



Sunday 5th April 2020

Palm Sunday

Notes from our Sunday Morning
Pre-recorded Worship

Opening Prayer

Father God, we thank you so much for this story that we celebrate on Palm Sunday. Lord, as we hear it read later and as we hear Andy share wisdom and insight on it, may you help us to really step into it. May you bring it to life, may you draw us closer to your son, Jesus. And may you bring it alive for your spirit, in Jesus name, Amen.

As our Saviour taught us to pray, we say:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your Kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins and help us to forgive those who sinned against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, Amen

Opening Worship

Pray

Verse 1

Our Father high above
Hallowed be Your name
Reveal to us again who You are
All things are possible
God of the miracle
Oh let Your will be done

Chorus

We pray for heaven
Here today Your kingdom to reign always
Here on earth as in heaven
Here on earth as in heaven (oh)

Verse 2

You give us all we need
Forgive us ev'rything
Help us to love as You have loved us
Now come and build Your throne
As we go where You go
God our deliverer

Bridge

Yours is the kingdom the power and glory
Now and forever amen
Oh Yours is the kingdom the power and glory
Now and forever amen amen

Living Hope

Verse 1

How great the chasm that lay between us
How high the mountain I could not climb
In desperation I turned to heaven
And spoke Your name into the night
Then through the darkness Your loving-kindness
Tore through the shadows of my soul
The work is finished the end is written
Jesus Christ my living hope

Verse 2

Who could imagine so great a mercy
What heart could fathom such boundless grace
The God of ages stepped down from glory
To wear my sin and bear my shame
The cross has spoken I am forgiven
The King of kings calls me His own
Beautiful Saviour I'm Yours forever
Jesus Christ my living hope

Chorus

Hallelujah praise the One who set me free
Hallelujah death has lost its grip on me
You have broken every chain
There's salvation in Your name
Jesus Christ my living hope

Verse 3

Then came the morning that sealed the promise
Your buried body began to breathe
Out of the silence the Roaring Lion
Declared the grave has no claim on me
(REPEAT)
Jesus Yours is the victory

Ending

Jesus Christ my living hope
Oh God You are my living hope

Prayers

Lord we thank you for the words of the song that says, 'as the oceans rise and thunders roar, I will soar with you above the storm, Jesus you are King over the flood, I will be still, and know you are God'.

Lord, we lift to you, those who are sick right now. People we know and those that we don't. We thank you God that you are close to those who suffer, and that you are our healer. Come in your healing power, Holy Spirit, to bring complete wholeness and life to their bodies right now. We commit them to you. We lift before you the vulnerable.

We also lift before you those who are vulnerable because of their age, circumstance or underlying health problems, not forgetting those with difficult mental health struggles too. Lord protect them. May you give peace to their hearts and remove any anxiety or worry from their shoulders. You say Jesus, that you will keep in perfect peace, those whose minds are stayed on thee. Fix our eyes on you Jesus at this time we pray.

Lord we pray for our key workers right now, those in direct contact with Covid 19, who cannot go back to their vulnerable families, and who are sacrificing so much to take care of our nation. Lord we pray protection, strength and peace and to them now.

For those keeping us fed, working at check outs, stacking shelves, delivering food, driving, providing for these physical needs, and those at the production and supply end too Lord, especially our farmers and factory workers. Bless protect and strengthen them God at this time.

For those keeping things running, essential services, waste collection, water and energy suppliers. Lord bless them and all they are doing God.

Lord we pray for those who are struggling right now with real physical needs. Lord where this season of isolation is exacerbating suffering and stress for families who were already struggling with being able to meet their most basic needs. We lift them to you now, and especially those who have lost jobs, and are feeling overwhelmed by uncertainties they face. We pray for those individuals and families who are hungry, struggling, and who are in real need of support. Make them known to us Lord, and may our government and ground level communities be able to provide a way to see these needs met.

Lord many of us feel isolated right now, in a very physical sense. But there are also those who have felt isolated emotionally and mentally for longer. Lord we want to lift to you those who feel lonely right now, who feel it very deeply, whatever the reason may be. Jesus, may they know the peace and comforting presence of your Holy Spirit more tangibly, and powerfully than ever before. Be near to them Jesus right now. And in the time of uncertainty, may we be ever more certain of your still small voice, nudging and prompting us, laying people on our hearts, and reaching out to them in ways that we are able to.

Lord you have all authority on earth and in heaven, loose the power of this virus now. We claim your authority over this Land, hear our prayer for mercy God and save our world from this pandemic.

Lord at this time of great global crisis, it is sometimes unfathomable to imagine anyone could have any desire to cause further difficulty, or pain. Lord there are many situations that we need you to directly influence. Places we cannot reach, and hearts we cannot touch. But we believe you can. We want to pray now for the powers of darkness to be loosed, where your light is needed more now than ever before.

