

ST. ANDREW'S, BLACKROCK & BRAY - 28TH MARCH 2021

PALM SUNDAY - 'THE STONES WOULD SHOUT OUT' (LUKE 19:28-40)

"Welcome to our 'Church at Home' service transcript for Palm Sunday, 28th March 2021. I will be off next week and will be unable to send out the transcripts from our Easter services. So I have included some prayers and readings that you might like to use on Good Friday and Easter Sunday." - I hope that you have a blessed Easter, Rev. Andrew Gill

Call to Worship – Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

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.'

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.

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

you are my God, I will extol you.

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

for his steadfast love endures for ever.

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

On the first Palm Sunday you entered the rebellious city where you were to die. Enter our hearts, we pray, and subdue them to yourself. And as your disciples blessed your coming and spread garments and branches in your way, make us ready to lay at your feet all that we have and are, that we too may bless your coming in the name of the Lord. Amen

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, 30 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. 31 If anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" just say this: "The Lord needs it."' 32 So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. 33 As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, 'Why are you untying the colt?' 34 They said, 'The Lord needs it.' 35 Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. 36 As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. 37 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, 38 saying,

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

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

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Father, thank you for who you are. Thank you that you love us, redeemed us through Jesus, and that you speak to us today. Help us to listen to your voice, and

to know our identity is in you. Help us to be daily refreshed by your word in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Thank you for this time of year, for the longer evenings, and signs of spring all around in your creation. You are the author and creator of life, and we are in awe of the beauty of your creation, and your artistry. Thank you for writing the greatest story ever told, that of Jesus coming to earth to save us from our sins. Thank you that you offered us life instead of death. Help us to choose to live life with you each day. Help us in all our daily joys and trials we face. Thank you that we are never alone, but your presence is with us. Help us to know you more, in Jesus name. Amen.

Sermon - 'The Stones Would Shout Out'

I wonder how much you feel like praising God today? For the best part of a year now we have been unable to meet together for public worship, and to be honest I find it more challenging to get into a place of worship on a Sunday morning. Maybe you feel the same. But what I do, is that I remind myself, that the source of my praise does not come from looking at my surroundings, but from looking to my saviour.

Today is Palm Sunday and we are looking at this story of Jesus entering in to Jerusalem where he will suffer and die. As he is coming in the crowds of his disciples praise God and they sing out, "*Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!*" (v.38) But there are other travellers on the road, pharisees who have been against Jesus' ministry from the beginning, and they say to him, "*Teacher, rebuke your disciples!*" (v.19) But Jesus responds in verse 40, "*I tell you, if they kept quiet the stones would cry out.*" This verse has challenged me this week because even though life is not perfect at the moment, I know I'm better off than a stone! So why does a rock on the ground have a greater desire to worship God than I do sometimes? What do the stones know that we don't? Of course, Jesus is exaggerating here, but the point is that Jesus deserves to be worshiped. When we understand who he is, and we when we have experienced the peace that he brings, our hearts will want to rejoice and our voice will want to praise God. So this morning we are going to look at this story and see some of the things that it shows us about who Jesus is with the aim that it will increase our desire to praise God.

These verses are all focused on the kingship of Jesus, and I want to think about three things that we learn about the King. The first is that *the King is in control*. Verses 29b to 32, “Jesus sent out two of his disciples, saying to them, ‘Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find a colt there which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, “Why are you untying it?” say, “The Lord needs it.”’ Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them.” They found it ‘just as he had told them’. Whether you think this is prophecy, or this is a pre-arranged plan, either way it is another example of how Jesus is in total control. As you read through the events of Holy Week, never once is Jesus surprised by what happens. It is as if he is always one step ahead. The plot of the religious leaders to kill him, the betrayal of Judas, and the denial by Peter, were all predicted by Jesus before they happened. That was the worst week in Jesus's life, the darkest moment in the history of the world, yet there is a calmness about Jesus, he has a confidence because he knows he is walking in the plans of God. Even though people did terrible things to him, he allows it to happen, because through it he will bring salvation to the world.

