**Sunday 28th March** WORSHIP AT HOME: Palm Sunday

Welcome to our act of Worship

Call to worship – Psalm 118

Give thanks to God,

**Hosanna to God, hosanna in the highest.**

God’s steadfast love endures forever,

**Hosanna to God, hosanna in the highest.**

God has come, answering prayer, bringing joy and hope,

**Hosanna to God, hosanna in the highest.**

Opening the gates of our hearts,

**Hosanna to God, hosanna in the highest.**

Blessed is the One who comes in the name

of the Lord,

**Hosanna to God, hosanna in the highest.**

Give thanks to God.

HYMN

**All glory, laud, and honour**
to you, Redeemer, King,
to whom the lips of children
made sweet hosannas ring.
You are the King of Israel
and David's royal Son,
now in the Lord's name coming,
the King and Blessed One.

The company of angels
is praising you on high;
and we with all creation
in chorus make reply.
The people of the Hebrews
with palms before you went;
our praise and prayer and anthems
before you we present.

To you before your passion
they sang their hymns of praise;
to you, now high exalted,
our melody we raise.
As you received their praises,
accept the prayers we bring,
for you delight in goodness,
O good and gracious King!

HP160, MP9, RS208, STF262

(Some of the hymn books widely used in the Wiltshire United Area)

*Prayers of Praise*

Give thanks to the Lord, for God is good.
**God’s love endures for ever.**
This is the day that the Lord has made.
**God’s love endures for ever.**
God has opened the way for the people.
**God’s love endures for ever.**
Let all the people say:
**God’s love endures for ever. Amen.**

*Prayer of Confession*

*Take a moment to be still,*We lay before our king all that we are and all that we bring;

the good and the bad, the riches and the poverty,

our strengths and our weaknesses.

We confess our sins in penitence and faith,

for we are not a forsaken people.

**God will hear the cry of our hearts,**

**and will have mercy upon us.**

*Silence*

God’s face shines upon us. God has given us light.

We trust God to save us.

Hosanna. God, our God,

hear the cry of our hearts and save us. **Amen.**

HYMN

**From heaven you came helpless babe**

Entered our world Your Glory veiled

Not to be served but to serve

And give Your life that we might live

*This is our God, the Servant King -*

*He calls us now to follow Him*

*To bring our lives as a daily offering*

*Of worship to the Servant King*

There in the garden of tears

My heavy load He chose to bear

His heart with sorrow was torn

Yet "Not my will but Yours", He said.

Come see His hand and His feet -

The scars that speak of sacrifice

Hands that flung stars into space

To cruel nails surrendered.

So let us learn how to serve

And in our lives enthrone Him

Each other's needs to prefer

For Christ we're serving.

HP, MP162, RS522, STF272

Ministry of the Word of God

Lectionary Bible readings for RCL Palm Sunday Year B

Psalm 118.1-2,19-29; Isaiah 50.4-9a; Psalm 31.9-16; Philippians 2.5-11; **Mark 11.1-11**

**When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples 2and said to them, ‘Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. 3If anyone says to you, “Why are you doing this?” just say this, “The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.” ’ 4They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, 5some of the bystanders said to them, ‘What are you doing, untying the colt?’ 6They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. 7Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. 8Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. 9Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, ‘Hosanna!   Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! 10   Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!’**

**11 Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.**

This is the Gospel of Christ.

**Praise to Christ our Lord.**

Reflection

Jesus in his ministry frequently turns things on their head. He knows that in God’s world strength is found in weakness, victory looks like defeat, and life is born of death.

Jesus turned perception on its head entering Jerusalem on a colt. There was a tradition from the book of Maccabees of a triumphal and victorious entry of a king (1 Maccabees 4:19-25; 5:45-54; 13:43-51) instead, Jesus comes in peace and relatively quietly.

As we enter Holy Week I want to “turn things on their head”, using a line from a famous hymn ‘*Emptied Himself of all but love’*

As the cross beckons the disciples in confusion and emptied of all their confidence run away. Peter emptied of all his good intentions denies. The crowds emptied of their initial enthusiasm empty themselves of the goodness of humanity and become a mob. Pilate empties himself of responsibility, the Jewish authorities, likewise, getting rid of someone who threatened their authority.

