**Sunday 28th March 2021 – Palm Sunday Act of Worship**

**Welcome and opening words**

Welcome to Worship in the Rochdale, Bury and North Manchester Missional Partnership on this Palm Sunday. I am Richard Bradley one of the two ministers in the Partnership. It is good to lead you in worship and share with you in Worship.

As we begin I want to share some words from the Bible with you from Psalm 117, words full of promise for you and for me:-

**“ 1 Praise the LORD, all you nations; praise him, all you people of the earth. 2 For his unfailing love for us is powerful; the LORD’s faithfulness endures forever.”** (NLT Bible)

Let us pause as we think about those words – which for those watching the service will remain on the screen.

Today in our service I want us to think about journeys. Jesus went on a journey on that first Palm Sunday as he rode into Jerusalem to the shouts of praise from those gathered there. And out first hymn says something to us about that journey and the response of the people.

Let us now sing our first hymn on this Palm Sunday….

**Hymn: Make way, make way**

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| 1.. Make way, make way,  for Christ the King  in splendour arrives;  fling wide the gates  and welcome Him into your lives. | 2.. He comes the broken hearts to heal,  the prisoners to free;  the deaf shall hear,  the lame shall dance,  the blind shall see. |
| 3.. And those who mourn  with heavy hearts,  who weep and sigh,  with laughter, joy and royal crown  He'll beautify. | 4.. We call you now to worship Him  as Lord of all,  to have no gods before Him,  their thrones must fall! |
| Chorus: *Make way, make way,*  *for the King of kings,*  *for the King of kings,*  *make way, make way,*  *and let His kingdom in!* | Graham Kendrick  ©1986 Thankyou Music  ccli 169737  Streaming Licence 595811 |

**Prayers**

Journeying God, who calls us to follow His Son Jesus Christ we gather as your people in different places and at different times to offer you our praise, worship and thanks.

We come as people who are invited to journey with Jesus. We come as people who need to journey with Jesus. And we come to offer you the praise and worship that you, Lord, deserve.

As we come we give thanks for your goodness and presence with us each and every day. We thank you Lord that you not only call us on a journey but that you walk beside us on that journey by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

We acknowledge that that journey is not always easy and the burden we carry is not always light. But we rejoice and give thanks that you are always with us and never leave us.

On this Palm Sunday we thank you for journey that Jesus took into Jerusalem. A journey that ultimately ended up with him suffering greatly and ultimately losing his life that we might have life and have life everlasting. And we can do not other than bow the knee in worship and sing your praise.

But we are mindful of our weaknesses and failings. Those times when we have let you down. We seek your forgiveness, Lord, and ask that you would help us to become more like Jesus in our everyday lives.

May we know and accept your true and lasting forgiveness when we say “sorry” for our wrongdoings.

And we join together in saying the words of 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.

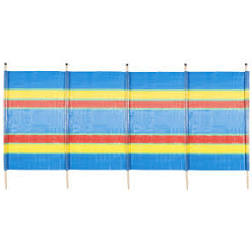
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

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.

**Introduction to the theme (Journeys?)**

As I said a few moments ago we are thinking about journeys today. I wonder if you can guess the sorts of journeys someone might be going on with some images I am going to show you…..

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1. 



1. 
2. 
3. 

OK, I am sure you all did really well! But we will go through the answers….

The first set of images are – a trip to the beach

The second set of images are – a foreign holiday

The third set of images are – a football match

The fourth set of images are – going to school

The fifth set of images are – Palm Sunday and the journey Jesus took into Jerusalem.

In all of them I want to suggest there was ‘preparation’. If you are going to the beach it is a good idea to take a bucket and spade if you want to build sand castles. If you are going to the beach in this country then a wind brake is also a good idea!

The journey Jesus took that day was part of the overall journey of faith which Jesus invites us all on.

We need to be prepared to follow Jesus for He leads us into a special relationship with God the Father.

So, today, Jesus invites us all to follow him so that we may come to the Father (God) who is full of love for all of humanity.

Let us pray….

Loving God, thank you for Jesus. Thank you for the journey he took into Jerusalem and beyond to the cross that we might know the love of God the Father. Amen.

We are going to sing of that love now in our next song….

