



EMMANUEL CHURCH – PALM SUNDAY WORSHIP – 28TH MARCH 2021



Make some space at home to read and pray through the following, if possible, on the morning of Sunday 28th March 2021.
If you are able, join in this service on Zoom – contact Rev. Paul for details of the service, login and password.

Gathering Prayer: We tell your story; we follow your footsteps: **Lead us into Holy Week.**
We walk towards the city; we wait in the garden: **Lead us onto holy ground.**
We journey towards death; we hope for resurrection: **Lead us into holy joy. Amen.**

Reading: Mark 11:1-11 ‘Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem’

¹ When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ² 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. ³ If anyone says to you, “Why are you doing this?” just say this, “The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.”’ ⁴ They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, ⁵ some of the bystanders said to them, ‘What are you doing, untying the colt?’ ⁶ They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. ⁷ Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. ⁹ Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

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

¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!’

¹¹ 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.

Address: ‘Donkey King’



Prayers of Thanksgiving, Intercession and Lord’s Prayer:

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

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.** We pray: **OUR FATHER...**

Blessing: May the blessing of God: Father, Son and Spirit be with us today and always. Amen.

Address: ‘Donkey King’

Important people travel in style. It’s the case now and it’s always been that way. Don’t believe me? Well, what about:



- † The ‘Popemobile’ – always white, bullet proof, has its own oxygen supply in the back. The Pope can sit, stand, and the chair can be elevated with a hydraulic lift. It might look like Jeremy Clarkson and friends have been let loose on a Datsun Cherry, but it’s the business.
- † If you prefer old school, why not the ‘Gold State Coach’ – used for every coronation since 1760. It weighs 4 tonnes, and is apparently *extremely* uncomfortable to ride in, hence HM Queen did not use it for her Diamond Jubilee. They don’t make them like this anymore.
- † ‘The Beast’ – the car of the US President. A specially designed Cadillac – after JFK the convertibles were dropped. 8-inch-thick doors, 5-inch-thick bullet proof windows, a tear-gas cannon and an adjustable cup-holder. A beast indeed! And now for another ‘beast’!
- † Er... can we add ‘colt’/‘donkey’ to that list? Oh dear, we seem to have crashed to earth rather!

Maybe not, though! Mark gives this bit of detail of how Jesus comes into Jerusalem and it seems to *matter*. By using a donkey Jesus recalls words of Jacob in Genesis 49 which speak of the donkey being a royal mount. Also, the words of the prophet Zechariah would also be significant: *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey”* (Zechariah 9:9). Jesus doesn’t walk; doesn’t use a horse/chariot like a Roman general, he uses a symbol of kingship, making the entry into Jerusalem deeply symbolic. Mark shows us Jesus fulfilling a royal tradition... but also doing so with *humility*. This is no invasion of Jerusalem, and neither is Jesus formally welcomed by anyone there. Jesus embodies authority but with peace.

This is important: don’t forget a little earlier in the Gospel Jesus asks his disciples who he is – and Peter says: ‘You are the Messiah’. Jesus does NOT then talk about privilege, wealth, power, control, or domination. He tells Peter and the others the Son of Man *“must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again”* (Mark 8:31).

Can I ask you to re-read Mark 1:11 again? I don’t think it’s ever struck me before what an almighty anti-climax this verse is! Humility or not, Jesus arrives, pops into the Temple, as a look around, and then leaves! The crowds had just been shouting ‘Hosanna’, surely some of them would have expected a new King to be installed? Again, I think this simply reinforces the message Mark wants to convey: that the victory many expected had very little to do with the victory Jesus had in mind. Going off with the Twelve to Bethany – retreating almost, it’s as if Jesus resists another temptation. The name ‘Bethany’ means ‘house of the afflicted one’ – another reminder of the necessary part of Jesus’ path he must take.

I don’t know about you, but I need God to know *my* experience; to know *my* sadness, my sorrow, to know *my* grief or loss, to know when *I’m* in pain or confused. When I reach out to God, it’s the God of my experiences to whom I pray. Like the crowds in Jerusalem who gathered, we have a choice, you and I. We can place our trust in power, strength, grandeur, those who shout loudest. You know who ‘they’ are! Or, we can place our trust in God who shows us where true love and power are to be found: in a man who humbly enters a city, breaks bread, washes feet, forgives, and faces death that we may have life:



*‘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!’*