Our past year has been full of parallels. The pandemic has emptied so much of what we held dear.

Remember the first Lockdown and the empty shelves in any food shop? A year on take a walk along the main streets of our towns, they are almost empty of shoppers and how many shops lie empty? Last Monday I stood on Bristol Temple Meads Station at just before 8am, I have never seen it so empty.

Think of our churches … remember last Easter Sunday … think of this Easter Sunday … our places of worship will be … physically empty. But is the church simply the building? We may not all be gathered in the same building, but throughout this time when we need each other so much, we have been invited to worship together, from where we are – knowing that God can hear us all and holds each one in the palm of his hands.

Amidst the emptiness, let us never forget there have been many striking stories of heroism, of going the extra mile. What will stay in your mind from this year of pandemic? What stories stand out for you what images, what people, what dramatic moments will we carry to pass on to future generations? Deer in city centre streets; clapping for carers; Captain Tom Moore…?

Yet emptying. We have been emptied, made more aware of our fragile humanity, seen the fragility of some political structures, our failure to properly prepare for what was an expected pandemic. Have we recognised that our mental health was not as robust as we expected, or seen more clearly some of our habits or mindsets that stop us living contentedly in all circumstances as Paul had ‘*I have learned to be content with whatever I have. 12I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. 13I can do all things through him who strengthens me.’* (Philippians 4:11-13)

In the emptying of this last year what have we learnt about our humanity? What has sustained us spiritually and met our emptiness?

If all this emptiness sounds overly negative … hold on to … emptiness! St Paul during his own sufferings is reminded *‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness* (2 Corinthians 12v9).

The streets of the cheering crowds that first Palm Sunday become silent and empty … Even Calvary after sunset on Good Friday becomes silent and empty and there in that place of suffering and death will stand an empty cross. But next Sunday all of this is transformed by the empty tomb.

Reflective Prayer of Response

*He left His Father’s throne above
So free, so infinite His grace—
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam’s helpless race:
’Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For O my God, it found out me!*

*HP216 MP33 RS 366 STF 345*

HYMN

**My song is love unknown,**
my Saviour's love to me,
love to the loveless shown
that they might lovely be.
O who am I
that for my sake
my Lord should take
frail flesh and die?

He came from his blest throne
salvation to bestow,
but they made strange, and none
the longed-for Christ would know.
But O my friend,
my friend indeed,
who at my need,
his life did spend.

Sometimes they strew his way,
and his strong praises sing,
resounding all the day
hosannas to their King.
Then "Crucify!"
is all their breath,
and for his death
they thirst and cry.

Why, what hath my Lord done?
What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run,
he gave the blind their sight.
Sweet injuries!
Yet they at these
themselves displease,
and 'gainst him rise.

They rise, and needs will have
my dear Lord made away;
a murderer they save,
the Prince of Life they slay.
Yet steadfast he
to suffering goes,
that he his foes
from thence might free.

In life, no house, no home
My Lord on earth might have;
In death no friendly tomb
But what a stranger gave.
What may I say?

Heaven was His home;
But mine the tomb

wherein He lay.

Here might I stay and sing,
no story so divine:
never was love, dear King,
never was grief like thine.
This is my friend,
in whose sweet praise
I all my days
could gladly spend.

HP173, MP478, RS207, STF277

Our Prayers

Praise the Lord: **Hosanna.**

We praise and thank you for the progress that has been made in the Covid vaccination programme, and we pray for those in our health services who have been put under additional pressure as a result of the pandemic; for those preparing for a third wave; and those working in care homes.

Praise the Lord: **Hosanna.**

We praise and thank you for the churches that have been able to reopen for worship, and for creative ways which have been found to unite people in prayer and worship. We pray for those who feel isolated; who long to gather with others; who cannot access online worship.

Praise the Lord: **Hosanna.**

We praise and thank you for signs of spring; for crocuses and daffodils, and all the green shoots of growth.

