

THE BRIDE VALLEY CHURCHES:

Telephone Service for Sunday 10th April 2022 – Palm Sunday

The service can be accessed by phone on Sunday morning on **01308 293062**.

Welcome to this act of worship for the Bride Valley Benefice for Palm Sunday which has been put together by Liz Howlett. Before we begin, if you have a cross that you can hold or look at during this service, please get it now.

‘This is the day that the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it’

Psalm 118: 24

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, during Lent we have been preparing by works of love and self-sacrifice for the celebration of our Lord’s death and resurrection. Today we join together to begin this solemn celebration in union with the Church throughout the world. Christ enters his own city to complete his work as our Saviour, to suffer, to die and to rise again. Let us go with him in faith and love, so that, united with him in his sufferings, we may share his risen life.

Hold up your cross and pray with me

God our Saviour, whose Son Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem as Messiah to suffer and to die; let these crosses be for us signs of his victory and grant that we who bear them in his name may ever hail him as our King, and follow him in the way that leads to eternal life; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn: Ride on, ride on in majesty

1 Ride on, ride on in majesty!
Hark, all the tribes hosanna cry.
Thy humble beast pursues his road
with palms and scattered garments
strowed.

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

3 Ride on, ride on in majesty!
the wingèd squadrons of the sky

look down with sad and wondering eyes
to see the approaching sacrifice.

4 Ride on, ride on in majesty!
The last and fiercest strife is nigh:
the Father on his sapphire throne
awaits his own anointed Son.

5 Ride on, ride on in majesty!
in lowly pomp ride on to die;
bow thy meek head to mortal pain,
then take, O God, thy power, and reign.

Henry Hart Milman (1791-1868)(Public Domain)

The Collect

True and humble King, hailed by the crowd as Messiah: grant us the faith to know you and love you, that we may be found beside you on the way of the cross, which is the path of glory. Amen.

Philippians 2: 5-11

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

Gospel Reading

Luke 19: 28 – 40

After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, 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. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it.’” So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” They said, “The Lord needs it.” Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. 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, saying, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!” Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.”

Reflection

‘Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus’.

These words come from what may possibly be a very early Christian hymn that Paul incorporated into his letter to the Philippians. The letter was likely written around 62 AD – just thirty years after the death and resurrection of Christ. And the passage we heard just now is thought to have been composed even earlier than that. With these words we maybe are glimpsing the birth of belief in Jesus as God and human.

So what is it that this hymn understands is the mind that was in Christ Jesus? It takes us on a journey that is shaped like the letter ‘u’. We begin at the top of one side of the ‘u’, as we hear the words, ‘who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited.’ This is telling us that Jesus was in the form of God – that is a high position to have, of course! Equality with God - you can’t get any more exalted than that! But then we begin this surprising descent down the side of the ‘u’ because Jesus takes on the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. I wonder if this movement away from a position of power and influence is something that rings bells for us. Jesus chooses to empty himself. Rather than maintaining his position of equality with God, he empties himself and then goes even further – he humbles himself.

I wonder if we have found ourselves letting go of positions of responsibility and authority. I

wonder if we have chosen to lay them down, or whether they were removed from us and we had to comply because there was no choice. Redundancy can be one of those times, when we are presented with a situation and we are forced to let go of the position we once held, perhaps with power to make decisions and influence the world around us. Illness can be a similar experience, where we find that we simply cannot do what we once did, or maintain the position we had in our community any longer. It can be a painful letting go, especially if there is no choice involved. Even when we know that letting go is right thing, it can still be really hard – there are so many times when we have to let go with children! Walking away from the classroom when they start their first day at school. Making space so someone else can become the most important person in their life as they set up in their own home and establish their own family. Each of these losses can be like a tiny death. For Jesus, his emptying really does involve being obedient to the point of death and this links with the gospel reading for today, about his entry into Jerusalem. He would be so much safer if he stayed in remote Galilee! He could have ministered to the local people for so much longer if he had taken that path. If he had kept his head low and only ventured into the safety of the fishing villages around the lake. We hear his disciples in the gospels express very similar sentiments. They know, and Jesus is well aware, that he is deliberately courting trouble, by heading towards Jerusalem and by entering the city as he does, riding on a colt.

