

St Marc Grenoble
Sunday 28th March 2021 (Palm Sunday)

'King's Cross'

Mark 11: 1 - 11

Psalm 31: 9 - 10, 14 - 16

Mark 15: 1 - 20, 22 - 26

Good morning, welcome again **PRAY**

Palm Sunday, Can anyone say what we celebrate on Palm Sunday??
It's an interesting day in the Church's calendar; we are invited to look at two very important events, near the end of Jesus' life on earth.

Firstly, we celebrate Jesus' triumphal arrival in Jerusalem, supported and celebrated by many of His followers - a great crowd of them, waving Palm branches and welcoming Him, like the great conquering King they were hoping He would be. Secondly, we start to look at the events - less than a week later, leading up to Jesus' crucifixion.

The Anglican Church has two liturgies for today - the liturgy of the Palms and the liturgy of the Passion. To me, neither shows us the whole picture. So, I've tried to blend the two together in one act of worship - which I hope you'll find helpful. Two Gospel readings and two homilies or 'sermonettes'; and, a bit like the events themselves, the tone of our worship will change quite a bit too.

PART 1

Putting things into context, the Passover festival, the foundational Jewish festival, celebrating the Children of Israel's escape from Egypt - led by Moses, over a thousand years earlier, was approaching.

Every year thousands of Jewish people travelled from all over Judea to celebrate and make their sacrifices at the festival. It was by far the busiest time of year, both in the Temple, and in the City.

People left towns and villages all over the country and made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem - considered God's Holy City.

On this occasion, Jesus went too ... we don't know how many times during His life on earth, Jesus actually went to Jerusalem; but we do know He'd been before - the first time when he was just twelve years old.

Jesus had been preaching, performing miracles and healing all around Galilee. Wherever He went, large crowds - often in their thousands - turned out to listen to Him. He was a local hero - they were fascinated by Him and the Good News He preached - Not your average rabbi!

Many people hoped, even believed Jesus was the promised Messiah - who, in their minds, was going to start a revolution, and kick the occupying Roman forces out of their country.

There was, of course, nothing further from Jesus' intentions - although almost no one, except Jesus himself, accepted that.

Galilee to Jerusalem is c.125 Km; they were a very large, constantly growing, crowd of people - the journey would have taken at least four, or more likely five days - they were more used to walking, then!

There weren't many Travelogues or Holiday Inns along the route either; food and other facilities will have been very limited. Most of the pilgrims will have slept out in the open - Imagine the camaraderie, the banter, the blisters - and the body odour, as they went along!

Some of you may have experienced similar situations, but perhaps not in such joyful circumstances.

The final leg of the journey, from Jericho to Jerusalem, is a steady climb, through barren countryside over 1,000 metres in less than 20Km; but, as they reached the top, the Holy city was laid out before them - the sense of achievement kicked in, and the partying of the festival usually began.

But this year was different - they were accompanying their Messiah! Near Bethany, Jesus sent two of his close followers to find a donkey's colt. He told them where to find it, and what to say to anyone challenging them. They did and when challenged said what He'd told them, and they were allowed to continue. (HOW did He know?? We're not told!)

The triumphal procession began! Conquering Kings usually rode battle horses, accompanied by their armies. Jesus riding a young donkey was surrounded by an excited band of pilgrims, seeking freedom and shouting: **Hosanna!** Blessed is He who comes in God's Name! Blessed the coming kingdom of our father David! **Hosanna!** in highest heaven!

Jesus offers His followers hope and freedom, but not the way they were expecting! Jesus offers a totally different way. A loving, serving way of humility and joy. He offers the same freedom, hope and joy to us today!

Let us celebrate with Palm Crosses as the Children process out!
Let's PRAY (Bless Palm crosses)

PART 2

Our second reading is set just about a week from our first reading.

As the film critics would say, it was an action packed week! (if you're seeking reading matter for Holy week, try Mark 11 to the end of Mark 15)

Jesus visited the Temple, and His teaching authority was challenged by the religious big-wigs. He told a parable; about tenants who ignored the owner of a vineyard and ended up killing his son - Does that ring bells?

Jesus was challenged, by Pharisees trying to catch Him out, as to whether, taxes should be paid to Caesar. His response: 'Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar'.

He was asked by a legal expert, again trying to catch Him out, as to which is the most important commandment; His response was categoric: 'Love the Lord your God (the only God) with everything you've got; and the second is this - Love your neighbour as yourself'.

While establishing His genealogical links to King David, (essential for a valid/kosher Messiah), He also warned people to beware of lawyers and their self serving injustices.

Jesus talked about integrity in giving to God, explaining how a poor widow had given everything she had, whereas others were only skimming the cream off the top of their wealth.

He prophesied about the destruction of the Temple, which did actually occur in AD 70, (probably 27 years later).

At supper in 'Simon the Leper's' house Jesus was anointed with a really expensive jar of pure spikenard ointment. When some people at the supper complained at the flagrant waste, Jesus dismissed their complaints, saying that the woman was anointing His body for burial.

Judas Iscariot, in return for a bribe, arranged with the chief priests to betray Jesus; and on the Thursday evening, Jesus, after sharing the traditional passover meal with His closest friends (disciples); we know it as 'the Last Supper', went out to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane. They were ambushed by a crowd of ruffians, working for the chief priests, led by Judas Iscariot. Jesus was arrested, and His closest followers, who until

that point had never left Him, all ran away, to save their skins; leaving Jesus in the clutches of the chief priests and their gang of henchmen. At first light the next morning, the religious leaders and lawyers carted Jesus off to Pontius Pilate, the local Roman commander.

Pilate, after a sham trial (against his better judgement), sent Jesus to be crucified, simply to keep the Jewish leaders happy, and to ensure their continuing support... and thus less hassle for Pilate and his soldiers.

The sham trial was in public, and although Pilate offered to release Jesus, we're told the Jewish leaders incited the crowd to demand release of another man, a murderer rather than allow Jesus to get in their way again.

The same people, who earlier in the week were shouting Hosannah!
Were now shouting Crucify him! Nail Him to a cross!

King to The King's Cross in one week - how fickle we human beings are.

When things were going well, the crowd were shouting support for Jesus. When they realised He'd allowed himself to become vulnerable they were happy to see Him sent to the Cross - they wanted an aggressive king.

Reflect on the story for a moment, work it through in your mind ...

This Easter will you allow Jesus to be your King ... or allow Him to be sent to the Cross - The King's Cross ... the inscription read Jesus, King of the Jews.

But will you allow Jesus to be King of your heart ... and lift His name on High in everything you do - whatever it costs??

Or will you go along with the mob and shout 'Crucify Him'?

As the lovely song says: 'He died that we might be forgiven, He died to make us good ... that we may go at last to heaven, saved by His precious blood'.

We must remember - the Cross was not the end. It was never going to be - the Cross led to the new beginning - Our salvation.

On the cross, Jesus paid the price for our redemption, so that we may go -

at last to heaven ... whatever our past deserves ... All we need to do is to repent, to change our direction, and welcome Jesus into our life.

Let's Pray