

Sunday, 5th April 2020
Worship at Home for Palm Sunday

Preparation:

Before starting worship you will need:

- a candle (if you wish to light one)
- a Bible
- a palm cross (if you still have it, or make a cross from paper)
- your best or favourite coat

Gathering – the candle is lit

Eternal God,
we come together in prayer and praise
to celebrate this holy day.
As we look at this palm cross
and remember last year,
help us to remain strong in our faith
that you are still with us,
even though we cannot celebrate in the same way.
In Jesus' name we pray, AMEN



Today is Palm Sunday when we remember Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a donkey. It is a day to celebrate, to celebrate the time when Jesus entered Jerusalem and was welcomed with songs and cheers.

Say or sing the words of "Make way! Make way, for Christ the King."

One Palm Sunday I announced *Make way! Make way* as the opening hymn for a Parade Service. I had forgotten that the colours came in during the first hymn until, as we sang "Make way, make way for Christ the King", the Union Jack was processed solemnly up the aisle. My heart sank as this was not quite the effect for which I had hoped! Suddenly a small child appeared. He had been crying, so his nose was running, his shirt was not properly tucked in and his short trousers revealed knees still covered with mud. A steward greeted him gently, took him by the hand and led him, in front of the flags, to his place with the rest of the BB. It was a small thing, but it brought a lump to my throat and reminded me that God does not come in the majesty

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and pomp we associate with a flag, but as a small, scruffy child, in need of being welcomed and loved.

- ✝ *What did you see in your mind's eye as you sang or said "Make way! Make way for Christ the King"?*
- ✝ *What would have been your reaction if you had seen the small child arrive? Would you have laughed, or tutted, or seen Christ the King?*
- ✝ *Quietly thank God for the ways we are surprised and our thinking is challenged, and that God welcomes even the scruffy latecomers into the Church.*

Read Isaiah 50: 4-9

The first verse of this reading is incredibly apt for our current situation. How many more phone calls have we made than we would usually do, or how many emails have we sent, checking up on loved ones, friends and family? How many have we been glad to receive because they of their timely words of consolation? But the prophet doesn't stop there, he goes on to describe the persecution he has suffered because he holds onto his faith in God. There have been several verbal and written attacks on the churches for closing at a time of crisis. However much we try to explain that God wants us to care for one another and for the world, so we have closed to stop the spread of the virus and to protect the NHS, we are then met with the inevitable questions "Where is your God now?" and "Why is God doing this to us?" We can feel vilified, as the prophet did for continuing to believe in a good and loving God, or as if we are being blamed for the current crisis.

Living God,

forgive us for not defending our faith when others accuse or condemn;
forgive us for not always trusting that you can work through this crisis;
forgive us our despair and fear when we are overwhelmed by the
media coverage;

and forgive us our selfishness when we moan about the freedom we
have lost when others are battling to save lives.

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When we feel far from you,
give us a timely word
to console our weariness
and renew our strength,
in Jesus' name, we pray, AMEN

Read Matthew 21: 1-11

For many of us, memories of Palm Sunday will include a parade around the church waving palm branches made of green paper and gardeners' stakes, or perhaps even of following a donkey through the village. Such parades are far less frequent in the United Kingdom now, but they are still very much part of the culture in the Mediterranean countries. Most towns and



*Palm Sunday Statue,
Valladolid, Spain, March 1986*

villages have parades lasting a couple of hours every day from Palm Sunday to Easter Day. Huge statues are processed through the streets, high above people's heads. As they approach you can hear the volume of the cheering and singing increase, and when they pass many people fall to their knees in prayer. There is an air of excitement, anticipation and worship into which you get caught up.

- ✝ *Think of something that excites you – a goal scored for your team, a clear round for a showjumper, a successfully solved crossword puzzle, or whatever is your passion.*
- ✝ *Now look at the palm cross and then look out of the window at the trees near you. Can you imagine them being stripped bare by excited pilgrims?*
- ✝ *Look at your coat. How excited would you have to be to throw it onto the floor in front of someone riding a donkey?*

Now re-read the Gospel and hear the excitement and the anticipation of the people as Jesus enters Jerusalem, and be caught up in that moment, even throw your coat and palm cross on the floor if you wish!

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Prayer

Living God,

There has been so much emotion and excitement recently
and it is so easy to be caught up in it,
that now, in silence, we make space to hear your heartbeat.

Silence, in which you may offer prayers for others if you wish.

God of all time and all places,
hear the prayers of our hearts and minds
and bring peace and strength to those for whom we have prayed,
for your name's sake, we pray, AMEN

The Lord's Prayer

We share the Grace.