

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

Sunday 5 April 2020

Palm Sunday

Welcome to our Prayers and Reflections for Palm Sunday. Holy Week begins with Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, with the crowds waving and cheering him on.

Hosanna to the Son of David!

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

Hosanna in the highest heaven!

The mood in the city darkens as this extraordinary week progresses, and we'll wonder what happens to those who were so happy to welcome Jesus in as their king.

Sharing in the same thoughts and prayers through Holy Week is one of the ways that we will remain connected as a church and as villages in these very disorientating times. We are - and will always be - God's beloved family in this place.

I hope that the Prayers and Reflections will meet you where you are, this Sunday, and help you to journey on with confidence towards the cross and the resurrection. Our next edition will be out for Easter.

God bless you and all your loved ones.

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Prayers and Reflections
for use at home on Palm Sunday
Holy Week begins

PREPARING OURSELVES

Take a moment to be still in God's presence, and feel his love. If you are indoors, you may wish to light a candle as a sign of God's love, here, in your room. You may also wish to have last year's palm cross, in your palm or on the table.

Lord, as I sit and wait in silence,
I place my hopes and dreams,
my fears and concerns,
into your safe and loving hands.
Pour out your love upon me,
make my heart beat in time with yours;
in Jesus' name,
I pray. **Amen.**

LETTING GO

If you come to this time of prayer and reflection with any regrets, with things that you wish you had not said, done or been, offer them to God in the silence of your heart. And then, reflect on the opening words of this well-known hymn.

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways!
Re-clothe us in our rightful mind,
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence praise,
in deeper reverence praise.

Feel God's forgiveness. You are his beloved child, nothing can separate you from his love. May this thought inspire you in the week ahead to speak words of love and peace and hope.

PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER (The Collect)

Across our villages and the worldwide Church, this prayer is being said today. Add your voice to this earthly circle of prayer to our loving Father.

Almighty and everlasting God,
who in your tender love towards the human race
sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ
to take upon him our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross:
grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility,
and also be made partakers of his resurrection;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Pause for a moment to contemplate Jesus preparing for this last stage of his journey into Jerusalem and his God-given fate. What courage and confidence in his Father he displays as he steps out in love.

Picture yourself in this scene. Perhaps, you are one of Jesus' followers walking beside him or in the crowds shouting "Hosanna" as he draws near to you. Picture too your church friends in this scene.

Notice how you are feeling as the story begins.



LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

In our first reading, Jesus enters Jerusalem.

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, "The Lord needs them." And he will send them immediately.' This took place to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

'Tell the daughter of Zion,
Look, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

'Hosanna to the Son of David!

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

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?' The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'

*As Jesus enters the city, it's filled with people for the Passover festivities; the mood in the crowd is one of joy and hope. At last - they're going to be set free from Roman oppression! God has sent us his King! But - there is a key question that they need to face, "Who is this?" Yes, Jesus has come as God's King - the kind of king that they most need; yet, perhaps not the one they were expecting. Ask yourself, **"What kind of King do I need Jesus to be at this time?"***

A Prayer in Response

True and humble King,
hailed by the crowd as Messiah:
grant me the faith to follow in your footsteps,
this Holy Week, and be found beside you,
on Good Friday, at the foot of the Cross.
It is a journey of love and sacrifice,
that leads to joy and hope. **Amen.**

In our second reading, the crowds reject their God-given King.

Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. At that time, they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, 'Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?' For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. While he was sitting on the judgement seat, his wife sent word to him, 'Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him.' Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them, 'Which of the two do you want me to release for you?' And they said, 'Barabbas.' Pilate said to them, 'Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?' All of them said, 'Let him be crucified!' Then he asked, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Let him be crucified!'

*There's a beautiful Spiritual hymn which asks, 'Were you there when they crucified my Lord?' If you'd been in the crowds lining the city's streets, where would you have been when Jesus upset the tables... shared his parting thoughts on God's generous love... ate with the outcasts... and, failed to rise up against the oppressors? As you pondered, "**Who is this?**" Where would you have been when the chief priests and elders were calling for Jesus to be put to death? What would you have done?*

*Pause and place your trust in Jesus,
the servant king, who looked death
in the face and journeyed on.*

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
O, sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
(*Spiritual*)



PRAYERS FOR PALM SUNDAY

Here are some prayers as Holy Week begins. Feel free to use one or more of these prayers, and to add your own.

Suffering, servant God, as I listen again
to the story of your Passion,
move me to weep over Jerusalem,
and all places of conflict,
to mourn for those who die unnoticed in besieged towns
and far from home in refugee camps.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Stir me to stand firm when I see injustice,
to work for reconciliation, at home and in the world,
and transform what is, to what shall be.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Embolden me to stand up for the voiceless,
to be an advocate for the weak and vulnerable,
and to protect all of your creation.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Strengthen me as the world battles the Covid-19 virus,
help me to trust in you, my rock and my salvation,
bless our health and caring services,
and all who are keeping life going across our nation.
Guide our national and business leaders,
scientists and researchers, in their decision making.
Comfort the sick and the dying,
and bring hope to those living in self-isolation.

Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Offer your own heartfelt prayers and yearnings.

The Lord's Prayer

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.**

Prayer of Blessing

A closing prayer of blessing for this week.

Lord, bless and guide me,
whatever I do, whether at home or outside.
Go before me, watch over me,
and keep me, and my loved ones, safe in your love. **Amen.**