

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

'Church at Home' - Palm Sunday 5th April 2020

Welcome

"Welcome to our 'Church at Home' service for Palm Sunday. For our message today we are looking at how we can praise Jesus as our saviour and welcome him as our King. I pray that you will be blessed and encouraged." - *Rev. Andrew Gill*

Call to Worship – Psalm 118:1-4

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;

his steadfast love endures for ever!

Let Israel say,

'His steadfast love endures for ever.'

Let the house of Aaron say,

'His steadfast love endures for ever.'

Let those who fear the Lord say,

'His steadfast love endures for ever.'

The Lord's Prayer

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.

Reading John 12:12-19

The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting, *'Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord— the King of Israel!'*

Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it; as it is written:

'Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion.

*Look, your king is coming,
sitting on a donkey's colt!'*

His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him. So the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify. It was also because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to meet him. The Pharisees then said to one another, 'You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!'

A Prayer of Thanksgiving – Psalm 118:5-21

Out of my distress I called on the Lord;

the Lord answered me and set me in a broad place.

With the Lord on my side I do not fear.

What can mortals do to me?

The Lord is on my side to help me;

I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.

It is better to take refuge in the Lord

than to put confidence in mortals.

It is better to take refuge in the Lord

than to put confidence in princes.

*The Lord is my strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.
There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous:
'The right hand of the Lord does valiantly;
the right hand of the Lord is exalted;
the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.'
I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the Lord.
The Lord has punished me severely,
but he did not give me over to death.
Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the Lord.
This is the gate of the Lord;
the righteous shall enter through it.
I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.*

Sermon - Hosanna

Today is Palm Sunday and as a church we are beginning the journey of Holy Week towards Easter. On Palm Sunday we remember Christ's triumphant entrance into the City of Jerusalem, and we reflect on the events of the week that would change this world forever.

In John chapter 12, the Apostle records the crowd that gathered to greet Jesus. We are a few weeks into social distancing now and maybe we have forgotten what a crowd even looks like! The crowd was way bigger than 2 people from the same household, even more that 500 people keeping 6ft apart. During the passover festival the population of the city swelled by hundreds of thousands of people. One ancient historian estimated that there

could have been over 2.5 million worshipers in the city at that time! And there was a great hype surrounding Jesus. Many of them had seen his miraculous signs, and others had heard about how he raised Lazarus from the dead. As Jesus is making his way to the temple the crowd shouts out *“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel!”* (John 12:13)

Hosanna, is a Hebrew word and means ‘save us now’. It is a quote from Psalm 118 which is song written about a 1000 years before about a king who rescues the nation from their enemies. The crowd sing it now because once again they were living in a time of anguish and needed a rescuer, and they believed that Jesus was a King that could save them.

Hosanna means ‘save us now’ but it is not a cry for help, it is a shout of praise! Hosanna is not a desperate whimper it is a confident cheer. In many ways the crowd gives us a picture of the life of faith. Even though they are surrounded by problems they lift their hearts in praise because of their confidence in a better future. True worship is based on a response to the goodness of God’s character not as response to current circumstances.

I don’t if you like to watching movies about super heroes? I love them. In almost every story there is a moment when someone is in trouble. They are alone and the situation looks utterly hopeless. Then the music swells... the camera turns... the heroes appears! And the audience cheers as they watch (at least that’s what I’m like at the cinema anyway). Even before the hero does anything to actually rescue the person in trouble they celebrate because they know that they will be saved. Just by their arrival you know that he hero will save the day. Future certainty has become more real than the present circumstances.

It is similar for the Christian who has put their hope in Jesus Christ. Even when they are at the bottom of the pit they can still praise God because they have confidence that they will be rescued. As the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 8:18 *"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us"*

Hosanna is an expression of joyful confidence and trust in a saviour. The crowds praised Jesus as he entered Jerusalem and they welcomed him as their King. And they were right to do so, but they were wrong in their reasons for doing it. They misunderstood the type of King that Jesus was. They were expecting a national liberator, who would lead them in battle to free them from their oppression. But Jesus did not come to build an earthly kingdom, he came to establish Heavenly one. And it did not take long for the crowd to turn on Jesus, and in just days few days time they would be screaming 'crucify him, crucify him.'

They misunderstood the type of King that Jesus is. His humility is not his weakness but his power. The Cross was not a defeat it was a victory. So for those of us who know this and believe that Jesus really is the prophesied Messiah that God sent to be the saviour of the world, how much more should we praise him lifting our *hosanna* to him today?

Our biggest problem right now is not the spread of a virus or the crash of our economy. It is not the boredom of staying at home, of the burden of serving on the front line. Our biggest problem in life is always sin and death. But through the glory of his death on Good Friday and his resurrection on Easter Sunday, Jesus offers us the forgiveness of our sins and the hope of eternal life. And a day is coming in the future when he will return with healing and redemption and will fully establish his eternal kingdom of peace and freedom.

I know that at the moment we are living in difficult times. But we can still sing *hosanna* and bring praise to our God today, because we know that our salvation has been secured by Christ. We can give thanks to the Lord, because he is good and because his love for us endures forever.

So today, take some time to worship God. Make a list of everything you have to be thankful for. Welcome Jesus as King into your home and your heart.

A Prayer of Praise – Psalm 118:22-27

The stone that the builders rejected

has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the Lord's doing;

it is marvellous in our eyes.

This is the day that the Lord has made;

let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Save us, we beseech you, O Lord!

O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

We bless you from the house of the Lord.

The Lord is God,

and he has given us light.

Bind the festal procession with branches,

up to the horns of the altar.

Final Prayer – Psalm 118:28-29

You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;

you are my God, I will praise you.

I give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,

for his steadfast love endures for ever