We pray for gardeners; for those who look after parks and public verges; for those who make our communities more pleasant.

Praise the Lord: **Hosanna.**

We praise and thank you for the message of hope, encouragement, and peace that Jesus brings. We pray for those who are fearful for the future, those who have lost direction in life and those whose lives are troubled. We especially pray for…

Praise the Lord: **Hosanna.**

Lord Jesus, blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord –
blessed for all you are; blessed for all you do.
Receive our prayers and speak to the needs of all your children, we pray. **Amen**.

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.**

HYMN

**When I survey the wondrous cross**
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e’er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

HP180, MP755, RS217, STF287

Blessing *based on Philippians 2*

Let the same mind be in us,
the same love, the same compassion,
that was found in Christ Jesus.
Let us empty ourselves,
humble ourselves, and in obedience,
follow Jesus to the foot of the cross.
Hosanna. Lord, save us.
**Amen.**

**Action Prayer for all ages**

Generous God,
you show us what love is.
*(make a heart shape with fingers)*
You did not spare your only Son,
but you gave him up for us all.
(make the shape of a cross)
Help us to seek and find you
*(hold binoculars over eyes)*
with effort and enthusiasm,
*(make ‘come on’ gestures)*
to give extravagantly
*(make giving gesture with hands)*
and to be enriched by your presence.
*(round of applause)*
**Amen.** *(shout it loudly!*

Through the Week -but especially for Good Friday

One of my favourite Good Friday sermons is, *“It’s Friday, but Sunday’s Coming.”*  I first read it in a sermon by Tony Campolo.  The original has been traced to San Diego and Baptist pastor S. M. Lockridge.   *Part of that sermon went something like this.*

It’s Friday. Jesus is arrested in the garden where He was praying. But Sunday’s coming.

It’s Friday. The disciples are hiding and Peter’s denying that he knows the Lord. But Sunday’s coming.

It’s Friday. Jesus is standing before the high priest of Israel, silent as a lamb before the slaughter. But Sunday’s coming.

It’s Friday. Jesus is beaten, mocked, and spit upon. But Sunday’s coming.

It’s Friday. Those Roman soldiers are flogging our Lord with a leather scourge that has bits of bones and glass and metal, tearing at his flesh. But Sunday’s coming.

It’s Friday. The Son of man stands firm as they press the crown of thorns down into his brow. But Sunday’s coming.

It’s Friday. See Him walking to Calvary, the blood dripping from His body. See the cross crashing down on His back as He stumbles beneath the load. It’s Friday; but Sunday’s a coming.

It’s Friday. See those Roman soldiers driving the nails into the feet and hands of my Lord. Hear my Jesus cry, “Father, forgive them.” It’s Friday; but Sunday’s coming.

It’s Friday. Jesus is hanging on the cross, bloody and dying. But Sunday’s coming.

It’s Friday. The sky grows dark, the earth begins to tremble, and He who knew no sin became sin for us. Holy God who will not abide with sin pours out His wrath on that perfect sacrificial lamb who cries out, “My God, My God. Why hast thou forsaken me?” What a horrible cry. But Sunday’s coming.

It’s Friday. And at the moment of Jesus’ death, the veil of the Temple that separates sinful man from Holy God was torn from the top to the bottom because Sunday’s coming.

It’s Friday. Jesus is hanging on the cross, heaven is weeping and hell is partying. But that’s because it’s Friday, and they don’t know it, but Sunday’s a coming….

Rev David Coppard Superintendent @ Wiltshire United Area

Team Chaplain @ Musgrove Park Hospital, Taunton

***Our churches may not all be open, but the Church is active and alive.***

*This is service is offered to any and all, with love and prayers.*

CCL LICENCE

Steeple Ashton Methodist CCL 291605

Warminster United CCL 1221052

Westbury Methodist CCL 781988

Westbury URC CCL 293641

**FUTURE SECTOR SERVICES VIA ZOOM**

**GOOD FRIDAY APRIL 2ND AT 10.30**

**EASTER DAY APRIL 4TH AT 10.30**

For those not online paper copies of these services will be available, please contact David if you would like one.