Lord we also pray specifically for those in situations of domestic violence, where home isn't, and doesn't feel safe, and this season of lockdown makes those already vulnerable, more so. We pray for social workers, and frontline workers to have deep discernment, authority and wisdom for those families they are connected with. We pray for them, and also for those who are unknown to anyone in the system, sovereign God put your mighty hand of protection over them, and a cessation to any abuse. We know God this world is broken, and for many, holds pain, trauma, and inner turmoil. Lord at this time we pray for those who do not know the rest, the peace and love of Jesus, who walk in ways that bring pain not balm, who seek destruction to themselves and others, who cannot see the light and hope for their own lives feels lost. Lord will you deliver them, and us all from evil, and heal our land.

And may we, the church the body of Christ Jesus, be more united than ever, may we defend the weak, the cause of the oppressed, may we be strong in the beautiful bond of unity. Lord make us guardians of our neighbours, where you have placed us, may we be a blessing. May we carry the hope and fragrance of Jesus at this time.

In Jesus precious name. Amen

Reading: Luke 19: 29-46

29 As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 30 "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' say, 'The Lord needs it.'"

32 Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. 33 As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" 34 They replied, "The Lord needs it." 35 They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. 36 As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

37 When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: 38 "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"

40 "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

41 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it 42 and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. 43 The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. 44 They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

Jesus at the Temple

45 When Jesus entered the temple courts, he began to drive out those who were selling. 46 "It is written," he said to them, "'My house will be a house of prayer'; but you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"

Talk by Andy Wheeler

Today is Palm Sunday and we begin on this day, a journey. It's in a way the central journey, the central story that the Christian faith tells. And it will carry us from today through what we call Holy Week, through to Good Friday, when we remember the death of Christ on the cross. Then through to the most triumphant day in human history, Easter Sunday when we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, from the dead.

It's an incredible story. And it's one that we are accustomed to doing together. We are accustomed to meeting frequently during this time to remember these great and significant events. And what is strange about this time is that we are not able to do that, especially Easter Sunday will be very strange as it is our great day of gathering to celebrate the victory of Christ.

So there are two stories running alongside each other in our minds and our experience at this time. There is the unfolding, destructive story of the Coronavirus. There is also this central story of the Christian faith. And I suppose my question this morning and what I would like to just tease open with you is, do they relate, do they connect? Does the central Christian story connect with the journey we are on as a nation, and as a worldwide human family at this time?

Many of you will be very familiar with the story of Palm Sunday, others may be less familiar. This is a crucial turning point, a crucial moment of decision and choice in the story of Jesus. Some weeks beforehand, He had chosen to leave His ministry in Galilee and other parts to journey purposefully to Jerusalem for a confrontation, for a challenging of the systems.

On Palm Sunday, He reaches the climax of that journey and begins His entry into Jerusalem. He is Israel's true king, and He is coming to His capital city. But this is not a coup, this is not a political enterprise, there is something much deeper and more profound going on. The authorities in Jerusalem maybe did see it as a coup in the making, and were out to crush it. But Jesus is doing something far more profound. He is bringing God's kingdom into the picture and He is seeking to demonstrate that in everything He does. It's a kingdom not characterized by violence and oppression, by power, by ambition by self-seeking. It's a Kingdom characterised by God's initiative and the demonstration of God's love and sacrifice love, His grace, His generosity and mercy. Christ is the embodiment of that in human history and in the human story.

A strange collision is in the making and it is one that will lead to His rejection and His death and His vindication three days later, in an event unique in human history. Beyond human comprehension, God raised Him from the dead. And His story of planting and extending His kingdom in the world was to go forward through us, through His Church. It's an extraordinary story.

I want to look at some aspects of that story briefly, two aspects in particular that we don't commonly look at. First of all, I want to look at the beginning of the story. That strangely extended account of how Jesus locates a donkey for His journey. Now the donkey was very significant, in that, he was re-enacting and fulfilling an Old Testament prophecy that said Israel's true king would come, not on a war horse, and not with violence and not with troops, but would come humbly, simply and in peace, riding a donkey. So, the selection of the donkey is really important. But there is a phrase that's used there a couple of times. It's the phrase, the Lord has needed it. The Lord has needed this donkey, as the disciples asked for its release for Jesus' purpose.

I remember as a child, a sermon which affected me very deeply where the central theme was that Jesus needs all of us. Just as on that occasion, He needed the donkey, the master needs you as well. I'm not quite sure whether that's Luke's intention as he tells the story here. But it's certainly been read that way in Christian history. So at this time, as we try to connect these two stories, I would just want to say, the master needs you. He needs you to step into the story. The story of salvation is the work

of Christ alone. We don't contribute to our salvation; we don't contribute to the gift of God's grace to us. But we are kindly and gently invited into the demonstration and the realization of that story.

We see it at this time in our nation. We see people volunteering and offering themselves taking great risks with their lives. We see people being generous and gracious, and we want to affirm that and bless that and say this is part of God's purpose for His world and we are invited as well. We are also contributing by our isolation to the healing of the nation, and in prayer, and in our encouragement, and in the work we do with various people remotely. We trust that we are serving God's kingdom and you as well. I invite you to play your part in generous self-giving at this time, and it's a contribution to the coming of God's kingdom amongst us.

