

## PALM SUNDAY

28<sup>th</sup> March 2021

### Opening Prayer

Eternal God, we praise you as Holy Week begins. We thank you for meeting us where we are.

We praise you O God, for your thoughts and ways are beyond our imagining.

We thank you for sending Jesus to be our Saviour and Liberator.

Lord Jesus, we praise you for your generous love shown in your ministry of healing, teaching and forgiving and finally in how you gave your life for all.

Holy Spirit, we praise you for guiding and inspiring us. Through you we give thanks for the mystery of the Divine love in community.

As we recall the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem leading to his Passion, we celebrate with joy and devotion at your coming.

God, three in one, we offer our worship to you.

### The Lord's Prayer

### Hebrew Bible Reading 1 Kings 1.32 – 40

*'So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and the king's bodyguard took Solomon down to Gihon Spring, and Solomon rode on King David's personal mule. There Zadok the priest took a flask of olive oil from the sacred tent and poured it on Solomon's head. Then the trumpets were blown, and all the people shouted, 'Long live King Solomon!' 1 Kings 38,39*

### Gospel Reading Mark 11.1 – 11

*'The two disciples left and found the colt standing in the street, tied outside a house. As they were untying it, some bystanders demanded, 'What are you doing, untying that colt?' They said what Jesus had told them to say, "The Lord needs it and will return it soon."' Mark 1.4-6 New Living Translation*

### Reflection

Jesus riding an animal into Jerusalem and entering its Temple is a strong prophetic sign indicating that God's promises to Israel were being fulfilled. The people on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival had heard about this Jesus of Nazareth and wondered if he was the Messiah, the anointed one, come to deliver them and restore the kingdom of Israel.

Jesus would have been aware of this sign and so has the disciples help him prepare. He asks two disciples to go and take a colt from a village near to Jerusalem, telling them to say, 'The Lord needs it and will return it shortly.' By referring to their teacher as 'Lord', the two disciples identifying Jesus as having absolute authority from God. The bystanders who must have wondered if they were stealing it, realised that this was someone special and immediately let them take it.

The crowds also on their way to the Temple would also have understood the significance of the event. The parade will have brought to memory many similar stories or royal parades in the Hebrew Scriptures: the colt signifying the fulfilments of the prophesy of the triumph of Judah– the southern kingdom - when Jacob blesses his sons before his death (Genesis 49.11); the joy of the return of the Ark of the Covenant – the gilded box holding their most holy treasures - to the Temple in Jerusalem under the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 6.7ff); and the declaration of Jehu as king after the long corrupt dynasty of Ahaz (2 Kings 9.13); and perhaps most powerfully of all, the story of King David’s son Solomon anointed with oil and riding into Jerusalem to be enthroned as King. Just as Solomon was the Son of David, is this Jesus the long-awaited Messiah, the Son of David coming to be their everlasting King? Like their forebears, the people in Jesus’ day celebrated by spreading their cloaks on the road ahead of him – a red carpet welcome – and praised God and waving palm branches, proclaiming him as the coming king. You can sense their excitement and expectation.

But the staged event isn’t quite what is expected. The symbolism of Jesus riding the foal of a donkey refers back to a different prophesy which was anti-military, found in Zechariah 9.9 *‘Shout aloud, daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you... humble and riding upon a donkey. He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem ... and shall command peace to the nations.’*

Jesus comes unarmed – he does not follow the Messianic script of national liberation to restore power to the people of Israel by ruling the Davidic Temple-state. He comes to the Temple not to defend it, but to disrupt it. The next scene is him turning over the tables of the money changers and sellers of animals. He comes not to overthrow Rome and establish the new Israel, but to set up a completely different way of being that upturns all those who would rule by dominance and force, and instead to set up a kingdom of peace for all, ruled by justice and love.

As we pray in the Lord’s Prayer, we long to see his kingdom come. We as his followers today are to continue his work toward justice and peace through respect of all people and our planet. AMEN.

### **Prayer of Intercession**

Loving God, we acknowledge you as Lord above all Lords. Thank you that you love all people and pray for those who are needing care at the moment, those who are unwell, those who are hurting or lonely, those grieving the loss of loved ones, those struggling with work or financial difficulties.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for your courage in standing up against the rich and powerful of your day. Help us to be willing to challenge unfair inequalities and abuse and oppression in our society today.

For the sake of your kingdom, AMEN.