

Palm Sunday

5th April 2020

Today's Reading: **Matthew 21:1-11**

- from Revd. David Hildred



Now that we are staying in Darfield for a while longer, I thought it might be helpful to offer a few thoughts, since Palm Sunday would have been our final Sunday in the parish.

I hope this, together with the hymn/song suggestions on the news sheet (or website if you have access) and the prayer sheets from previous weeks will mean we will be able to join together as a congregation in using the same material.

Maybe, like me, you remember people saying, or attaching to letters, the initials "DV", which means "Deo Volente" - a Latin phrase acknowledging that something that has just been said would happen "if God is willing".

Just recently I have caught myself saying in a similar vein something such as, "We'll hope to see you before we go, Coronavirus permitting". Suddenly I seem to be declaring that the Coronavirus has become the master of the universe.

The reading from Matthew for Palm Sunday is a timely corrective for me, especially verse 5, "Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey...'"

Palm Sunday is all about a king arriving, or should we say, the King arriving. We are reminded that there is only one King in this universe, and only one whose will we need to pay attention to; only one who determines the course of our life.

The crowds on that first Palm Sunday took action together to acknowledge Jesus as the King - with palm branches and shouts of 'Hosanna' - and normally we would have been together to acknowledge the same. However, we can still make a united witness to the fact that Jesus is King.

Some folk will be receiving a palm cross with the paper copy of the news sheet, and others of us (I hope) will have been able to have a go at making our own crosses. Can we put that cross in a place that is visible to others?

This year I think I need to highlight that this cross represents the way in which Jesus is King. I'm thinking about putting a crown above the cross, or perhaps reproducing the sign on the cross which Pilate wrote, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews" (Mt 27:37). What might you do?

Whatever you do, I hope we will all be clear that Jesus is our King. He is the all-powerful, all-present, all knowing King who lives that out not as a megalomaniac tyrant, but as the Servant, who takes our place, pays our debt, wins our forgiveness.

It might seem like Coronavirus is a stronger king, but it's not.. Yes, we do face restrictions just now, not being able to go where and when we want, not being able to get everything we need, but there's something more important. The writer to the Hebrews (13:5) told his readers, "Be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you'".

And whilst we are socially distancing and self-isolating we will do well to remember that we are not spiritually distancing and spiritually-isolating. With Jesus as our King we know that we are, in Paul's words (1 Cor 12:27), part of the Body of Christ, and as such we are connected together. The 'buddying system' is an important expression of how we are the Body, even though we can't meet together at the moment. We are connected because individually we are connected to the King.

This coming week is known as Holy Week. There are various suggestions on how to mark the week in Bishop Pete's letter dated 1.4.20 on the diocesan website.

For those without access to that we can very easily share the journey that Jesus took during that last week of his life on earth. Following on from today's passage you could read more of Matthew's gospel, and aim to land on Maundy Thursday at 26:17. For Good Friday you could read from Mt 27:27. And then you could keep Mt 28 for Easter Sunday.

There might be a particular hymn you would like to recall (or even sing). Here are some prompts to help you remember other ones:

Maundy Thursday:

A new commandment I give unto you.
I am the Bread of Life
Meekness and majesty
You laid aside your majesty

Good Friday:

Here is love vast as the ocean
How deep the Father's love for us
Jesus Christ, I think upon your sacrifice
Man of Sorrows, what a name
Rock of ages, cleft for me
There is a green hill far away

Throughout the week ahead let's live as those who believe that Jesus is the only King around here.

Yours faithfully in Christ, David

Rector of Darfield with Great Houghton - for a bit longer.