

A Service of Praise, Prayer and Proclamation for Sunday 5 April 2020 Palm Sunday

For use at home:

*If there are more than one person praying this service then you can split the speaking between the **bold text** and the regular text.*

PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING TO GOD

Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!

Revelation 5.12

We are not people of fear:

we are people of courage.

We are not people who protect our own safety:

we are people who protect our neighbours' safety.

We are not people of greed:

we are people of generosity.

We are your people God,

giving and loving,

wherever we are,

whatever it costs

For as long as it takes

wherever you call us.

Gracious God, we humbly thank you
for life and health and safety,
for freedom to work, leisure to rest,
and for all that is beautiful in creation and human life.
But, above all, we praise you for our Saviour,
Jesus Christ,
for his death and resurrection;
for the gift of your Spirit;
and for the hope of sharing in your glory.
Fill our hearts with all joy and peace in believing;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Spend a few moments recalling the blessings God has granted you and those whom you love. Give silent thanks to God

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Thank you, Father, for making yourself known to us
and showing the way of salvation
through faith in your Son.

We ask you now to teach and encourage us
through your word,
so that we may be ready to serve you;
for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

The First Reading, from the Old Testament

Isaiah 50.4-9a

⁴The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he wakens— wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught. ⁵The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backward. ⁶I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. ⁷The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; ⁸he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me. ⁹It is the Lord God who helps me; who will declare me guilty?

Hear the word of the Lord,
thanks be to God.

Psalms 31.9-16

⁹Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress;

my eye wastes away from grief, my soul and body also.

¹⁰For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing:

my strength fails because of my misery, and my bones waste away.

¹¹I am the scorn of all my adversaries, a horror to my neighbours, an object of dread to my acquaintances: **those who see me in the street flee from me.**

¹²I have passed out of mind like one who is dead: **I have become like a broken vessel.**

¹³For I hear the whispering of many— terror all around!— **as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life.**

¹⁴But I trust in you, O Lord: **I say, “You are my God.”**

¹⁵My times are in your hand: **deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.**

¹⁶Let your face shine upon your servant: **save me in your steadfast love.**

The Second Reading, from the New Testament

Philippians 2.5-11

⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, ⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, ⁸he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The hymn of the day from the Royal School of Church Music: (because this is a resource being posted in England – it will be a day behind us – so don't worry if it says hymn for Saturday 4 April)

<https://www.rscm.org.uk/our-resources/hftd/>

The Gospel for the Procession of Palms Matthew 21.1-11

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying 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. ³If anyone says anything to you,

just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." ⁴This took place to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, ⁵"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." ⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. ⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The 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!" ¹⁰When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" ¹¹The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

The Passion according to Matthew 27.11-54

¹¹Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "You say so." ¹²But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. ¹³Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?" ¹⁴But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed. ¹⁵Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. ¹⁶At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. ¹⁷So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" ¹⁸For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. ¹⁹While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him." ²⁰Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. ²¹The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." ²²Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" All of them said, "Let him be crucified!" ²³Then he asked, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!" ²⁴So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." ²⁵Then the people as a whole answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!"

²⁶So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. ²⁷Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. ²⁸They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ³⁰They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. ³¹After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. ³²As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross.

³³And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), ³⁴they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. ³⁵And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; ³⁶then they sat down there and kept watch over him. ³⁷Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." ³⁸Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁹Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads ⁴⁰and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." ⁴¹In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, ⁴²"He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. ⁴³He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, 'I am God's Son.'" ⁴⁴The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the

same way. ⁴⁵From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. ⁴⁶And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ⁴⁷When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "This man is calling for Elijah." ⁴⁸At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. ⁴⁹But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him."

⁵⁰Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. ⁵¹At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. ⁵²The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. ⁵³After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. ⁵⁴Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

The Sermon (prepared this week by Father Shane)

You can watch Father Shane preach this sermon on this you tube recording:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IX_3FkZyJR0&t=8s

Let us pray:

O Saviour Christ, in whose way of love lies the secret of all life, and the hope of all people, we pray for quiet courage to match this hour. We did not choose to be born or to live in such an age; but let its problems challenge us, its discoveries exhilarate us, its injustices anger us, its possibilities inspire us, and its vigour renew us, for your kingdom's sake. Amen.

