

**PALM SUNDAY**

**10/4/22**

**CAVES BEACH**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

Joyous, enthusiastic!

**We join the crowds who welcomed Jesus.**

Supportive, friendly, encouraging!

**We join the disciples who came with Jesus.**

Wondering, reflective, in awe!

**We look towards the cross-hill of the city.**

**Opening Prayer**

Touch us with your joy, O God,

**As we acclaim Jesus, your praiseworthy One.**

Encourage us with your Word, O God,

**As we learn from Jesus your Son, your wise and inspired Son.**

Fill us with your compassion, O God,

**As we follow the lead of Jesus, your care-full One.**

Unite us as your people, O God,

**As we pray and praise together,  
and remember Jesus, your beloved Son. Amen.**

**HYMN 244** Trotting, trotting

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJxscSePly4&t=25s>

**PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION**

As the sun rises, the light reveals your world.

In the warmth of its glow, winter plants unfurl.  
With the refreshing rains comes exceptional greening.  
As the busyness of Creation sounds out its joy, we hear your wisdom.  
Draw close to us again today, Our God of Wonder  
Companion us along our faith path,  
for we long to know you more  
and understand you deep in our hearts.  
May we, your people, celebrate with joy  
and give thanks for the work of your hands,  
May our living celebrate the wonders that you offer.  
Listening One,  
Please lend your ear, for we are sorry.  
We have the choice of living in your way,  
of holding close to our hearts your love for all beings.  
Yet, our practice does not show this,  
and our commitment is weak.  
Our humility is corrupted by our low sense of worth.  
We let this colour what we see and it filters our listening.  
Our forgiveness is marred by keeping accounts.  
Our choices are diverted by fear and distrust.  
We harbour our hurts, and they weigh us down.  
Our own desires temper our help.  
In our daily living, we act in easier ways for ourselves,  
with little consideration of our impact on all that is yours.

We offer these truths, and more that you see,

for we long to walk humbly with you.

We seek your rest, O calming One...

We seek your wisdom, O insightful One...

We seek your way, Jesus.

### **WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

All beings in heaven and in God's realm  
are blessed by the grace of God's deep love.

Jesus brought a redemptive path  
and will walk this with you,  
companioning you as you listen, learn and love again.

Hold this forgiveness close  
for with it comes as rest for weary souls  
and wisdom that speaks into life itself.

### **READINGS**

- **Philippians 2: 5–11**

5 Let 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.

### **Luke 19:28–40**

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

<sup>29</sup> When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, <sup>30</sup> saying, “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. <sup>31</sup> If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it.’” <sup>32</sup> So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. <sup>33</sup> As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” <sup>34</sup> They said, “The Lord needs it.” <sup>35</sup> Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. <sup>36</sup> As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. <sup>37</sup> As 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, <sup>38</sup> saying,

“Blessed is the king  
who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Peace in heaven,  
and glory in the highest heaven!”

<sup>39</sup> Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.”<sup>40</sup> He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.”

**HYMN 348** Ride on, ride on in majesty

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHelX8xTpYs>

## **SERMON**

It occurred to me the other day that we are in for a few weeks of full-on election hype leading up to a Federal election. People cheering in the streets for their favorite politicians and others yelling abuse. It reminds me of a comment made by Sir Winston Churchill when he said that public favour was no proof of real success. There was one speech where over 10,000 people turned out and his friend said to him: “Winston, aren’t you impressed that 10,000 came out to hear you speak?” Churchill replied: “Not really. 100,000 would come to see me hang.”

When we think back to Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the back of a non-descript donkey we might think how wonderful that event was. The crowd was praising Him. What a wonderful way for this bearer of peace to enter into the Holy City. It must have been quite a contrast to the Roman soldiers and their generals as they rode their horses into the city followed by all of their troops. They came through the main gate in numbers in order to displaying their power, so as to help maintain peace with the unruly Jewish population.

Everyone in the street watching Jesus was happy and celebrating. However Jesus also knew that a lot of the same people would show up for His demise a few short days later.

I sometimes wonder how did Jesus really feel during that triumphant ride into town. Was he waving and smiling at the crowds like people do on floats during some parades? Or, was he looking straight ahead with grim determination knowing what lay ahead. At this time of His greatest acclamation Jesus knew that he was to face an undignified death.

We know that this was to be His last visit as we have already read the end of the story. His mission was very clear.

I wonder if many of those people standing by the road celebrating contemplated what was ahead. People were spreading their cloaks and palm branches on the ground to cover the unsewered mess that would have been in the street. The Zealots were hoping that Jesus was the

promised conqueror coming to lead them onto victory against the Roman forces. Those more attuned to the Apocalyptic were hoping that this would mark the end of the known world and the start of God's rule on earth.

The ordinary followers of Jesus were reacting to the love that He had shown to so many, even to Roman soldiers. Others were looking for more miracles like the one which brought Lazarus back from the dead. Whatever their reasoning the crowd was in a mood to celebrate. Each wanted their hopes fulfilled through Jesus.

Also scattered among the crowds were those who opposed His ministry and teachings. Jesus was the worst nightmare of the establishment. Pharisees were unsettled by the huge crowds clamouring to get close to Jesus, rather than following their restrictive teachings. They were doubly disturbed by His disregard for the Law. Jesus was equally not covered by the Temple and its finery.

Even the Roman authorities would have been nervous as they witnessed Jesus' popularity because they were on guard to squash any sign of an uprising, which was not that uncommon among the Jews and their fractured political sub-groups at this time of year.

In this midst of all this confusion Jesus rode on boldly without coming into direct conflict with the Roman rulers. He set the standard for people who choose to go against the accepted niceties to show up people like the church, the government and all those who are unloving, uncaring and oppressing people.

As he entered Jerusalem on a donkey Jesus fulfilled the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9 where it says;

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud,  
O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to  
you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and  
riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey (NRSV).*

If we look carefully at the symbolism Palms had many different connotations in Jesus' time. In those days palms branches were often laid across a person's grave as a sign of eternal life. Palm branches were laid on the road to welcome a conquering hero. Palms, especially in the desert, were signs that life giving activity was near. While some laid their cloaks on the road before Jesus others laid everything in their hearts before Jesus.

Despite all the undercurrents present that day there was a passion in the crowd which greeted Jesus as He entered Jerusalem. Things had been building up to this point for some time. Followers of Jesus were ready to embrace Jesus and they looked forward in hope as to what would happen next.

Jesus also had some passion. His passion was to do His Father's will. He had compassion for the crowds surrounding Him as they cheered for Him. Jesus already knew what was ahead but still He followed through.

At the same time Jesus recognised why He had come to earth to live a human life. This is what culminated in His riding into Jerusalem. The crowd cheered thinking of a liberating King. Little did they recognise the difference between their expectations and the reality of Jesus' mission on earth.

For so long the people of Israel had prayed for a king to liberate them. They searched the scriptures and some had determined that the arrival of a king was imminent. Having seen Jesus perform many miracles they thought that someone like Jesus was really the promised king. Now, as the donkey bearing Jesus came into town, their hopes were heightened. Was Jesus going to be their king?

Yes He was a King but not the sort that they longed for. Jesus prayer then, as it is today, was for people to understand His teaching about the new Kingdom and not about political power or even a magnificent temple. His Kingdom was about far more and could only be summed up in one word: *Servanthood*.

His modelling of humble servanthood throughout His ministry was often overlooked by those around Him. The servanthood that Jesus lived even took Him to Golgotha. He rejected legalism. He overturned the money changer's tables in the Temple. He cared for the poor, the stranger, the hungry and set about the healing of those who were sick. All of this culminated in the crucifixion of Jesus.

With such a noisy bunch of followers the Pharisees called on Jesus to quieten the crowd down. In response Jesus said: "if these people were silent the very stones would cry out." Those who were part of Jesus' movement were part of a movement which was growing to be bigger than any individual.

