

## Sunday Church service

[In place of Sunday Worship 5 April 2020, CofS Garvald and Morham linked with Haddington West Church; a shorter version, for use in the privacy of our own homes to which we are currently consigned; not meant for speed reading but as a help for being before God in the Spirit and in truth, in prayer and contemplation; may God bless us, together with all who call on Him]

### **PALM SUNDAY**

**Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ**

*"We proclaim Christ nailed to the cross. He is the power of God and the wisdom of God."* (1Cor,1, 23f)

Prayer (Collect):

'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'

Readings for Palm Sunday are **Mt.21, 1-11** and **Ps.118, 1-2, 19-29**

[many services today would make space for the whole passion narrative to be read: Mt. ch26,14 – ch27,66 – a useful thing to do for the way this can emphasise the nature of Jesus' kingship: this is how he came to reign!]

A hymn:

"Ride on, ride on, the time is right:  
the roadside crowds scream with delight;  
palm branches mark the pilgrim way  
where beggars squat and children play.

"Ride on, ride on, your critics wait,  
intrigue and rumour circulate;  
new lies abound in word and jest,  
and truth becomes a suspect guest.

"Ride on, ride on, while well aware  
that those who shout and wave and stare  
are mortals who, with common breath,

can crave life and lust for death.

“Ride on, ride on, though blind with tears,  
though dumb to speak and deaf to jeers,  
Your path is clear, though few can tell  
their garments pave the road to hell.

“Ride on, ride on, the room is let,  
the wine matured, the saw is whet;  
and dice your death-throes shall attend,  
though faith, not fate, dictates your end.

“Ride on, ride on, God’s love demands;  
justice and peace lie in your hands.  
Evil and angel voices rhyme:  
this is the man and this is the time.” [JBell and GMaule]

Sermon:

**Mt.21, 5:** *“Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey.”*

Like today so already in Jesus’ day there were many opinions about him. What they all had in common was that none managed to get behind the secret to the truth. Whenever the truth appeared it was by revelation. Jesus Mt,11 ,27: *“All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him”*, or Mt.16, 17 after Peter had confessed him to be the Messiah: *“Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.”*

On Palm Sunday something happened that took them, and takes us, beyond opinions and gives us all a fixed point to help us know the truth: A public declaration was made, loud and clear through the voice of the disciples and the people, concerning the truth about Jesus and his coming: *“Look, your king is coming to you.”*

The fact that Jesus rode on a donkey in fulfilment of an ancient prophecy and the people applied to him Ps.118, shows that this was not one more opinion into the mix but a statement as from the highest place, saying ‘Here’s the truth about him!’ When the Pharisees who disapproved of the message wanted the shouting stopped Jesus said to them: *“I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.”*

This being so, we can do better than choosing what opinion(s) to have about Jesus, or indeed about it all. We can learn to *know* him and *own* the truth he brings! Here revelation happens, by the Spirit of God, as we seek it. This is truly the only way. And this we do by hearing and understanding the words of God's declaration: "*Your king is coming to you!*" and doing so in the light of his death on the cross and his resurrection, because that is how the thing played out (what Palm Sunday declares Good Friday/Easter accomplishes!).

You learn him right when you know that -

- He is "***Your king***": When you realise that God sent Jesus so that he may belong to you and you to him. He profits you nothing unless you believe that he did his royal duty by laying down his life *for you* to wash off you all sin and unrighteousness, every moral stain and blemish of guilt, and in place of that make over to you his own righteousness and his own rights as God's Son – in him God means for it to be *yours*. He is *your king*, for you to declare him as such. In yielding to him and his rule of mercy and grace, seeking his strength and guidance, you will learn the freedom of what it means to belong to him alone and therefore to nothing that could accuse and condemn you.

- He is "***Your king***": When you realise that you are to follow him in trust and obedience, so as to pull into your life the victory he has won for you over sin and death. He calls you to a spiritual warfare because you belong to the winning side. You are to rule over sin and death and quash, live free from, the fears they generate: But this you can because your king has made a way for you and leads you in grace and wisdom, received in weakness, if you will follow. No enemy is a match for this king, no evil limits the power and reach of his mercy.

- "***Your king is coming***": When you realise that because he has risen from the dead and lives, your future comes to you from him. Nothing can snatch you away from him, if you love him you know that all things must work together for good. Live towards his coming so that when he comes, to judge the living and the dead, he shall know you to be his. Stay awake, and hold fast to him in repentance and faith and he will give you the crown of life.

- "***Your king is coming to you***": When you realise that it is *you* he comes to and *you* he seeks, that he wants your heart because only in him will your heart know rest. He gave himself for you so that you may know the love of God and be bound in love to all who are his, indeed to love even your enemies. With all your heart you are to love, to be holy in all your ways – that is the goal, and complete only when you have been made like him. He suffers no intermediaries between you and him, neither does he suffer hypocrisy or self-righteousness. Whatever sin there is, he comes to bring it to light and cleanse you. And he resides in the heart that receives him, resides in *your* heart when *you* receive him. That is by faith.

Dear friend, we can only believe in Jesus Christ because God has raised him from the dead and given him all authority in heaven and on earth. What this means we only know because of the cross that went before. Through faith in him our sins are forgiven, death is demoted to a mere sleep from which we will arise and we are enlisted in the fight against what is wrong and for what is true (to see all evil ultimately overcome and all creation restored) , above all for the glory of God. We don't do this in our own strength but in his, to which end he gives us the Holy Spirit.

Praise God for our Lord and King! AMEN

Take time to pray, to seek God; give thanks for his steadfast love and faithfulness; bring all your concerns before him; use the Lord's Prayer for a guide;

*“Offer to God the sacrifice of thanksgiving and pay your vows to the Most High. If you call upon me in time of trouble, I will come to your rescue, and you shall honour me.” (Ps.50, 14)*

**Now to him who is able through the power which is at work among us to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or conceive, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus from generation to generation for evermore!**

Secure in God’s love,

be steadfast in his service.

And the blessing of God almighty,

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

be with you all.

**AMEN**