**Hymn: How deep the Father’s love for us**

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| 1.. How deep the Father's love for us,  how vast beyond all measure,  that He should give His only Son  to make a wretch His treasure.  How great the pain of searing loss -  the Father turns His face away,  as wounds which mar the chosen one  bring many sons to glory. | 2.. Behold the man upon a cross,  my sin upon his shoulders;  ashamed I hear my mocking voice  call out among the scoffers.  It was my sin that held Him there  until it was accomplished;  His dying breath has brought me life -  I know that it is finished. |
| 3.. I will not boast in anything,  no gifts, no power, no wisdom;  but I will boast in Jesus Christ,  His death and resurrection.  Why should I gain from His reward?  I cannot give an answer,  but this I know with all my heart,  His wounds have paid my ransom. | Stuart Townend  ©1995 Thankyou Music  ccli 169737  Streaming Licence 595811 |

**Bible Reading: Mark 11:1-11 -Jesus comes to Jerusalem as king (NIVUK)**

1As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, **2**saying to them, ‘Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. **3**If anyone asks you, “Why are you doing this?” say, “The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.”’

**4**They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, **5**some people standing there asked, ‘What are you doing, untying that colt?’ **6**They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. **7**When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. **8**Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. **9**Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

‘Hosanna!’

‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’

**10**‘Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!’

‘Hosanna in the highest heaven!’

**11**Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

Thanks be to God for His Word.

**Sermon: “Journeying”**

Let’s pray together…Loving God, as we have heard your Word read we come now to reflect upon these powerful words on this Palm Sunday. Be with us, speak to us, challenge us and comfort us we pray. Amen.

I want you to think of a journey you have taken. A good journey, a happy journey

* it may have been a memorable holiday, here or abroad,
* it may have been the journey you took to the church on your wedding day - the walk down and then up the aisle.
* your honeymoon
* the journey you took home from hospital after the birth of a child
* it may be a journey to visit family at Christmas

And that list could go on and on…..

Journeys are a theme in the Bible passage Rebecca read to us a few minutes ago.

At first we have the journey of the Jewish people of God. It was a journey they often took to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover when they remember and celebrate God’s protection of His people many, many years before. Each year people would literally flock to Jerusalem to the Temple for a week long worship celebration!

I have never been to the Holy Land but my research tells me that the journey from Jericho to Jerusalem is not an easy walk at all. Jericho is the lowest City on earth (over 800 feet below sea level) and Jerusalem (some 12 miles away)

is nearly 3000 feet above sea level! The journey took the pilgrims through dry and baron land before they reached greener vegetation and a view of Jerusalem.

*I think there is something in these words about faith journeys more generally. They are not always easy. The past year has taught us that we are not immune from suffering when we journey with Jesus. There will be parts of our journey that are difficult, baron,*

*when we see little signs of growth…little hope…you may have been through such times not just during the pandemic that we are still encountering….but through the loss of a loved one….a relationship breakdown….ill health….*

*But we must hold onto the hope we have in Jesus. The love Jesus has for us. The plan and purpose he has for our lives and know that he journeys with us.*

On the journey of God’s people there is also the excitement of the people of God would have been truly immense! They were going to the Temple to worship – the place where they believed God chosen to place his presence.

For them the Temple was *the* most special of places because of God’s presence and going there was very special for them. I suspect that emotion never wavered or reduced however many times they made that journey.

*I think that is so powerful! That the people were so excited to go and worship with fellow believers at these times of celebration.*

*I wonder what it will feel like when we are all able to be back in our respective places of worship when we can gather again without the restriction of numbers and distancing….I know I look forward to that day and I pray it comes soon!*

*More generally though, do you get excited about worship? How often do we complain, dare I say, about the choice of hymns….or a particular hymn tune!*

*Worship, in its truest sense, is not about you or I as the worshipper….it is all about God. It is telling God how much we love him and give thanks for His Son Jesus Christ.*

And as we continue to think about journeys we have thought about the people who came to Jerusalem for the Festival of Passover but what about Jesus’ journey? Jesus came into Jerusalem and he knew what lay ahead for him even if others didn’t. Jesus’ journey was a lonely one.

There were lots of people gathered, hundreds possibly thousands, but Jesus on the colt of a donkey rode a lonely journey into Jerusalem.