By now things had developed under Jesus' teaching to the point that the reign of God in people's hearts and the power of His love would continue through the activities of His followers. When Jesus was martyred the

movement towards Christianity had already been started and it became unstoppable.

This blossoming of movements following brutal repression has been seen so many times since. This is especially true in freedom movements like the civil rights movement in the USA and again in the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. The more people are unfairly repressed the stronger the movement becomes.

Jesus died to reinforce what He had been teaching His followers and to fulfil God's love. By simply forgiving, healing & preaching, Jesus dared to reach out and touch those who society ignored and dismissed. By following in the footsteps of that donkey we can learn how to persevere even when the price of discipleship seems impossible.

Today is known as both Passion Sunday and also Palm Sunday. It is not hard with the news on the TV everyday to recognise the extent of evil in our world today and for us to long for God's deliverance for of all those who suffer. We have palm branches around the church because we live in hope of eternal life. In that action of waving palm branches we see that Jesus helps us to draw on those life giving waters in the midst of a tired and dysfunctional world.

We now know that Jesus can set us free from destruction. Like those palm waving pilgrims in Jerusalem we also give thanks for the healing that Jesus offers.

Thanks be to God who has delivered us from death to life, from sorrow to joy, from pain to pride, from the grave to grace. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. "Hosanna indeed!" Amen

**HYMN 333** All glory praise & honour

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e9VnLNh5YY8>

## **PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING**

We are so thankful, Jesus, for your generous love that keeps nurturing and renewing us each day. May this offering and our lives be part of the continuing renewal of God's realm today and beyond our reckoning. Amen.

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE (Bob Willoughby)**

There is a lovely song written many years ago by Charles H Gabriel. It was inspired by a statement made by Jesus about God caring for each one of us. Jesus said: Are not two sparrows sold for a penny and not one of them



falls to the ground unless your Father in Heaven wills it and you are worth more than many sparrows. The song starts like this:

***Why should I be discouraged, why should the shadows come,***

***Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home***

***When Jesus is my portion, my constant friend is He,***

***His eye is on the sparrow and I know He watches me;***

***His eye is on the sparrow and I know He watches me.***

**Let us Pray:** Heavenly Father, these words of Jesus gives us hope for the future. Sometimes we get so worried about people and situations and communities who are in strife. The war that is going on in Ukraine with the Russian forces taking its toll on human life. Some people are asking why, why, why can't You do something about these Russians and especially Putin? And then we realize that You have given people a free will. And so we see evil forces, the old enemy Satan inspiring people to use their free will to start this dreadful conflict.

Lord God, strengthen the faith of the people who are downtrodden and vulnerable in that country. May they know that you will sustain them in their needs.

Father, we also ask for your blessings on the members of our church who are feeling unable to cope with coming out to worship, either because of their age or disability. We know you still love and care for them and we hold them before you again this day. May they know the hope that comes from trusting in your mercy and grace. For those members who are so sick that they are not here today continue to touch their lives by your Holy Spirit.

We know that you, Lord are concerned for all aspects of our country's welfare. We then are bold enough to ask for guidance for our politicians as the Federal elections are nearly here. Guide our Prime Minister and the opposition leader. May they take the welfare of our country to heart as they present their policies for the future.

Lord God, our church is now looking to the future directions You may which to take us. Guide the Church Council by your Holy Spirit as they try to interpret the answers given in the recent Church Life Survey. We pray that you will give us the tools and the incentive to grow this fellowship of believers in faith and numbers. We need Your urging and your help to

Speak about our faith to others so that Jesus may reign in their lives as well as ours.

Will you join me in 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.

**HYMN 231** At the name of Jesus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7w-tDjlpqk>

## **BENEDICTION**

Leave here, friends, pondering the way of redemption.

Prepare for the journey.

Set aside time to be in prayerful presence with God.

Read, share in hearing the word and share in prayer.

This is the pivotal moment where we travel with Jesus  
through wonder, joy, humility, betrayal, anger, grief,

and understanding the gift of redemptive love.

May God hold you,

the Spirit guide you

and Jesus walk with you

on your journey to the way of redemption.