

**Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit
Worship at Home, 24 March 2024**

Service prepared by the Revd Ruth Fry

Palm Sunday

Opening prayer:

We raise our voices and wave with joyful hope
the palms of deliverance of God's people.

Hosanna! Hosanna to the Son of David!

Our hearts are filled with expectation
as we welcome the coming king.

**Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the
name of the Lord!**

We receive into the crowded streets of our lives
the one who is Saviour, not only of us, but of all
the earth.

Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest heaven!

https://youtu.be/SKHwBamBSPk?si=597S0_Qu9K_ifoOD

Listen, read, pray, or sing along

Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest!
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest!
Lord, we lift up your name, with hearts full of
praise;
be exalted, O Lord, my God!
Hosanna in the highest!
Glory, glory, glory to the King of kings!
Glory, glory, glory to the King of kings!
Lord, we lift up your name, with hearts full of
praise;
be exalted, O Lord, my God!
Glory to the King of kings!

Carl Tuttle (b. 1953)

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Readings:

Philippians 2 v5-11

Mark 11 v1-11

Reflection:

I'm sure you've heard the well-known phrase
'*there's a light at the end of the tunnel*'. The thing
about that saying is that on the one hand, a light
at the end of the tunnel revives and renews
us. On the other hand, it shows us just how bleak
and dismal the tunnel has been. In other words, it
doesn't take us long to go from praise to pain.

What a fitting context for Palm Sunday, our entry
into Holy Week. Today, we begin a journey that
holds within it the fullness of the human story --
the highs, the lows, the hopes, the fears. In the
span of seven days, it's all there: praising and
processing, breaking bread, washing feet,
making, and breaking promises, denying,
betraying, condemning, grieving, despairing,
disbelieving, and finally celebrating on Easter
daylike no other celebration.

Holy week takes us from seeing the light at the
end of the tunnel, through losing our vision of it
entirely in the grimness of death, to finding it
again, this time drenched in the glory of
resurrection.

The triumphal entry of Jesus into the city of
Jerusalem was deliberate and planned. This was
no attempt to slip in, quietly, unnoticed. The way
Jesus came, the time and manner of his coming,
when the Jewish people were gathered to
celebrate the Passover feast, to remember the
great story of freedom and liberation from slavery
in Egypt, was highly confrontational although it
was peaceful.

There were prophecies in the Jewish Scriptures,
for example, from the book of Zechariah: '*I will
remove the war chariots from Israel and take the
war horses from Jerusalem, the bows used in
battle will be destroyed. Your King will make
peace among the nations*'.

Paul writes in his letter to the Philippians *'Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited'*.

Throughout Lent we spend time reflecting on and thinking about the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness being tempted to misuse his power. Jesus when faced with temptation chose to resist and to embrace an entirely different sort of power. The power of God made known through the humility of self-emptying.

A few days after his entry into Jerusalem Jesus shares the Passover meal with his disciples and he stoops to wash their feet. No King had ever done such a thing before. Servants wash feet not Kings.

Paul goes on to say of Jesus *'he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. Therefore, God exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and in earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father'*.

The message of Philippians and of the Gospel story of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem is that human power, control, and privilege must be relinquished if God's work of healing, reconciliation and transformation is to be enabled for all to see. Jesus must die if he is to complete the task to which he has been called. There can be no escape from what is to come.

Letting go, giving up power and control is not something the world understands, it's not

something human beings find it easy to understand. But it is God's way. And God's way is the only way to new life, to everlasting life. It's all about gain through loss. It's about letting go, releasing power and control and being able to say, *'not my will but yours be done, O God'* But my goodness it's not easy. The truth is that without a deep trust in God, without a total surrender and absolute reliance on God it's quite simply impossible.

Human beings will always try to cling on to power and control. We are stubborn and slow to learn. For us letting go is often the hardest thing to do. We're not like the trees that simply allow their leaves to fall in autumn and then stand bare throughout winter waiting patiently for spring buds to develop.

We see the evidence everywhere in the world, in our nation, in our community and in the church of the unwillingness to let go, of the fear of loss, of the hesitancy to be willing to relinquish power and control.

The Easter story shows us that the only way to new life, to eternal life is through letting go. Jesus, in his readiness to self-empty, to relinquish control, to trust in God to the very end is the only means by which the gift of eternal life can be made available to all who choose to place their trust in him.

As we make our way through Holy week 2024, as we follow in the steps of Jesus all the way to the cross may we each learn a little more of what it means to let go, to freefall into the arms of the One who loves us more than we can imagine so as to be able to say as Jesus did *'thy will, not mine be done, O God'*. If we can then there really

be a bright shining light at the end of that tunnel.
A light that can never ever be extinguished.

Prayers for God's people and world:

Lord Jesus Christ,
..... over the broken glass of our world,
The rumours meant to hurt,
The prejudice meant to wound,
The weapons meant to kill,
Ride on.....
Trampling our attempts at disaster into dust.

**Ride on
Ride on in majesty**

.....over the distance which separates us from
you,
And it is such a distance,
Measurable in half-truths,
In unkept promises,
In second-best obedience,
Ride on.....
Until you touch and heal us,
Who feel for no one but ourselves

**Ride on
Ride on in majesty**

.... through the back streets
And the sin bins
And the sniggered-at corners of the city,
Where human life festers Go in joy for Jesus
walks between us,
Go in humble faith,
In all our humanness,
for we will be led by the Spirit
Amen.

And love runs cold,
Ride on....
Bringing hope and dignity
Where most send scorn and silence.

**Ride on
Ride on in majesty**

For you, O Christ, do care
And must show us how.
On our own,

Our ambitions rival your summons
And thus threaten good faith
And neglect God's people.

In your company and at your side,
We might yet help to bandage and heal
The wounds of the world.

**Ride on,
Ride on in majesty
And take us with you.
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

Prayer of Dedication

Offer your regular giving to God.
As we bring these gifts to you, and offer you our
lives, we thank you for all your good gifts and
especially for your coming Kingdom.

Listen, read, pray, or sing along

<https://youtu.be/CUYCw0quuQ?si=uZW-2mH5oYT4yRKI>

Ride on, ride on in majesty!
Hark, all the tribes 'Hosanna!' cry;
your humble beast pursues its 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!
The wingèd squadrons of the sky
look down with sad and wondering eyes
to see the approaching sacrifice.
Ride on, ride on in majesty!
Your last and fiercest strife is nigh;
the Father, on his sapphire throne,
expects his own anointed Son.

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 power, and reign.

Henry Hart Milman (1791–1868)

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Closing Prayer :

Gracious God, bless each one of us
and send us out in the power of your Spirit,
that we might grow
deeper in wisdom,
more passionate in faith,
and more loving towards
ourselves and others.

In the name of Christ, we pray

Amen