

This short act of worship has been produced for you.
If you are well enough and able,
why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time
when you would normally be sharing with others in church and
pray for them as they pray for you.

Greeting: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and
the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hosanna to the Son of David!

Hosanna in the highest

Blessèd is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest

Hymn: Ride on, ride on in majesty! (Singing the Faith 265)

Sing/read/pray/proclaim the words

<https://youtu.be/g-qDQSjnzH8>

Ride on, ride on in majesty!
Hark, all the tribes 'Hosanna!' cry;
your humble beast pursues your 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

Let us pray.
God our Saviour,
whose son entered Jerusalem as Messiah to suffer and die:
may the celebration of this Palm Sunday be for us a sign of his
victory;
may we ever hail him as our king
and follow him in the way that leads to eternal life.
With all the faithful,
may we enter the new Jerusalem in triumph;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,

who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Today's reading: Matthew 21:1-11 (NRSV)

Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying 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. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, "The Lord needs them." And he will send them immediately.' This took place to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

'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.'

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The 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!'

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?' The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'

Time to Reflect

Today is Palm Sunday which marks the triumphal entry of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ into Jerusalem. Today also launches us into the Holy Week in which we are invited to identify and be united with Christ in His sufferings so that we may share in his risen life. We celebrate today, not only to remind ourselves of what happened in the past but as an act of praise to Christ Jesus and an expression of our willingness to follow his way of humble love.

In our story today from St Matthew, Jesus enters Jerusalem as a Passover pilgrim for the last time in the concluding days of his earthly ministry, showing how he brings God's Kingdom; and also paving the way for the encounter with those He sees as real enemies of God.

The significance of the event is underscored by the fact that the circumstance is recorded in all four Gospel accounts. If we may combine testimonies of all the four Gospels accounts, we read that the people chanted:

- Hosanna! ['save now' — cf. Psa. 118:25], Son of David

- Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel; blessed be his kingdom
- Hosanna in the highest heaven; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest (Mt 21:9; Mk.11:9-10; Lk 19:38; Jn 12:13).

The varying phrases cited by the Gospel writers obviously reflect different expressions from the multitudes, yet the combined chorus is one of exaltation and victory – so they thought that victory was just around the corner for them. Yes, the Good News is about to unfold; Yes, the Messiah has come.

On one hand, the people had experienced the dangers of extremism and its terrible cost from the hands of their atrocious masters. On the other hand, those who may have seen and experienced the wonderworks of this man Jesus before and are witnesses to his radical ideas and undoubted integrity thought He the One – the Political Messiah that they had been yearning for to redeem them. In the atmosphere of general excitement and longing for God to do something for their nation, Jesus' appearing on a donkey makes them boil over ... it meant that God's longed-for kingdom is one step close ... But suddenly the Good News become Bad News. The people's heightened hopes for freedom became shattered.

They were looking for freedom but not in the way that Jesus executed it. They were NOT looking for a peacemaker riding on

a donkey on the way to a cross ... But for those with eyes to see, what Jesus did was enough to show them that he himself is the king they long for. Around 500 years earlier the prophet Zechariah had prophesied that Israel would overcome her enemies ... and in the middle of that prophecy, came this verse: *'See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'* (Zechariah 9:9)

If deep meaning were to be given to Jesus' entry on a colt then we can expressly say that Jesus contrasts himself with the Kings and commanders who rides on horses and in chariots. He rather acts out his vision as a true liberator of the people entering the city of peace as a humble peacemaker, hungry for righteousness and mercy (Matthew 5:3-12);

As our Lord Jesus was on a journey to Jerusalem, we too are on a journey in this world ... a journey which sometimes is riddled with challenges, hopelessness, fear, desolation, desperation and misplaced and complex expectations like those who were travelling with Jesus. In all the darkened byways of our life journeys ... be assured that Jesus is with us every step of the way in good times and in bad times ... The Psalmist puts it appealingly:

'Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff— they comfort me.' (Psalm 23:4, NRSVA)

In the last couple of weeks, everything about our lifestyles has changed due to the Covid 19 pandemic. We find ourselves in sombre moments. We are in extraordinary and challenging times and being pulled in different directions. We are suddenly being weighed down with worry, fear and anxiety and we are not sure what to do next. Governments are pulling resources together with extraordinary speed and tenacity to devise and implement their responses to this pandemic ... but we still seem to find ourselves in a place of hopelessness as we journey on, but Christ assures us of his presence and our hope is in him. Amen.

A time of prayer (trusting that others pray with us)

Lord Jesus,
we pray for all who give of themselves sacrificially,
for those whose lives are dedicated to serving others:
parents, carers, foster carers, doctors, nurses ...
those caring for children or elderly relatives.

Let us travel together and lighten the load.

We pray for those serving in war-torn countries
around the world:
medics, those who work in missions, the media,
NGOs and charities ...
who bring food, shelter and healing to those in need,
sometimes putting their lives on the line.

Let us travel together and lighten the load.

We pray for those in our communities who need our
unconditional love:
those hurting from broken relationships, abuse, bullying,
domestic violence ...
children and adults whose lives are bereft of love and hope.
Let us travel together and lighten the load.

We pray that we might be Easter people,
laying down our lives to serve others,
bringing hope to hopeless situations – the hope
of the cross and resurrection.
Let us travel together and lighten the load.
Amen.

We say together the prayer that Jesus gave us:
**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.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Hymn: In Christ alone my hope is found (Singing the Faith 351)

Sing/read/pray/proclaim the words

<https://youtu.be/PGKJ2JHT9dw>

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.

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.

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.

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!

Keith Getty (b. 1974) and Stuart Townend (b. 1963)

Blessing

Let us in our journey from today celebrate the King, the liberator, the servant, our hope and let us do the same. The blessing of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be with you now and remain with you always. **Amen.**

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