

Sunday 5 April - Palm Sunday

We begin by reading that scene on Palm Sunday

Reading: Matthew 21:1-11

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.'

*Our builders and trekkers or others might want to watch a video of a song about it -
(See Clip Clop from engage): https://youtu.be/kyFZ93k_0AU*

We say:

**Hosanna to the Son of David, the King of Israel.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

*We have a moment to reflect on the things that we have got wrong in the last week.
The mistakes made and the times we have let ourselves and others down.*

And we say:

**Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

Ann Lewin - Palm Sunday from Seasons of Grace.

I wonder what the donkey made of it all? Donkeys play quite a significant part in the stories of the Bible. They do the donkey-work. quite literally, and they were highly prized. especially the females. I don't think they were ever sacrificed — perhaps they were more valuable alive. For example. there was a donkey who spoke: Balaam's ass. She saw what was going on — more than the boss did, in fact, and eventually spoke to draw his attention to the presence of an angel. (Read her story in Numbers 22-24.) A donkey also carried Jesus invisibly to Bethlehem — perhaps he was present at his birth?

Another donkey, today's, carried Jesus publicly into Jerusalem. I wonder where she was at the end of the week. Was she tethered somewhere near the cross, with her foal? Why remember all these donkeys? I want to suggest that we are very like them. No offence! I don't just mean that we share their stubbornness and need a lot of coaxing sometimes; or that we always get lumbered with the donkey-work; or that we all behave like silly asses sometimes. All these are true in some measure. But we share something else that is much more important. Nearly all donkeys bear the mark of a cross on their backs. We

carry the mark of the cross too, given us in baptism.

So what do these donkeys tell us about discipleship? They remind us that we always carry Jesus invisibly, like Mary's donkey, wherever we go. Every day Christ is carried into his city, into his world, by us. As St Theresa said, 'Christ has no body now on earth but ours, no hands but ours, no feet but ours. Ours are the feet on which he is to go about doing good, ours the eyes through which he is to look with compassion on the world, ours the hands with which he is to bless us now.' So on the days when we feel we're carrying the world on our shoulders, we need to remember that we are also bearing Christ to meet the world's pain and give people life.

There are times when, like Balaam's ass, we shall see things that others can't or won't see. Then we have to do something about it. Balaam's ass tried first of all to draw the boss's attention to the demands of God, the angel standing in the way, and got pretty rough treatment for her trouble. But then God gave her words to say, and Balaam began to take God seriously.

Being a Christian, being outspoken for God, isn't always going to be easy or

pleasant. Balaam was trying to maintain his reputation, and wasn't keen on anything standing in his way. We shall find ourselves challenging important people and vested interests — that can be very hard, like crucifixion.

Today's donkey reminds us that when we go with Christ, there are no promises about easy rides. We know, however, which she did not, that at the end of the suffering, after the death, there was resurrection. We know that Christ has promised to keep us company. but as we carry him with us in the world, he won't avoid confrontation, or allow us to. 'In the world', he said, 'you will have tribulation.' We know that, from

personal experience, and from sharing in the pain of the world, as people starve, exploit and kill each other. We shall have to hang on with some of the donkey's stubborn-ness to the belief that Christ really has overcome the evil in the world. and that we shall share that victory.

So here we are, at the beginning of Holy Week, armed with our crosses, ready to ride out again with Jesus, to be his donkeys as he goes the way of his cross. God grant that we will be faithful, so that, accompanying him to the cross, we may also know in ourselves the power of his resurrection.

Ann Lewin, from Seasons of Grace

Prayers

Wonderful God, I hold before you all those who I would have seen today.
neighbours, colleagues, friends.
Make yourself known to them.
Help me to serve them from a distance.
Help me to hope for them from a distance
Help me to love them from a distance
Amen

From Socially Distant by Tim Watson

Lord God for those who are finding this time especially hard, those grieving, those fearful, those feeling more alone than ever.

For the keyworkers across our society, all NHS staff, teachers (thinking specifically about the teachers from our local schools, Bassett Green, Swaythling, Mansbridge and Cantell.

For social workers and home carers, those involved in the distribution, delivery and sale of food, those seeking to reach the vulnerable at this time, those involved in providing funeral care, those collecting our rubbish and the many other tasks that are rarely named.

For those living in countries less equipped than our own to cope.

Christ, as a light
illumine and guide me.
Christ, as a shield
overshadow me.
Christ under me;
Christ over me;
Christ beside me
on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me,
lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.
Be in the heart of each to whom I speak;
in the mouth of each who speaks unto me.
This day be within and without me,
lowly and meek, yet all-powerful.
Christ as a light;
Christ as a shield;
Christ beside me
on my left and my right.

From St Patrick's Breastplate

Blessing

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you,
wherever He may send you.
May He guide you through the wilderness,
protect you through the storm.
May He bring you home rejoicing
at the wonders He has shown you.
May He bring you home rejoicing
once again into our doors.

Northumbria Community