allow You to take full control.

At times we find it hard to think of all the good in our lives, our friends, our homes and food on the table. We prefer to focus on the doom and gloom, feeling we have been cast adrift and left to our own devices. Lord during these times help us to stop and listen for Your still small voice of calm and order. Remind us that You have given us a beautiful world and entrusted it into our safe keeping. Speak to us through the silence and help us to realise that whatever may happen in our world we will always be Your beloved children until eternity and You will never let us go. May we remind ourselves of the hymn and "sing of your love forever".

We pray for areas of the world that concern us at present and we lift them up to You now knowing that You know each one of their needs as well as You know ours. Grant them respite from their troubles and let them know we are praying for them. We pray too for our government trying to make decisions in these unprecedented times. It is so hard to reach solutions when we all think we know better. May they be guided by You to lead us out of this current crisis.

We think now of our family and friends those we see and those who even though maybe close to us geographically may as well be miles away. Ensure they know they are not forgotten and help us as we seek to maintain these connections.

We pray for those who are ill at this time so many people known to us and in these moments of silence we bring them before You Lord.

Lord Jesus bring them comfort and the reassurance that you are with them through every day and night bringing where possible Your healing touch and reassurance.

As we bring our prayers to a close help us to continue daily developing our spiritual selves so that we may be able to serve our communities better in the days ahead. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Hymn: Ride on ride on in majesty

Henry Hart Milman

StF 265 / H&P 159

1. Ride on, ride on in majesty;
hark, all the tribes Hosanna cry.
O Saviour meek, pursue thy road
with palms and scattered garments
strewed.

2. Ride on, ride on in majesty;
in lowly pomp ride on to die.
O Christ, thy triumphs now begin
o'er captive death and conquered sin.

3. Ride on, ride on in majesty;
the angel hosts beyond the sky
look down with sad and wondering eyes
to see the approaching sacrifice.

4. Ride on, ride on in majesty;
the last and fiercest strife is nigh.
Thy Father on the sapphire throne
expects thee, loved, anointed Son.

5. Ride on, ride on in majesty;
in lowly pomp ride on to die.
Bow thy meek head to mortal pain;
then take, O God, thy power and reign.

Blessing:

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore.