This Sunday is Palm Sunday and as I write this sermon I am feeling grief that for the first time in the almost twenty-five years I have been ordained we will not be gathering physically to bless our palm crosses. We will not enter into church in procession reminding ourselves of the procession Jesus made into Jerusalem the week before he was crucified. This week I have felt a sense of powerlessness as I have watched and endured, along with us all, so many restrictions being placed upon our lives. I have not felt in control and it is like I have been playing catch-up every day. Getting on top of a restriction and seeing what can be done to alleviate it, only to find that no sooner had I managed to do that, a new restriction was hinted at and enacted.

I have been wrestling with and pondering these themes of processions and powerlessness in preparation for this sermon. In their compelling book, The Last Week: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus' Last Days in Jerusalem, Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan argue that two processions entered Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday; Jesus' was not the only *Triumphal Entry*. Every year, the Roman governor of Judea would ride up to Jerusalem and come in all of his imperial majesty to remind the Jewish pilgrims that Rome was in charge. According to Roman imperial belief, the emperor was not simply the ruler of Rome; he was the Son of God. For the empire's Jewish subjects, Pilate's procession signalled more than a military threat. It was the embodiment of a rival theology. Heresy on horseback!

This is the background, Borg and Crossan argue, against which we need to frame the so-called *Triumphal Entry* of Jesus. As Pilate clanged and crashed his imperial way into Jerusalem from the west, Jesus approached from the east, looking (by contrast) ragtag and absurd. His was the procession of the ridiculous, the powerless, and the explicitly vulnerable. As Borg and Crossan remark, "What

we often call the triumphal entry was actually an anti-imperial, anti-triumphal one, a deliberate lampoon of the conquering emperor entering a city on horseback through gates opened in abject submission." Jesus was drawing on the rich, prophetic symbolism of the Jewish Scriptures in his choice of mount. The prophet Zechariah predicted the ride of a king "on a colt, the foal of a donkey." He would be the nonviolent king who'd "command peace to the nations." Did anyone in the crowd get the deep symbolism of Jesus' entry? I suspect they did not. After all, we understand that they were ripe for revolution. They wanted — and expected — something world-altering. An ending-to-the-story worthy of their worship, their fervour, their dusty cloaks-on-the-road.

What they got instead was a parade of powerless misfits. As New Testament scholar N.T Wright puts it, what they got was a mismatch between their outsized expectations and God's small answer. Which raises an interesting question? What did Jesus accomplish on Palm Sunday? I don't think it would be an exaggeration to say that Jesus' political joke hastened his crucifixion. He was no fool; he knew exactly what it would cost him to spit in Rome's face.

It was the will of God that Jesus declare the coming of God's kingdom. A kingdom of peace, a kingdom of justice, a kingdom of radical and universal freedom. A kingdom dramatically unlike the oppressive empire Jesus challenged on Palm Sunday. So before us this day we have the choice, as we do every day, to side with one kingdom or the other. Two processions. Two kingdoms. Two parades into Jerusalem. Stallion or donkey? Armour or humour? Emperor or clown? Which to choose? And in choosing – what to do? We process in humility and vulnerability, placing our fear and anxiety before God and trusting in the love, mercy and grace of God.

In endeavouring to walk *that* procession there is one other procession I have been reflecting upon and it comes from the Old Testament. In the Book of Exodus, a series of increasingly catastrophic plagues loosened Pharaoh's grip just long enough for the Israelites to make their way into the wilderness. Pharaoh reversed course and pursued them. The Israelites faced a vastly superior army on one side and the Red Sea on the other. They were hemmed in. Then followed one of the most renowned and spectacular of all the miracles in the Scriptures! God "divided" the waters and the Israelites passed through, "with a wall of water on their right and on their left." It must have been an awe-inspiring experience to walk that hallway through the sea. It must also have been terrifying. At any moment, those towering walls could have crashed in upon them. May I suggest that many of us might at this moment be feeling like those Israelites passing through the sea? That we are exhausted and bewildered! A frightening enemy pursues us. Danger looms at every side. The only way is forward. We know there is hope on the far shore, but we have not yet begun our ascent.

Our lives are in suspense. We wait in the in-between. We walk in the depth of the depths. We are reminded of the psalmist from last week's readings and their profound cry: "Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord. ... let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy" (Ps. 130:1–2). The Scripture calls this a song of ascent, and yet it comes in the waiting before the ascent. "I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. I wait for the Lord more than the watchmen wait for the morning, more than the watchmen wait for the morning" (vv. 5–6).