The other two parts of the story that I want to underline again, briefly, are perhaps not often spelled out as preachers examine their story. The first is the moment going down the Mountain of Olives where Jesus pauses, and we are told He weeps over the city. And the second is when he comes to the temple. Let's pick the first one of those. First of all, it's a very ambiguous story this. People are divided in their attitudes. The authorities are suspicious and fearful. Jesus has a clear sense of the journey He is making and the challenge He is offering to the authorities. The crowds are expecting something different. They are expecting deliverance, maybe they are ambiguous about their attitude to this preacher man from Galilee. And this whole situation is ambiguous and fraught and tense. Jesus at this point is overwhelmed as He looks over the city. He sees the glories of that city. He sees the glories of the temple that is being constructed at that time. People appeal to Him to admire the building. He sees its glory and its splendour, but He knows its rottenness and He knows that at its core is not the kingdom of God that He himself has come to inaugurate and develop. It is rotten to the core.

I say this somewhat reluctantly and with caution, but we need to see that the Coronavirus crisis in our world reveals to us the fragility of our global systems, reveals to us what really drives them and reveals to us how God's kingdom is about different things. So I say that as we journey towards Easter, let's also pause with Jesus to weep over the city, to weep over our civilizations and our societies and our immense achievements and the glories of the world in which we live. The extraordinary technology, which even now, we are using in this service. Let's reflect on what fragility, frailty and insubstantial character is revealed by this pandemic. Let us weep over the city.

The final one is about the temple. Jesus enters Jerusalem and He heads for its centrepiece. He heads for the tourist centre of Jerusalem. He heads for its religious centre. It's like a tourist coming to London and seeking out St. Paul's Cathedral, or Westminster Abbey as the religious centre and perhaps going to offer a formal prayer. The problem is that Jesus knows that it has lost the plot. The temple, which had been established originally as a focus of God's presence amongst His people had become not a place of prayer and worship and of offering of oneself to God but had become a place of ambition and self-glorification. The building itself had become an end in itself and the temple had ceased to be what in God's purpose, it was there to be. In fact, as Jesus says, in other places, He has a sense that He Himself is the new location of God's presence in human history. "Destroy this temple," He said, referring to Himself "And I will build it again in three days."

Jesus comes to the temple and He causes a sensation. He overthrows the tables where money is turned into the special coinage required by the temple. We understand that this was in the Court of the Gentiles where the wider world was invited to come not further into the holy places, but into this court alone. Jesus puts his finger on what is wrong with religion in his day. This has become a den of thieves. It's become a place where people are self-seeking, it's become a place where people are seeking their own ends. Through Abraham and through his descendants, through the Jewish people, God would bless all the nations of the world and Jesus says, this place no longer serves that purpose. It is no longer a place of prayer. It is no longer a place where people seek God's voice and hear His word and pray for their world and is no longer a place of welcome to all. It's a damning condemnation.

These two short stories in our accounts call us back to essentials at this time of crisis in our nation. Will we see beyond the facades of achievements and prosperity, that the facades are beginning to crumble in our world. Will we weep over the city? Secondly, will we in our churches and our places of faith, our religious centres, will we actually come back to that place where we offer a place of prayer, a place where the voice of God and the word of God is heard and we're all welcome.

I want to close with a prayer. And this prayer is provided by the Church of England for this time. So, let us pray together. Keep us good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy. Sustain and support the anxious. Be with those who care for the sick and lift up all who are broken. That we may find comfort, knowing that nothing can separate us from your love. In Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Song

There Is A Redeemer

Verse 1

There is a Redeemer Jesus God's own Son
Precious Lamb of God Messiah Holy One

Chorus

Thank You O my Father
For giving us Your Son
And leaving Your Spirit
Till the work on earth is done

Verse 2

Jesus my Redeemer name above all names
Precious Lamb of God Messiah
O for sinners slain

Verse 3

When I stand in glory I will see His face
There I'll serve my King forever
In that holy place

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Family News

As we enter Holy Week, and we have lots going on in the life of St. Saviour's. On Thursday at 8 p.m. we have our Tenebrae service, which Mike will be leading.

On Friday, we have our Good Friday service at 12noon. This will be a reflection of the cross service, and Jens will be leading this.

A week from today, we have Easter Sunday, a great celebration in the life of the church. So do join us for that one, which will take place at 10 a.m.

As always, we're so grateful to everyone who gives already. If you'd like to make a donation, you can find out how via the website. We thank you so much to all that you give already and to anyone who wants to give today.

Closing Worship

In Christ Alone

Verse 1

In Christ alone my hope is found
He is my light my strength my song
This Cornerstone this solid Ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm
What heights of love what depths of peace
When fears are stilled when strivings cease
My Comforter my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand

Verse 2

In Christ alone who took on flesh
Fullness of God in helpless babe
This gift of love and righteousness
Scorned by the ones He came to save
Till on that cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live

Verse 3

There in the ground His body lay
Light of the world by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

Verse 4

No guilt in life no fear in death
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell no scheme of man
Can ever pluck me from His hand
Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand