

**Sheffield United Reformed Churches**  
**Team Ministry worship for individual or families**  
**Sunday 28th March 2021 at 10:30 am - Palm Sunday**

**Call to worship**

Make way, make way, for Christ the King in splendour arrives.  
Fling wide the gates and welcome him into your lives!

**Hymn R&S 209**

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

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.

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.

**Prayers of Worship, Thanksgiving and Confession**

Lord, we worship you and welcome you as King of our lives  
As the crowds cried "Hosanna" and laid their makeshift palms and worn clothes before you  
So, we lay our lives, though sometimes makeshift and frayed, in worship before you.

Jesus, to the villages of Galilee, to the crowds in the fields and on the hillsides,  
To disciples, to the outcast, to the sick and heart-broken, to the lonely woman at the well  
You offered the words of life  
So you came to Jerusalem offering the humble leadership of an unusual and un-looked for King

So today, we thank you that by unlooked for grace, you offer truth, peace and life to each of us,  
And so, also, you offer your blessing and wholeness to our civic life together

As we consider our own hearts and our life together, we are conscious  
That we have failed to respond to your words of life  
We have exchanged your truth for "our truth",  
We have allowed violence and destruction to masquerade as righteous justice  
We have exalted comfort and indifference in the place of humble service - we are truly sorry  
And ask for your grace, our Servant King, to guide and restore our lives again

**Readings**



**Zechariah 9: 9-12** – Zion's deliver comes!

**Psalms 118, 1-2, 18-29** - Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; His mercy endures for ever.

**Mark 11: 1-11** - The crowd proclaim the Kingdom as Jesus enters Jerusalem in humility.

**Philippians 2:5-11** - Let us imitate the humility of Christ

**Reflection by Rev Brenda Hill - *A Royal Progress***

I have witnessed two coronations 1937 and 1953. At the first I was in the crowd that watched King George VI ride to and from Westminster Abbey to be crowned and I shouted with everyone, 'God Save the King,' and waved my little Union Jack. At the second we watched it in black and white on a 12" screen with about a dozen people crowded into our front room and we shouted too, 'God Save the Queen'.

Palm Sunday was the same sort of occasion only 2000 years earlier. Jesus was riding into Jerusalem announcing his reign as monarch of the Kingdom of God. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey as the crowd shouted, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'. Affirming that Jesus was the Messiah and truly their King and Saviour. He rode as Prince of Peace on a donkey of course. This happened when the Roman Empire ruled by a military dictatorship. Caesar would have no king but himself and he made that certain by keeping a huge army that could enforce it. The Romans spoke proudly of 'Roman Peace.' But it was kept by force

Neither the Roman soldiers nor the shouting crowd understood what kind of a kingdom Jesus announced, of which he was the king, but we do now, and it is the implications of that ride that I want to explore today, Palm Sunday. I want to ask the question of myself and you, 'Would you be one of the crowd acknowledging Jesus as King and would you still be his loyal subject if there was a risk involved.

Would you still be there before Pilates' palace ready to shout for Jesus not Barabbas. I've no doubt that soldiers and Jewish religious leaders were noting the revellers and would later get them alone and threaten them with dire consequences if they persisted in their overt loyalty to Jesus. The Jewish leaders were afraid that Rome would clamp down and take away their privileges and the local soldiery that they must be seen to be in control where no upstart king took over.

Today, in this country we have no fear and can express our faith openly and be loyal to both Jesus and the monarchy but there are many people who aren't so free There are some brave enough to risk their liberty or their life for what they believe... Hongkong, Myanmar and others and the Uyghurs in China who are having their faith suppressed. Many are following Allah at great risk, so I ask again, 'Would I dare to follow Jesus in such circumstances?' I wondered, as a child why the crowd turned against Jesus so soon, between Palm Sunday and Jesus questioning by Pilate, but I didn't see the risk or the implications then as I do now!

So now let us come right away from the first century and come to the twenty first and spell out what Palm Sunday is saying to us. Jesus announced that he was to reign in the Kingdom of God. **That** was based on all its members living together and loving each other as much as they loved themselves...where everyone was able to achieve their potential and where there were no haves and have-nots. A kingdom where no nation could war with another and where the ruler ruled justly so that each person had a place and all were the loved beings of God himself who offered them mercy and grace.

Comparing that with what we have now it seems impossible we are not doing everything we can to bring in the one and abandoning the other. What do we have as the rule of life today? We have desperately poor nations who can't afford to feed their citizens let alone buy vaccines, and countries fighting each other and devastating peoples' cities and homes and worse! In Syria and other countries, one group of citizens is killing a rival group and where more is spent on weapons of destruction than on food and where human beings are emitting such amounts of carbon-dioxide they are overheating the world. In Britain we are sheltered from the extremes, so we are complaisant and comfortable with the status quo but we should not be.

As we sing, 'We have a King who rides on a donkey or some other Palm Sunday songs let us determine to fulfil our purpose as Christians and follow Jesus' as our King and bring his kingdom nearer. Jesus suffered and died to make it a reality, surely, we can be part of his transformation team, 'Bringing his Kingdom in'. Yes!

We will suffer difficulties and rejection as Jesus did. Not everyone will join us shouting for Jesus and may-be we will be taken out of our comfort zone and hurt a little, but we follow, 'A Christ crucified.' I hope from this Palm Sunday to be certain I will be with Jesus when given the choice between Barabbas (representing the world) or Jesus ruler of God's Kingdom of love. My effort will be small but Jesus left 11 ordinary people to change the world and they did. I will be shouting, 'Hosanna, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.' today and with God's help ready tomorrow morning to do my bit to bring his Kingdom nearer. AMEN

## **Song for Reflection**

Make way, make way, for Christ the King in splendour arrives.  
Fling wide the gates and welcome him into your lives.

*Make way! Make way! For the King of kings! Make way! Make way! And let his kingdom in!*

He comes the broken hearts to heal, the prisoners to free.  
The deaf shall hear, the lame shall dance, the blind shall see.

*Make way! etc*

And those who mourn with heavy hearts, who weep and sigh;  
With laughter, joy and royal crown He'll beautify.

*Make way! etc*

We call you now to worship him as Lord of all.  
To have no other gods but him: their thrones must fall!

*Make way! etc*

## **Prayers of Intercession**

Father God, creator of the universe,

We come to you to seek help for a troubled world where hope and love are overwhelmed by power-seeking and division. As we look at different parts of the world which we share as a human race we pray especially for areas of conflict like the Middle East, remembering how this makes life for all peoples involved, frightening and grief-ridden. Jesus as we prepare to follow you to the cross and to resurrection may live with passion to bring your Kingdom nearer

We bring special prayers for parts of the world where one nation seeks power by denying it to others: thinking of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang province of China where Muslims are being repressed and the olive farmers of Palestine are having their trees confiscated by the Israeli settlers, or the Christians of South Sudan and Nigeria where one faith group wants to eliminate another.

Although we feel helpless and too small to make a difference, may we set models and have faith in your power of love to overcome all hatred. We ask that we may look at our own country and pray for the division of rich and poor to be eliminated through our being a voice for those who have no voice. May we be first to speak as the Body of Christ where love is the only rule.

Your church, Lord, prays for strength to speak out against the greed and exploitation of the workers where the goal of profit leaves people jobless and whole families are thrown into poverty and degradation. May we, as part of that church do our part locally helping practically and speaking out on their behalf. Lord, give us hope and inspiration to make a difference in Sheffield, offering practical help to those in need and love to many who feel lost and alone. Lord, you, who are the anchor of our being and the inspiration for all we do through our church fellowships show us new ways to mend broken hearts and restore crushed souls and bring the light of faith from the darkness of unbelief.

May the church shine forth reflecting the light of Jesus on all who seek him. Jesus who died for each and everyone who believes, we bring our concerns and cares for the people we know and are worried about in our communities and who need to know that your love is there for them:

*(Pray now for the people and situations on your hearts and minds...)*

We bring all our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour - AMEN

## Hymn R&S 207

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 men 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.

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? Heav'n was his home but mine the tomb wherein he lay.

## Closing Prayer and Blessing

Lord, as we end this time of worship  
May each one live the life of your Kingdom the best we can  
Slowly transforming this world into your world...  
Where heaven and earth can be one.  
We go, knowing that our God, Creator Father,  
The crucified, risen, Son  
And the go-between Spirit  
Will be with us always. AMEN