This image of Jesus riding on a colt or donkey, brings to mind a sermon preached a good few years ago by a former bishop of Birmingham. He was newly in post, and this was a sermon at a large gathering in the Cathedral. It may have been on Palm Sunday, or close to that part of the church's year. Anyhow he used this image of Jesus' riding on a colt or donkey into the city of Jerusalem to illustrate how he saw his ministry as bishop amongst his people. He did not suggest that a bishop should be seen like Christ, the one riding and guiding the beast, but rather he saw his role as being the donkey for Christ to sit on, to be guided by him to go wherever Christ chose. This seems a striking picture to me of Christian service and especially powerful because it was used by a bishop, one who does hold authority and influence within the church. I wonder if this bishop found it necessary to place the picture of the donkey before his eyes often when he was in post, making difficult decisions for example, or having challenging conversations with various people and knowing that as bishop, his word was often going to be the last word on a subject.

So today we enter into Holy Week and we know that Christ's ride on the donkey into Jerusalem will lead to his death five days later. With that death, we reach the bottom of the 'u' shape that we reflected on earlier. It is a remarkable, humbling, chosen descent - from the highest place of equality with God - to enduring death, even the shame of death on a cross.

As well as the little deaths we experience throughout our lives, we all know that we too will experience bodily death ourselves – the final letting go in this life. Death and life are inextricably linked for us as part of this created universe. The second part of the early Christian hymn used by Paul is important for us to hold onto, for it reminds us that death for Jesus is not the end. His death may be the bottom of the 'u' shape but it is not the end of the story, for the 'u' continues up the other side and we will enter into that upward journey next weekend, when we celebrate Christ's resurrection from the dead. Amen.

Hymn: My song is love unknown

1 My song is love unknown,
My Saviour's love to me;
love to the loveless shown,
that they might lovely be.
O who am I, that for my sake
my Lord should take frail flesh and die?

2 He came from His blest throne
salvation to bestow;
but men made strange, and none
the longed-for Christ would know:
But O! my Friend, my Friend indeed,
who at my need His life did spend.

3 Sometimes they strew His way,
and His sweet praises sing;
resounding all the day
Hosannas to their King:

Then "Crucify!" is all their breath,
and for His death they thirst and cry.

4 They rise and needs will have
my dear Lord made away;
a murderer they save,
the Prince of life they slay,
Yet cheerful He to suffering goes,
that He His foes from thence might free.

5 Here might I stay and sing,
no story so divine;
never was love, dear King!
Never was grief like Thine.
This is my Friend, in Whose sweet praise
I all my days could gladly spend.

Samuel Crossman (1623-1683) (Public Domain)

Prayers

On this Palm Sunday, as we look towards the coming days of Holy Week let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**
For those who, like Jesus, weep for their city and homeland today, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**
For those who have the courage and honesty to work openly for justice and peace,
let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For those for whom Jerusalem is their home today, of whatever ethnicity or faith,
let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who, weighed down with hardship, failure or sorrow, feel that God is far from them, let us pray to the
Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For those we know who are struggling with ill-health and in need of God's healing and wholeness, let us pray to the
Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

And for ourselves, and all creation, that we may live and die within the everlasting love and mercy of God, let us
pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name;
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
On earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses,**

**As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory
For ever and ever. Amen**

Blessing

May God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the source of all goodness and growth, pour his blessing
upon all created things and upon you, that you may use his gifts to his glory and the welfare of all peoples;
and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you
now and always. **Amen.**

Anthem: God so loved the world

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not
perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the
world through him might be saved.

John Stainer from John 3. 16-17 (Public Domain)