

Sermon – Palm Sunday
Zechariah 9 and Psalm 118 verses and Luke 19:29-42
Triumphal entry

(An audio recording of this sermon is NOT available at the following link:
<https://www.northwestchchparish.org.nz/sound>)

Jo

Reading (from Zechariah 9 and Psalm 118)

Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!

Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!

Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he,

Humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous:

The Lord has done mighty things!

This is the day that the Lord has made!

Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

Gospel Reading: *An adaptation of Luke 19:29-42*

As Jesus and his friends approached Jerusalem, and came to Bethany and Bethphage, Jesus sent two of disciples on ahead, saying to them:

'Go to the village ahead of you, and there you will find a colt tied, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks, 'Why are you doing this?' tell him, 'the Lord needs it, and will send it back shortly'.

They went, and found a colt tied just as Jesus had said. As they untied it, the people standing there said: 'What are you doing?'

They answered as Jesus told them to, and the people let them go.

When they brought it to Jesus, and threw their cloaks over it for him to ride on, Jesus sat on the colt.

As Jesus rode into Jerusalem, people spread palm branches on the road, and many put their cloaks on the ground too.

The people who went ahead of him, and those who followed him shouted,

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

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David.

Hosanna in the highest.

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, Teacher, rebuke your disciples'.

'I tell you,' he replied, 'if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.'

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, **'If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace - but now it is hidden from your eyes.**

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Who doesn't like a good parade?

The Santa parade at the end of November- taking the kids, grandkids, nieces and nephews? On a hot summers day. Magic!

Or a ticker tape parade when they bring home the America's Cup?

Celebrating with the team? Splendid!

Or an ANZAC parade with veterans marching past to the sound of the band? Honouring- moving!

How about a royal parade with the Queen greeting the crowds.

Have you ever lined the streets and waited for a royal parade? Exciting!

Have you cheered and shouted hooray?

Waved a flag or a hand as those on parade pass by?

Did you get caught up in the excitement?

Could you feel the swell of the crowd pressing in on you?

Were you swayed by the crowd mentality?

In the time of Jesus as people made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover festival along long winding dusty roads from all over Israel they were looking for a king. The time was ripe for change. They had watched Jesus heal and set people free, they had seen the miracles he performed, heard his teachings and they were ready. Ready for a parade, ready with their palms to wave, throwing their coats on the ground- not for Santa, not for sporting hero's, not for returned service men and women, but for royalty- they were looking for a king and Jesus came into town – riding on a donkey. A colt who hadn't been ridden before. And yet it welcomed him on its back with no objection.

The adulation that the crowds gave to Jesus as he rode into Jerusalem was exuberant and heart-felt – when the Pharisees tried to quash it Jesus said even the rocks would cry out if he tried to silence the people. The whole of creation understood who Jesus was and what was about to be achieved on the cross.

The people were caught up in the excitement of this triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Throwing cloaks on the ground was what you did for royalty. You didn't throw your cloaks on the dusty middle-eastern ground for a friend or a family member – you did it for royalty. You don't cut branches from trees and wave them because you feel elated, you do it to welcome a king. 200 years before Judas Maccabaeus defeated the Syrian King Antiochus Epiphanes, entered Jerusalem and cleansed and rebuilt the temple and the people waved ivy and palm branches as they sang hymns of praise. This dynasty lasted 100 years. Now with the Romans occupying Israel the people were looking for someone to deliver them again and they truly believed Jesus was the King of the Jews- the one who would set them free from this tyrannical rule and bring them peace. Hosanna – a Hebrew word that mixes exuberant praise to God with a prayer that God would save his people and to do so right away.

Jesus the King of Kings –a humble king with a kingdom not of this world but Lord over creation. All the expectations of his earthly kingship were about to be challenged in the week ahead. The people wanted a king to set them free from Rome. They wanted their country back. Here was someone coming with such potential to meet their needs. To bring political overthrow. And so they cheered-full of expectation and hope. Full of fervour.

And yet Jesus as he looked out over Jerusalem at the top of the hill he knew the fickle nature of the people of God. This nation that longed for peace and yet refused to believe in the one who had come to bring them peace. Jesus knew what lay ahead. And he steeled himself to complete the journey. It wasn't long before the shouts of hosanna turned to cries of Crucify.

Are we those who get excited about our Lord and shout Hosanna with the crowd when all goes well, all goes our way, when God fulfils our expectations? Do we offer exuberant praise to God who comes to save us?

And are we those who stay the distance when our expectations are challenged – do we journey with Jesus and share in his suffering on the cross as he laid down his life for us.

Do we want a shallow peace that comes from feeling good when everything is going right or do we welcome the peace that comes even in troubled times because we believe in the Prince of Peace, when we know the power of the cross that bought us peace. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The world longs for peace. That has been made so evident in this past month as we stand by and watch the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The nations of the world gather to discuss a way of peace- fragile ceasefires are sought by leaders as they negotiate. Pressure is put on Russia as sanctions escalate from many nations.

The hope is this will bring Russia to its knees and stop this bloody, destructive invasion of neighbours as their country is all but destroyed. The war crimes and atrocities that are being committed against innocent civilians- men, women and children is in-your-face evidence that the human race is just as depraved as it was in the times of the cruelty of Roman Rule. Just in need of a saviour, not one that comes and overthrows nations or enemies but one that rescues the human heart from sin. It is unbelievable that the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church continues to sanction this attack. If you are praying for this situation and I hope you are pray that those who claim to be Christians in the midst of this conflict are on their knees crying out to God to bring a peace that will last, a peace that the world can't give, a peace that recognises our human sin and aggression towards others and brings repentant hearts, and decisive action to bring this war to an end.

Jesus longed for his people to let him gather them under his wings like a mother hen gathers her chicks and protects them. He longed for them to believe he had come to save them. Their great enthusiasm for his kingship did not last, when they followed him through the Passover festival and watched him be arrested by the Romans – their hopes and dreams were dashed, they wanted a triumphant king, and their shouts of Hosanna turned to crucify, crucify in the short space of a week. And only a few remained loyal to the king of kings and prince of peace.

Are we with Jesus this Holy week? Are we willing to go the distance with him in his suffering? Will we remain loyal to him when things don't go our way? Will we be those who give him our praise and thanks, our worship when the going gets tough and we don't understand what he is doing in our lives? Will our worship extend from Sundays to the way we live? Jesus said true worship is about how we treat others- the lost, the lonely, the poor, and the dispossessed. I invited you to bring a coat or jacket, or warm jersey today to lay at the feet of Jesus as we worship him but to reach out beyond our walls as we give to others, as we extend kindness to those who have little. Last week Ruth challenged us to consider how we can be hospitable to others in small ways and big. Through the gift of our time, our finances, our encouragement. We may do this through supporting other agencies who assist many in need, we may do this by phoning a friend, or someone we don't know so well, we may do this through an invitation to share a meal, or a cuppa, or a walk in the sunshine.

As we journey through this week to the cross and through to the glorious resurrection of our Lord, may we be those who worship him with our whole heart, with our lives and offer the hope we have in our king of kings and Lord of Lords to those we share life with. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. That was and is Jesus and it is us through the power of his Spirit at work in us. Go in the name of Jesus bringing hope to a broken world. Amen.