



Palm Sunday:

Matthew 21:1-11 (see reading)

or

Passion Sunday

Matthew 26:14-27:66

At this time of isolation, social distancing and really appreciating the work of the NHS and other careering professions, do we want to sing Hosanna and be joyful, or would we like to reflect more sombrely. This is stage in the Christian year when there is place for both.

Palm Sunday:

Yesterday as I was thinking about what to say for Palm Sunday, I began to sing:

“Jesus rode a donkey into town, all the folks turned out from miles around,

What a sight to see a man to see me free, riding on a donkey into town,

Hosanna, Hosanna.....

As I sang it, William my son said that he could remember singing it. It has a really joyful tune and is from a little musical called ‘Jerusalem Joy’.

In our church in the 1990’s we performed this a couple of times.

Passion Sunday:

Whilst Palm Sunday emphasises Jesus’ triumphant return to Jerusalem, the whole Passion Narrative is sometimes good to hear as many people who do not go to connect with Church in Holy Week miss out on the powerful Passion Narrative of The Last Supper, the Crucifixion and jump from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday without understanding the depth of what Jesus did for each one of us.

Again, looking back: in the 1980's Robert (my late husband) and I were youth leaders in the church, and for a few summers we took the youth group camping to Christian camps where 4000 people would gather to hear speakers, join study groups, and sing a lot. At one camp the teenagers had been to listen to two speakers: J John and Adrian Plass – both brilliant speakers. Whilst getting ready for dinner a girl called Tonia was exuberant, saying that she was filled with the Holy Spirit, only for one of the lads to quip – never mind Tonia you will soon get over it.

However, she didn't, and on returning to school – a quite rough Comprehensive School at the time, she set up a Christian Union which ran for many years after she had left. The boys who had teased her went on to very successful careers – one is a Professor in Nano technology, one a Consultant in Haematology and the other a Diplomat, and all still have very active roles in their churches where they worship. The public ministry of J John and Adrian Plass had profoundly affected each one of them.

Back to the Bible narrative:

At this point in the story Jesus has been in public ministry for three years. His identity as the Messiah has been carefully guarded, revealed gradually and discreetly to deliberately chosen individuals.

But the time has come to proclaim it loud and clear. He enters Jerusalem as the King of the Jews. The crowds know it; and were proclaiming it.

Why were they proclaiming it? Who really is this man Jesus?

Jesus normally travels on foot. So why does he now choose a different form of transport?

Jesus rides into the city of the kings, Jerusalem, on the back of a young colt. This is a symbolic act, a declaration of his identity and destiny. Zechariah 9:9 (from the Old Testament) promises that Jerusalem's king will arrive on the back of a foal /colt, (at the same time Jesus entered the East Gate on a colt, Pilate entered the West Gate on a horse with a whole army behind him).

Jesus took the Path of peace

A few verses in this passage are devoted to explaining how this foal is obtained, showing the importance of the animal to the story. The ancient kings of Israel rode into Jerusalem as part of their coronation ceremony, not to conquer the city, but in order to be crowned. Jesus does not enter Jerusalem on the back of a trained military horse; instead, he journeys to his enthronement on an untried animal. He takes the path of peace.

Jesus is followed by a multitude of disciples, who cry out: 'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord', applying to Jesus the adulation found in Psalm 118:26.

To assert his Kingship of peace he had to go through the path of the Passion, to his death and resurrection

As we go through Holy Week, I will offer a reflection of the Passion narratives each day on <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/> (then find your parish church)

Please do follow if you wish.

NB: The word "hosanna" is from the Hebrew word "Hoshana" which means "to save, rescue" or "saviour." This word was only used when referring to Jesus and particularly to "the Son of David." Something very similar is used in Psalm 118:25 which says "Save us, we pray, O Lord! O Lord, we pray, give us success!" and this fits nicely with the way it is used in the gospels as we shall see. In the Hebrew, the word "save" is "yasha`" and means "to save, be saved," or "to be delivered" and this might explain why they chanted this when Jesus arrived in Jerusalem in the final week of His earthly ministry before dying on the cross. Yasha` is very close to Joshua which means "Yahweh is salvation" or simply put "God is salvation" and this is precisely what the name Jesus means "God is Salvation" and in the Aramaic form is "eshu'a" which is pronounced "Yah SHOE uh" and, Yeshua is the Hebrew name for the Lord.

Maybe the word 'Hosanna' can be used for today's unsettled situation, as we say - save us and rescue us we pray.

The Reading for today : Palm Sunday

Matthew 21:1-11 Modern English Version (MEV)



The Triumphant Entry Into Jerusalem

When they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, on the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go over into the village opposite 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, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them.’ And he will send them immediately.”

All this was done to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet, saying:

“Tell the daughter of Zion,
‘Look, your King is coming to you,
humble, and sitting on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

The disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their garments on them, and He sat on them. A very large crowd spread their garments on the road. Others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went before Him and that followed Him cried out:

“Hosanna to the Son of David!
‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’
Hosanna in the highest!”

When He entered Jerusalem, the entire city was moved, saying, “Who is He?”

The crowds said, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee.”