

21st Century Disciples: Get Involved

Gathering

Create a space for worship - perhaps with a small table with a bible, cross and candle.

*This week, it would be appropriate to find a **purple cloth** or scarf to signify that we are moving into a time of preparation for Easter.*

Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God

Light Candle

We light a candle to centre us and to draw us towards Christ.

The writer of the gospel attributed to John assures us:

Jesus spoke to them, saying,
"I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

John 8:12



Acknowledgement of Country

As we look upon the hills and valleys and ocean,
we see the love poured out upon this Land
by those who have cared for this place
since time beyond measure.

***We honour those who have gone before
and those who are yet to come.***

May we be mindful of the calling
God places on all humanity
to care for Creation.

May we take the lead
from the Wadi Wadi people of the Dharawal nation,
whose stories are entwined
with the stewarding of this place.

***May we learn from them
and walk with them.***

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Introduction

Today, our preparations for Easter take a sharp turn as we enter the final week.
Today we reach the gates of Jerusalem.

Over the past 5 weeks, we have been thinking about what it looks for us to be 21st
Century followers of Jesus.

Who can remember?

- how we engage with the Scriptures;

- taking the long view
- know and practice grace
- seek reconciliation
- expect surprises

Today we think about how our discipleship means getting involved - we might not always get it right, Jesus disciples certainly didn't, but we need to keep trying!

Today we join with the crowd waving branches or, in Luke's account, throwing our cloaks on the road, celebrating Jesus as he rides on a small or young colt or donkey.

Yet the end of this coming week will find us at the foot of his cross.

So come, let us worship God.

Call to Worship

Philippians 2:5-11 say this:

⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,

⁷ but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

⁸ he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Lent has been a long journey.

Now the long shadow of the cross and the footsteps of Jesus
find us waiting at the gates of Jerusalem.

We have arrived.

Yet it seems the journey is still not complete;
there is a deeper journey still to make.

This Lenten wandering has been just the beginning.

The greatest story is still to be told.

Come let us gather at the gates of the city;
the crowds are preparing to enter.

Let us pray...

May we be your disciples today, O Jesus,
where we know what we cry,

where we take to heart the hosannas and live them beyond the parade.

May we be your supporters today, O Jesus,
where we know the saviour you are,

where we intend to follow you from gate to garden.

May we be your voice today, O Jesus,
where we cry out against the protests,
where we stake our faith and lives on what you begin here today. Amen.

Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Palm Sunday, 10 April 2022, p.80

Sing - Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

We sing a song that echoes the song of the crowd as Jesus entered Jerusalem.

Hosanna, loud hosanna
the faithful children sang;
through city street and temple
their joyous anthem rang;
to Jesus who had blessed them
had hugged them to his chest,
the children sang their praises
that he, in turn, be blessed.

"Hosanna in the highest!"
That ancient song we sing,
for Christ is our Redeemer,
who came as Servant-King.
O may we ever praise him
with heart and life and voice.
He walks life's pathways with us.
Come, let us all rejoice!

From Olivet they followed
among the shouting crowd,
their leafy palm-branch waving
and chanting clear and loud;
Jesus, the son of David,
rode on in lowly state,
and smiled to see the children
crowding the city gate.

*Words: Jennette Threlfall
revised by Nigel Weaver 1993*

Reading: Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

¹ O give thanks to the Lord, for [God] is good;
[God's] steadfast love endures for ever!

² Let Israel say,
'[God's] steadfast love endures for ever.'

...

¹⁹ Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the Lord.

²⁰ This is the gate of the Lord;
the righteous shall enter through it.

²¹ I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.

²² The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.

²³ This is the Lord's doing;
it is marvellous in our eyes.

²⁴ This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

²⁵ Save us, we beseech you, O Lord!
O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!

- 26 Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
We bless you from the house of the Lord.
- 27 The Lord is God,
and [God] has given us light.
Bind the festal procession with branches,
up to the horns of the altar.
- 28 You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;
you are my God, I will extol you.
- 29 O give thanks to the Lord, for [God] is good,
for [God's] steadfast love endures for ever.

For the Word of God in Scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us,
Thanks be to God!

Prayer

Almighty God,
whose love endures forever,
who meets us where we are,
who meets us as we are—
our true selves:
flawed and broken,
sick and well,
sad and joyous,
doubtful and sure;
but forever held:
in your steadfast love.

As we begin this week
of contemplation and reflection,
guide our thoughts towards the life and teachings of our saviour Jesus.
Show us the way forward and through the difficulties
of this life and these troubling times;
lead us towards the gates of your kingdom;
forgive us for all the times we have failed to follow you;
and embolden us to do better:
in your steadfast love.

Like those before us,
we come together today,
in our buildings,
in our homes,
perhaps separated in space
but bound always in dedication to your son Jesus,
strengthened in your Holy Spirit,
and united always:

in your steadfast love to shout Hosanna!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest. Amen.

Spill The Beans, Issue 42, Resources for Palm Sunday, 10 April 2022, p.58

Sing - Hosanna, Hosanna (TIS 724)

And so again we join with the crowd singing praise to God.

Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the
highest!

Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the
highest!

Lord we lift up your name
with hearts full of praise.

Be exalted, O Lord my God!

Hosanna in the highest!

Glory, glory, glory to the King of kings!

Glory, glory, glory to the King of kings!

Lord we lift up your name

with hearts full of praise.

Be exalted, O Lord my God!

Glory to the King of kings!

Words and Music © Carl Tuttle

Listening for God's Voice

Reading: Luke 19:28-40

²⁸ After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

²⁹ When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰saying, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here.

³¹If anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" just say this: "The Lord needs it." ³²So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. ³³As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, 'Why are you untying the colt?' ³⁴They said, 'The Lord needs it.' ³⁵Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. ³⁷As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, ³⁸saying,

'Blessed is the king

who comes in the name of the Lord!

Peace in heaven,

and glory in the highest heaven!'

³⁹Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, order your disciples to stop.'

⁴⁰He answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.'

For the Word of God in Scripture,

for the Word of God among us,

for the Word of God within us,

Thanks be to God!

Reflection

God of Love, as we listen to this ancient, yet familiar story, speak to us, we pray.

Open our minds to new understanding,

open our eyes to new insights,

open our hearts to new ways of engaging with the world you love.

We pray in the name of the one who comes in your name, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

²⁹ O give thanks to the Lord, for [God] is good,
for [God's] steadfast love endures for ever. (Psalm 118:29)

Why this psalm? Why were the crowd singing this particular psalm as they accompany Jesus into Jerusalem?

It is said this psalm was a victory song - as the king approaches the gates of the city - proclaiming God's goodness to the nation. It is a song that celebrates a military victory, God's victory over Israel's enemies.

To our ears today there are lots of problems with that - the idea that God gives a violent victory over a nation, taking the side of one particular group of people over another - well, it's problematic.

But for the people of Israel, this song or psalm has emerged out of the victories King David won and their belief that it was all God-inspired and a fulfilment of the covenant God made with the people of Israel centuries before, the covenant made with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the covenant that held the people of Israel in God's care and blessing.

So the psalm is telling when sung in reference to the parade we see in the events of Palm Sunday - Jesus, riding on the colt, approaches the city gates - God is once more seen as having brought victory to the people of Israel.

The cry of "Hosanna", translated more closely as "save us!" than "hooray!", alongside the singing of this psalm, holds this tension of hoping for release from the Roman tyranny and the celebration of God fulfilling God's covenant even in the face of the Roman rule.

It might also be that it held the same tension of hope and fulfilment before the religious leaders of the time.

There is plenty written about the nature of the parade described for us in Luke's gospel, its political and religious elements, and the juxtaposition of the military ruler riding into the city on a majestic steed and the peaceable king riding on a colt or donkey. I don't want to go into them today - grab me later if you want a more detailed conversation about that.

What I do want us to notice is the crowd.

This crowd is made up of all sorts of people - mostly Jewish pilgrims entering Jerusalem for the passover. It certainly included the disciples and the others who had been following Jesus for some time. This is a high moment - of anticipation and expectation.

I wonder how many of them understood what was happening at the time.

I wonder whether they could articulate what it was they were hoping for.

And we know that in a few short days their cries had turned to jeers, their celebration and affirmation of Jesus had turned to betrayal and denial, their hopes and expectations lay in pieces at the foot of a Roman cross.

But what strikes me as I read these stories this time, is that they were there.

They may not have understood,

they may at times have been misguided,

they may have been frightened,

they may even have betrayed or denied Jesus,

but they were there - in the thick of what what going on, participating, lending their voices and their presence - they were there...

And so I wonder, where is God calling us to be?

I wonder whether the church has become comfortable in its silence in so many ways.

I wonder whether we have become safe and comfortable in our own spaces and a bit reluctant to venture into the big wide world.

No, we haven't always got it right, sometimes we have spoken out on the wrong side of divisive issues, and sometimes our actions have caused unintended but devastating pain, but I don't think that gives us an excuse to withdraw.

We need to admit when we have got it wrong, sometimes we need to apologise and seek reconciliation with those we have hurt along the way, the people we have betrayed or abandoned or denied.

But the story we enter this week, also calls us to try again. And to keep showing up. To embrace the new life that is offered and to put ourselves back in the fray - speaking alongside the vulnerable, the dispossessed, the forgotten and the voiceless in our communities. Turning up to put bodily form around what we think or say.

As an example, just in the last 2 weeks, Tearfund have released some research into what young people think about the church and its attitude to climate change. One of the clear findings is that younger Christians (18-40 year olds) want us oldies (and leaders) to be saying more about what we believe about climate change and doing more to address it.¹ We need to get involved.

Today I want to invite you to think about what you need to get involved in?
Where is God calling you to lend your voice, your presence, your being?
What crowd do you need to help gather or be a part of?