And he did that for you, for me and the whole of humanity. He took that journey into Jerusalem knowing what lay ahead and he did so to save us. As the people shouted “Hosanna” which literally means “save us”….

the people were desperate for Jesus….the people needed a Messiah and in Jesus they believed they had him. In Mark’s account they spread their branches on the road….they lay their cloaks on the road….we must never forget the enormous sign that was. Not just anyone coming to town would have cloaks laid before them!

Cloaks were valuable items of clothing. And people in an act of worship laid them on the dusty, dirty road as a sign of welcome to Jesus – the King and the Messiah!

*I wonder….are there things you and I need to lay down at the feet of Jesus? Either as an act of worship or an act of confession? Are there things you wish you hadn’t said or done or thought? Then if that is you then Jesus is right with you in your home….confess that to him.*

*Despite us not being able to gather together for worship we are still united by the Spirit – guided by the Spirit and empowered by the Spirit. And it is right that we lay our all before Jesus as an act of worship to him, as an act of commitment to him as we give ourselves to serve him.*

*Friends, as we approach Easter Week….as we journey with Jesus….may we be fully committed to him laying before him all we have and all we are for the furtherance of God’s kingdom here on earth.*

I want to invite us to pause for a moment or two of silent reflection before I invite us to say a prayer together….

Let us pray together….

**Journeying Jesus, we come and lay all that we are and all that we have before you. May our worship and offering be one of joyful obedience to you as we seek to serve you and the kingdom of God.**

**Take us and all that we are and make us more like Jesus in all that we do.**

**For we ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.**

We’re going to sing our next him….

**Hymn: Here I am wholly available** (chorus, verse, chorus….)

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| Chorus: *Here I am, wholly available -*  *as for me I will serve the Lord.* | 1.. The fields are white unto harvest  but oh, the labourers are so few;  so, Lord, I give myself to help the reaping,  to gather precious souls unto you. |
| 2.. The time is right in the nation for works of power and authority;  God's looking for a people who are willing  to be counted in His glorious victory. | 3.. As salt are we ready to savour,  in darkness are we ready to be light?  God's seeking out a very special people  to manifest His truth and His might. |
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**Time of prayer – written by Joan Warner**

Dear Lord

In this week when we remember your journey from celebration to crucifixion we bring our prayers of intercession.

Jesus, you wept over Jerusalem 2000 years ago. Do you weep still as we continue to waste the world’s resources, exploit the poor & neglect the weak? Dear Lord, we ask you to support all who are working for justice, mercy and peace on a large or a small scale. Bless the United Nations. May national governments be open to the spirit of compassion & fairness. May charitable organisations work with integrity and those who have more than enough give generously.

We pray for our country as we enter our second year of this Covid 19 pandemic. Enable our government to act responsibly for the benefit of all citizens! Be present in the decisions of our local councils. Give strength to all in the Health & Social Care agencies. As we emerge from this most challenging of times help us all to commit to building a better society. Help us to be grateful for all we have learnt and to appreciate all we have missed. Especially be with all who have lost loved ones throughout this year.

Jesus overthrew the tables of the money changers in the temple. As He looks at His Church in 2021 what would He have to say? Dear Lord, show us Your way forward. Help us listen to Your Spirit, to pray without ceasing pray and to be your Body on earth. Help us to be salt and light exactly where you have placed us or where you will lead us.

In Jesus’ Name we pray

Amen

**Closing Song: Give me a heart**

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| 1.. Give me a heart  that will love the unlovely,  open my eyes to the needy and lost,  help me, O Lord,  to show Your love in action,  give without counting the cost,  give without counting the cost. | 2.. Help me remember  I'm empty without You,  help me to find my strength  only in You.  I can give nothing  unless You first fill me,  Your love alone must shine through,  Your love alone must shine through. |
| 3.. Make me be willing  to go where You send me,  make me be ready to answer Your call.  Give me a heart  that rejoices to serve You,  sharing the best love of all,  sharing the best love of all. | Gillian E Hutchinson  ccli 169737  Streaming Licence 595811 |

**Prayer for the week ahead**

Journeying God, who calls us to journey with Jesus, bless us this coming week. Give us opportunity to share then faith we profess. Hold us and all who we love in your loving embrace.

For we ask this in and through the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.