Let us pray: O God, we know that we live between the miracle of our redemption and the miracle of our deliverance. We wait between one miracle and another. We know it's only your grace that holds the walls of the sea. We look forward to our ascent. Someday you will meet us upon the mountain, and we will look back and see how mightily and beautifully and perfectly you delivered us. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father;
from there he will come to judge
the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

CONFESSION OF SIN

Return to the Lord your God, who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

Joel 2.13

Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 4.16

Let us now confess our sins to almighty God.
Heavenly Father,
you have loved us with an everlasting love,
but we have broken your holy laws
and have left undone what we ought to have done.
We are sorry for our sins
and turn away from them.
For the sake of your Son who died for us,
forgive us, cleanse us and change us.
By your Holy Spirit,
enable us to live for you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

One or more of the following passages may be said as an assurance of God's forgiveness.

Christ died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 6.10–11

God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.

Ephesians 2.4–5

Jesus is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

Hebrews 7.25

THE MINISTRY OF PRAYER

Intercessions prepared by Sophia Errey

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you that you humbled yourself and became as nothing for our salvation. As we seek to cope in the wake of the virus pandemic we pray for your merciful help, comfort and guidance

Jesus, son of David, let us follow on your way

Lord, graciously hear us

Lord Jesus Christ, bring us together as we understand that we are citizens of one world, your world. We thank you that you came, not as a worldly conqueror with pomp and show, but humbly riding on a donkey, to serve us.

Help elected officials, and all who exercise control and power as they grapple with unprecedented demands. Guide them to make wise and fair decisions on support services and allocation of resources.

We ask for your loving presence to support all those already afflicted by the consequences of war, famine and disease. Give a spirit of compassion and generosity to those who are suffering little in comparison.

Jesus, son of David, let us follow on your way

Lord, graciously hear us

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you that you come to us as our shepherd and healer.

Inspire your church to pray, to give, to love, to serve and to proclaim the Gospel, that you may be glorified throughout the world.

Support church leaders and draw them closer to you as they work in changed circumstances to work creatively in pastoring their flock.

We ask you to bless:

Anglicare Australia (Bp Chris Jones, Chair; Kasy Chambers, Exec Director);

St George's Monbulk (Simon Elliott);

St Stephen's & St Mary's Anglican Church, Mount Waverley (Bp Paul Barker);

St Luke's South Melbourne – Pastoral Visit (Bp Genieve Blackwell);

All Saint's Anglican Church, Greensborough - visit (Bp Kate Prowd)

as they continue to serve you throughout this time.

Jesus, son of David, let us follow on your way

Lord, graciously hear us

Lord Jesus Christ, as you entered Jerusalem the crowd shouted praises. But in just a few days they turned on you. We thank you that in you is all truth. Help all your people to hold on to what is true and right, and not be swayed to panic or injustice by false information.

Jesus, son of David, let us follow on your way

Lord, graciously hear us

Lord Jesus Christ, in your Passion we see our human frailty. We thank you that you suffered with us and for us. Guide all efforts to prevent contagion and to help those most vulnerable, including the elderly, the homeless, those suffering from chronic disease and those facing major financial hardships.

Be with all professionals and volunteers who work to check the spread of disease, seek ways to eradicate the epidemic, and care for the sick. Give them courage, the support they need, and an assurance that their efforts are needed and valued. May all our actions be marked by steadfast love and selfless service for others, and never by fear or selfishness.

We pray for your gracious care for those we now name before you, Russ, Betty, Jessie, Don, Jim, Alma, Muriel, Faye, Eileen, Nola and Margaret who are in special need at this time

Jesus, son of David, let us follow on your way

Lord, graciously hear us

Lord Jesus Christ, you shared our life even to the point of death. Gather to yourself in gentleness and peace all who have died. Comfort those whose grief is intensified by the need for isolation. In the Years' Mind we remember before you: Anne Johnston, Jess Hodges, Samuel Scott, Barbara Morris, Harry Laughler. As you are highly exalted, may we rise from death to the fullness of life with you.

Jesus, son of David, let us follow on your way

Lord, graciously hear us

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours

now and forever. **Amen.**

THE SENDING OUT OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Loving God, we thank you for hearing our prayers,

feeding us with your word,

and encouraging us in our meeting together.

Take us and use us

to love and serve you

and all people,

in the power of your Spirit

and in the name of your Son,

Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May the God of peace equip us with everything good for doing his will, working in us what is pleasing to God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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