For now, we are going to get involved in a task together - *making palm crosses*

These crosses will accompany us through the week ahead - you might like to have them with you through the Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services. These crosses will remind us throughout the year of our commitment to the way of Jesus, of the immense love Jesus showed in his living, dying and rising, and, I hope, of God's call to us to get involved.

²⁹ O give thanks to the Lord, for [God] is good,
for [God's] steadfast love endures for ever. (Psalm 118:29)

You might like to hold your cross as we pray for the world around us...

Responding

Prayer for Others (Helen Laidlaw)

Dear Loving God,

Today is Palm Sunday. And as we think of Jesus being cheered and celebrated as he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey one day, we also shiver as we know how close he was to his painful death on the cross. This seems to be our world today which seems to be wracked by deaths and cruelty and unfairness. But we also remember that Jesus suffered for us and the final surprise was his resurrection which opened up a whole new world for us all.

A friend recently sent me this comment:

"In the end, just three things matter...

How well we have lived

How well we have loved

How well we have learned to let go". (Jack Kornfield)

¹ Tearfund, *They Shall Inherit The Earth: 2022 Tearfund Climate Report Summary*, <https://www.tearfund.org.au/splash/climate-report>

As we contemplate this Easter week, help us to think about how well we have lived and what perhaps can change for each of us. Most of us are older and can look back on what has impacted on our living, and the circumstances which shaped us – often to our surprise. Be with us as we continue to depend on your guidance and support.

How well have we loved? Showing love when it is not returned is hard but Jesus taught us that it is easy to love those who show love to us. I thank you for the love which so many here show to others, which is not always recognised and appreciated. May this church be known as a place where love is freely shown, and differences are appreciated.

How well we have learned to let go? People hurt us in so many ways – often unintendedly – and it is so hard to put it behind us. But that is God's promise to us. None of us is perfect but we are forgiven always and are able to start again in His love and support. Holding on to hurt and anger is debilitating and we need your help to overcome these basic reactions.

An election will soon have been called, and we ask your guidance to vote wisely for the good of our country. Is our economic security the most important? Or caring for our environment? Or adequately paying our health workers and teachers? Should refugees be released from detention? Help us to not be blind to the issues which fit Jesus' teaching to us.

We are grateful for the vaccines which are limiting the severity of the pandemic and for the rules which have kept us safe. However we pray for those who are ill – (with so many different illnesses) that they may have both peace and healing. Be with Gail Pickles as she takes speech sessions, that she may swiftly regain her former abilities.

Be with all the members who make decisions for the running of the church that they may echo your will for us. Thank you for their time and effort.

In Jesus' name, who taught us that love of our neighbour is essential in God's world,
Amen

Sing - Lord, Jesus Christ (TIS 526) [women/men - verses]

As we gather at this table, we sing of Jesus coming amongst us, gathering us.

Note: verses for men and women

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have come to us,
you are one with us,
Mary's son;
cleansing our souls from all their sin,
pouring your love and goodness in,
Jesus, our love for you we sing,
living Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have come to us,
born as one of us,
Mary's son;
led out to die on Calvary,
risen from death to set us free,
living Lord Jesus, help us see
you are Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ,
now and every day,
teach us how to pray,
Son of God;
You have commanded us to do
this in remembrance, Lord, of you:
into our lives your power breaks through,
living Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ,
I would come to you,
live my life for you,
Son of God.
All your commands I know are true,
your many gifts will make me new,
into my life your power breaks through,
living Lord.

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Holy Communion

If you would like to share in Communion and are unable to join with us in-person, please let Rev Kath or Rhonda Back know. We would love to bring Communion to you in your home at a time that suits you.

Offering

Today, the stewards will bring the offering bags to you but please don't try and take them and pass them on - please just pop your offering into the bag as the stewards come by.

As we make our offering, this is not just about cash - many people give electronically now - this time is also an opportunity to consider what time, skills and commitment we make to the work of God in the world...

Save us
from injustice
from hunger
from conflict
from indifference.
Call us
to works of justice
feeding the hungry
peacemaking in conflict
and seeking the lost.
And we will go
with you
beside you
because of you
now. Amen.

Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for Palm Sunday, 10 April 2022, p.82

Sending

Sing - Come Into The Streets With Me (Seasons 5-11)

Come into the streets with me!

Come and follow my leader...

Come to where the crowds will be,
see a strange and gentle king
on a donkey travelling.

If the soldiers draw their swords,
will we dare to sing these words,
be his friends for just a day,
cheer him on, then run away?

*Come and follow my leader,
come and follow my leader,
Jesus Christ is riding by,
come and follow my leader.*

Come and follow my leader...

All the people shout his name,
waving branches, sing his fame,
throw their coats upon his road,
glad to praise the Son of God.

Jesus goes where things are
rough,
Jesus knows when life is tough,
always comes to us, his friends,
so his story never ends.

Come and follow my leader...

Shirley Erena Murray

Benediction

Go into this holy week in peace,
embraced by the steadfast love of God,
blessed by the humility and courage of Jesus Christ
and filled with the immeasurable power of the Holy Spirit.

Rev Kath Merrifield
10 April 2022