

SIXTH SUNDAY OF LENT - PALM SUNDAY

5th April 2020

A short act of worship for use in people's homes while churches are closed.

A free resource funded by **twelvebaskets**.

For more information [click here](#)

Prayer

Today we come into the presence of God with so much pressing in on us.
We come, unsettled at having to worship in a different way. But we come.
So draw near to us dear Lord, come close to us now.
Come and open us to your loving Spirit. Amen¹

Hymn - Singing the Faith 265 – Ride on Ride on in Majesty - [YouTube](#) or [Organ](#) only

Ride on, ride on in majesty!
Hark! all the tribes 'Hosanna!' cry;
your humble beast pursues its road
with palms and scattered garments strowed.

Ride on, ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die:
O Christ, your triumphs now begin
o'er captive death and conquered sin.

Ride on, ride on in majesty!
The wingèd squadrons of the sky
look down with sad and wondering eyes
to see the approaching sacrifice.

Ride on, ride on in majesty!
Your last and fiercest strife is nigh;
the Father on his sapphire throne
expects his own anointed Son.

Ride on, ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die;
bow your meek head to mortal pain,
then take, O God, your power and reign. (Henry Hart Milman 1791-1868)

Prayer

Father, I worship you today, recognising you are worthy of all I can offer.
Open to me the gates of your presence, free me to worship you in spirit and truth.

Jesus Christ who, by your death and resurrection, opened the gates to salvation for all, I worship you today, recognising I need you. I can't make it on my own after all.

Holy Spirit, mediator and energiser, be near to me, come near to my friends and family, that gates may be opened and lives transformed by your power. Amen²

Say the Lord's Prayer

Reading - Matthew 21:1-11 [Click to hear Bible reading](#) Play to 1:28

¹ As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, 'Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.'

⁴ This took place to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet:

⁵ 'Say to Daughter Zion,
"See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. ⁸ A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

'Hosanna to the Son of David!'

'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'

'Hosanna in the highest heaven!'

¹⁰ When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, 'Who is this?'

¹¹ The crowds answered, 'This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.'

Reflection

'Open to me the gates of righteousness', cries the psalmist... and as I hear those words, especially on Palm Sunday, certain images come to my mind... We have gates to keep things in and we have gates to keep things out and the opening and closing of gates plays a part in our lives in all sorts of ways...

The old city of Jerusalem is today surrounded by a wall which contains 8 gates... Gates in walls are always important because they are places of entry and exit and places of encounter... With only a few days of his life on earth remaining, Jesus rides into the city of Jerusalem... On that occasion, as Matthew tells us, Jesus approached the city gates on a humble donkey and as he did so the resounding cries of Psalm 118 ringing loud in our ears...

'Open to me the gates of righteousness',
'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord',
'Hosanna!'

That word Hosanna probably meant 'Save us' initially, but it becomes mixed up with a shout of praise as well – it is a cry which recognises two things; a need for help and that Jesus is the one who can meet that need. Matthew tells us it is a very large crowd and again images come to my mind... a picture of the whole world crowded around a gate crying out for help, for life, for goodness, for salvation...

Looking at the story as Matthew tells it to us; we see that the crowds did three things: Firstly, they cut branches from trees and used them to welcome Jesus. The waving of branches was an integral part of the ancient Jewish Festival of Tabernacles, referred to as the psalm we heard declares, 'Bind up the festal procession with branches...' Matthew's original readers will have made the connection between branches and worship and recognise that this man riding humbly on a donkey is one to be worshipped.

Worship can be a gate-opening experience! When we offer ourselves to God in worship something happens which speaks of the presence and the glory of God and can open the gates of people's hearts.

Secondly the crowd shouted 'Hosanna, Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord'. They recognised that Jesus was the one they needed. Sometimes the gates which have to be opened are the gates with which we fence ourselves off from any sort of need. The culture of today can lead us to think we must be strong, we must be perfect, we must be self-sufficient and able to cope with anything.

But the truth is that we are not supposed to live like that – we are supposed to live in relationship with a God who will supply all our needs – if we recognise that we have them. Shouting 'Hosanna' today is one way to open those gates and let God into our lives.

Thirdly, the crowd answered questions and pointed others to Jesus too. When the whole city, in turmoil, asks 'Who is this?' the crowds replied 'This is Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee'.

Put like that it sounds easy, but we're not always very good at doing it... at answering questions openly, being willing to say 'It's Jesus who makes the difference in my life. Come and meet him.' That too can open gates for our friends and neighbours.

On this Palm Sunday, let's open the gates we find in ourselves and open gates for others too so that the King of glory can enter in!³

Intercessions

Loving Lord I pray for those who share my life...

I pray for those who are struggling with all that is going on around them...

I hold before you those who I rely upon...

I pray for those who are putting themselves in harm's way for the sake of others...

Through your Holy Spirit open within me the gates that hold me back from fully serving you, may I be released, and empowered, and guided in the way of Jesus.

Dear Lord, as I enter this Holy Week, my normal routine cast aside, may I seek to journey with you. Thursday I will grapple to understand. Friday I will mourn what I have lost. Saturday will come and go, but on Sunday may your purpose become clear. Amen ⁴

Hymn 272 – STF From heaven you came - [YouTube](#)

From heaven you came helpless babe,
entered our world, your glory veiled,
not to be served but to serve,
and give your life that we might live.
*This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King*

There in the garden of tears
my heavy load he chose to bear;
his heart with sorrow was torn,
'Yet not my will but yours,' he said.

Come see his hands and his feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space
to cruel nails surrendered.

So let us learn how to serve
and in our lives enthrone him,
each other's needs to prefer
for it is Christ we're serving. ⁵

Blessing

Go into Holy Week, clinging to hope amidst the darkness.
Go with joy, knowing that resurrection is around the corner.
Go with peace, to seek a better world. Amen. ⁶

Acknowledgements

1. Prayer by Wayne Grewcock
2. Prayer by Jill Baker
3. Reflection by Jill Baker
4. Intercessions by Wayne Grewcock
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6. Blessing by Tim Baker

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