He was total control, and he still is. Jesus was not surprised by this pandemic, and he knows exactly what is going to happen next. We need to remember that no matter what difficulties we face at the moment, Jesus is in control. So we can find a calmness in the midst of the storm, and we too can have a confidence knowing that the plans of God will result in what is good for us. The King is in control, and *the King is the Christ*.

All through the Old Testament of the Bible there are prophecies about a special king, who will come and undo all the damage of sin in this world. In Hebrew he is called ‘messiah’ which translates into greek as ‘Christ’. Jesus riding the donkey, the location on the mount of olives, the psalm that the people sing, all of these fulfil the prophecies about the messiah and show that Jesus is not just a king, Jesus is *the King*. He is God's chosen, anointed, eternal, divine messiah, who is the King of all kings, and came to this world to save us!

When Jesus was born, angels from heaven sang, “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace.*” (2:14) And now crowds of disciples on earth sing, “*Peace in*

heaven and glory in the highest!" Jesus is the king who reunites heaven and earth in peace, he is restoring all things to how they should be. As a sign of who he was he opened the eyes of the blind, and made the crippled walk. He raised the dead back to life, and he proclaimed good news to the poor. That same Christ is still at work doing wonderful things in people's lives; bringing healing, restoring relationships, giving freedom from addictions, filling hearts with hope, taking away fear, and calling them to a new purpose. The king is in control, and the king is the Christ.

Thirdly, the king is journeying towards the cross. Luke's gospel is structured around journeys. For the last 10 chapters Jesus has been traveling towards Jerusalem, and every event that happens takes him closer to that destination. This episode links the journey to Jerusalem, to how he will suffer in Jerusalem. As joyous as this moment of Palm Sunday is, it cannot be separated from the tragedy that is about to happen. Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem is the beginning of his procession to the cross. See how he describes what is going to happen to him in the chapter before, *"Jesus took the twelve aside and told them, 'We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the son of man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him spit on him; they will flog him and kill him'"* (18:31-33)

If that is what Jesus is journeying towards, you might ask, 'Why?' If he knows that is what's going to happen to him in Jerusalem then why does he go there? It is because he loves you. It is only through his suffering that we can be forgiven and have that peace with God. But God's love is so great, so strong, and so powerful that nothing can stop it, not even death. In Jesus' prediction of his suffering he also says, *"On the third day he will rise again."* (v.33b) The cross was not the final destination. Even though they put him in a tomb and rolled over the stone, he walked out of his grave, and ascended into heaven. If our faith is in Jesus as the Christ, then we are on that same journey too. There may be tears, pain, betrayal, abandonment, loneliness, grief, and death, but that is not our final destination. Just as Jesus was resurrected from death, he will raise us to eternal life too. The king is in control, the king is the Christ, and the king is journeying to his death, and his resurrection.

Jesus says if rocks had a mouths, then they would open up and cry out in praise to God because of who Jesus is and what he has done. But I know you say, 'That's impossible, because rocks don't have mouths.' And you are right, stones don't have mouths, but you do. So open you mouth and praise God today. I know it's hard when we can't be together to sing in church, but there is something special about opening your mouth to praise God. Perhaps this week you could sing your favourite hymn, or read a psalm out loud.

I want you to do something really simple as you finish reading this transcript. On that day as Jesus was walking into Jerusalem the crowds quoted from Psalm 118 which begins this way, *"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let Israel say: his love endures forever. Let the house of Aaron say: his love endures forever. Let those who fear the Lord say: his love endures forever."* When this psalm would have been used in worship, the leader would have said the first part and then those that were present would have replied with 'his love endures forever.' I want us to do that this now. No matter where you are reading this, I encourage you say the words in **bold** below out loud as a way to praise Jesus our king this morning...

Responsive Praise

*Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.*

Let the church say:

his love endures forever

Let those who are saved by the king say:

his love endures forever.

Let those who love the Lord say:

HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER!