

Palm Sunday

Shared with kind permission of Reverend Roger Wood

Sentence:

Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord

Collect:

Almighty and everlasting God, who in your tender love towards the human race sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ to take upon him our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross: grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility, and also be made partakers of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the Unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Readings:

Isaiah 50, 4 – 9

Philippians 2, 5 – 11

Matthew 21, 1 – 11

Sermon: (Please also refer to the accompanying picture board)

Jesus enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday like a king coming to his coronation. Palms are waves. Clothes are spread in his path. He is greeted with the ancient greeting for the coming of a king- “Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessings on the coming kingdom of our father, David.” There is just one jarring note. The coming king is riding on a donkey, a beast of burden. It is this jarring note that provides the key to all that follows. What we are about to witness is a coronation like no other.

The journey of an earthly king to his coronation leads upwards to the highest place. Greeted at the city gates by the powers that be he moves through cheering crowds on a route lined by saluting soldiers. The journey culminates with his being set on a golden throne and crowned with a golden crown.

The journey of Jesus, by contrast, leads inexorably downwards to the lowest place. The soldiers, far from saluting, form a snatch squad to seize him. His supporters betray or desert him. The powers that be demand his execution. The crowd bays for his blood. His journey ends with his being set on a cross and crowned with a crown of thorns.

The purpose of Jesus' journey to this terrible coronation is nothing less than to change the way society is organised. What is to be left behind is a society shaped by power, a pyramid in which all power and authority is concentrated in the hands of the few at the top. What is to be substituted is a society shaped by love and service welling up from below, an inverted pyramid in which the first will be last.

It is this revolution that we are called to continue. We are to make our church a model of a community shaped by service. We are called to build a world in which people honour one another and seek the common good. We are called to build communities in which people serve one another as Christ served us. We are called to build a society which makes it its priority to bring comfort and strength, help and hope to all who are in trouble. And we are called to carry on doing these things till his kingdom comes and his will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

Prayers:

Lord, you died to set before us a new model of the way things should be organised. What you pointed us to was a world not shaped by power but by service. Help us to realise that goal.

Help us to make our church a model of a community shaped by service where the first priority of clergy and church officers is the well-being and unity of the congregation they serve and the first priority of the congregation is the well-being and unity of the parish and world in which they are set.

And help us by doing so

- to contribute to the building of a society in which people serve one another as you served us
- to the building of a society whose first concern is to provide comfort and strength, help and hope to all who are in trouble
- and the building of a world of gentleness and peace in which people honour one another and seek the common good.

Post-communion collect:

Lord Jesus Christ, you humbled yourself in taking the form of a servant and in obedience died on the cross for our salvation: give us the mind to follow you as Lord and King, to the glory of God the Father. Amen