

# **28 February 2021**

## **West Kirk of Calder & Polbeth Harwood**

By: Rev Dr Nanda Groenewald

Reading: Mark 1:1-11

Hymn: CH4 365 Ride on

Palm Sunday

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### **PRAYER**

Lord of all, when Jesus entered into Jerusalem,  
the people welcomed him with praise  
and gave him the best they could offer.

As we gather here, we ask you to fill our hearts with joy and love.

Help us to understand what it means  
to give freely and extravagantly of our time,  
our treasure and our talents.

Most of all, inspire us to give you our praise.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, who taught us to 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 debts,

as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.  
Forever, Amen.

## **READING**

### **Mark 1:1-11 (The Message)**

<sup>1-3</sup> When they were nearing Jerusalem, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent off two of the disciples with instructions: "Go to the village across from you. As soon as you enter, you'll find a colt tethered, one that has never yet been ridden. Untie it and bring it. If anyone asks, 'What are you doing?' say, 'The Master needs him, and will return him right away.'"

<sup>4-7</sup> They went and found a colt tied to a door at the street corner and untied it. Some of those standing there said, "What are you doing untying that colt?" The disciples replied exactly as Jesus had instructed them, and the people let them alone. They brought the colt to Jesus, spread their coats on it, and he mounted.

<sup>8-10</sup> The people gave him a wonderful welcome, some throwing their coats on the street, others spreading out rushes they had cut in the fields. Running ahead and following after, they were calling out,  
Hosanna!

Blessed is he who comes in God's name!

Blessed the coming kingdom of our father David!

Hosanna in highest heaven!

<sup>11</sup> He entered Jerusalem, then entered the Temple. He looked around, taking it all in. But by now it was late, so he went back to Bethany with the Twelve.

## MESSAGE

I can only imagine what it will be like when all the lockdown restrictions are lifted! I'm sure people will be celebrating big time! And there will most certainly be news crews recording the momentous event, interviewing people and asking them how they are feeling. And I can guarantee you that many of them will say that they are relieved! Freedom, at last!!

Nothing wrong with dreaming, eh?

But I think if we can imagine how electric the atmosphere will be when all the lockdown restrictions are lifted, we can get an idea of what it must have felt like in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Just bigger, because they haven't been waiting for that for a year, they've been waiting all their lives...

The people have been patiently waiting for an Old Testament prophecy to come true, for the messiah to arrive. And now this was happening!!

They all knew the prophecy by heart:

*Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!*

*Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!*

*See, your king comes to you,*

*righteous and victorious,*

*lowly and riding on a donkey,*

*on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

As we find it written in Zechariah 9:9.

Their dream came true! At last! Freedom! Freedom from the dreaded Roman oppression!

So they all gathered there, lining the streets, not wanting to miss out on any of the celebrations.

They waved their palm branches, that were originally cut for their celebration of the festival of the booths, and they also laid these palm branches and their coats down – making a proverbial “red carpet” for Jesus to enter Jerusalem on.

Laying down your cloak for a donkey to trample on, is not something we can truly understand today without taking a wee look at *their* culture.

A cloak, or ‘outer-garment’, as they called it in those days, was extremely valuable. A couple of Sundays ago we explored how Jesus elaborated on the fact that nobody would ever fix an old garment with new fabric, because it was way too precious to make it tear even further.

See, in those days, people only had 1 set of clothes.

And apart from the fact that every person would only have one cloak, this was more than just a cloak, it was also their blanket to sleep under at night.

In Matthew 5:40 we read that it was even possible to sue someone about a cloak!

So – throwing your cloak down on the dusty road for the donkey to walk on, was extravagant giving. But it was common practice at the anointing of a new king, as we can see in many references in the Old Testament.

But these people did it to show Jesus that He was more important to them than anything in their lives – even the things they needed for daily survival.

They were so happy! Their king came!

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Maybe it's just because they all knew the prophecy that they didn't find it strange that their king entered Jerusalem on a donkey, a donkey that's never been ridden on, a pure, perfect animal, fulfilling all the requirements for an animal to be sacrificed?

Wouldn't a king make his entry on a horse? The triumphant animal of war?

And where did Jesus go after he entered Jerusalem? Did he go straight to the palace to confront the current Roman government? No, he went to the temple...

These things should have been an indication of the kind of king Jesus was going to be, but the excited people in the crowd failed to see that.

Because only a few days later, many of them chanted along with the rest of the crowd: "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

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My question this morning is: Where would you have been, if you were in that crowd?

Pushing your way to the front, eagerly throwing your coat down, in the hopes that you'll be able to pick it up again later and forever treasure your filthy, torn coat, as a memento of the day you saw the new king with your own eyes?

*Or... In today's terms – staying up all night to be able to buy front row tickets, even maybe throwing your t-shirt up on the stage as your idol performs, and buying lots of branded merchandise after the show, to be able to show everyone that you've been there?*

Or, would you have been there, but hanging back? Standing on the fringes? Wanting to be a part of it, but not wanting to get too involved?

*In today's terms – standing at the back of the crowd, maybe holding your mobile phone high in the air to get some of the action recorded?*

Or would you have been super excited about all the action, but when this king didn't turn out to be who you thought he would be, you would be giving in to peer pressure and chant along that he should be crucified!

*Or in today's terms: Tweeting about your disappointment and then, like so many others, just "unfollow" Jesus?*

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I don't think that we are in a position to judge the people who were there that day, because they didn't fully understand what Jesus was all about and what he was going to do.

But we have absolutely no excuses for *our* behaviour – because we have the power of hindsight. We KNOW what happened after Palm Sunday.

We KNOW that because of what happened on Easter Sunday – we should be *right in there*, celebrating every single day of our lives!

Not to be getting something out of it, but because we are thankful for what God gave US all those years ago during Holy Week – his Son...

Therefore, we should be giving more than our “cloaks” – we should be giving the best of what we have, and the best of what we can be, we should be giving our everything; because through Jesus, we received everything we’ll ever need!

We even got the ability to wait patiently in situations like our current one, until we can go out to celebrate again.

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It all started with a celebration, followed by the worst time, but then it ended with the biggest celebration ever!

Isn’t that a little like life as well? We celebrate every birth, and in every life there are lots of ups and downs, highs and lows, but because of what happened during the week from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday, as believers, our lives don’t only start in celebration, it ends in celebration too! Always.

So let’s celebrate today, and every day, because no matter what the battle is we are fighting, we will never have to fight alone. Amen.

## **HYMN**

### **CH4 365**

1 Ride on, ride on in majesty!  
Hark! all the tribes hosanna cry;  
O Savior meek, pursue your road  
With palms and scattered garments strowed.

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

3 Ride on, ride on in majesty!  
The winged squadrons of the sky  
Look down with sad and wond'ring eyes  
To see th'approaching sacrifice.

4 Ride on, ride on in majesty!  
Your last and fiercest strife is nigh;  
The Father on his sapphire throne  
Expects his own anointed Son.

5 Ride on, ride on in majesty!  
In lowly pomp ride on to die;  
Bow your meek head to mortal pain,  
Then take, O God, your pow'r and reign.