

Welcome to Palm Sunday Worship from Strathtay Church with the Rev Neil Glover

Palm Sunday is the beginning of Holy Week, when we walk each day with Jesus on the road to the Cross. Let's join the crowds today with our imagined palm branches to greet our coming King.

Our opening praise is CH4 Number 365: Ride on Ride on in Majesty

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!
The angel armies 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
awaits 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.

Words: Henry Hart Milman (1791-1868)
Music: John Bacchus Dykes (1823-76)

Opening Prayer

Gracious God,

Palm Sunday heralds the beginning, the new chapter,

When Christ's story becomes our story

And so we come to you on this Palm Sunday

Our hearts full in the knowledge of the sacrifice, redemption and resurrection to
come -

These events which are the cornerstone of our church, our faith.

For the wonder and mystery of it all, Lord,

We give you thanks and praise.

But we are helpless, Lord,

Helpless because we are heedless,

Heedless of your Word,

Full of our own wisdom, going our own way.
Forgive us, Lord, reach out the everlasting arms,
Catch us and keep us
Rooted in your Word,
Guided by your Spirit,
So that we hear, loud and clear, the narrative of the Passion,
So that, by your Holy Spirit, we may be your light in the present darkness of our
troubled world.
In the name of Jesus, we ask this. Amen

Our Bible reading is from the Gospel of John Chapter 12 verses 12-30 NIV.

The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the king of Israel!" Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: "Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him. Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!" Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus. Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me. "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." The crowd that was there and

heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine.

Sermon: Kings

I want us to begin our thinking this morning by going to a sight that many of us will have driven past many times, without knowing it's here. It's just round this corner here in Logierait.....

It's this post-box, it's green, and it's in the insignia not of Queen Elizabeth but of King George VI, the last king to rule over these lands.

Before him lie 40 Scottish kings (and by my calculation 2 Queens). And 9 Kings of Great Britain and 3 Queens.

There have been Kenneths, Duncans, Roberts, James, one MacBeth and 6 Georges.

I struggle to become too enthusiastic about Kings, I'm not a rabid republican, but neither am I a mad royalist.

I don't know if I would have made much of a Jacobite, fighting for the Jameses.

And yet perhaps in a deeper time, before the possibility of democracy, you needed a king.

You needed a king to pull back the chaos of the world.

You needed a king who was attached to you in some way, who wasn't going to make you a slave, or who came as a foreign invader, or a distant Emperor.

And certainly, Kings like this man here, George VI, who was infused with a sense of duty and of service.

When you read the scriptures, you needed a good king,
A good king to keep your enemies away, to keep you safe,
A good king to guard against the chaos of anarchy,
A good king to ensure that justice was administered fairly,
A good king who was your own king,
A good king to inspire the great myth and story of the nation,
A good king to gather you into a community.

And, actually, the more bad kings you experienced,
the more you wanted a Good one.

That's why there are branches being cut from the palm trees,

That's why the crowd gathers.
They are tired of a life of being scared.
They are tired of a life of being exploited.
They are tired of living in a story where the bad guys win.

And they dare,
They dare to give voice to their biggest hopes,
so they tear down the palms

And they shout about kings.

They say, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord,
the King of Israel."

The King, The King, The King.

Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion,
Your king is coming.

Do not be **afraid**,
Your king is coming.

To yearn for a king,
is to notice that there are many things around me that I cannot control.
It is to notice something that goes back to the beginning of the Bible,
that there is the threat of chaos.
There is the threat that there is no sense to this world,
and, if there is no sense to the world, then you cannot live.

There is no future that can be anticipated.
There is no threat that does not always have to be guarded against.
There is no space in which can flourish dreams and poetry and crops and the next
generation.
There is no home whose walls cannot be knocked down.
There is no violence which cannot be restrained by justice.

That is why you need the king
to hold off chaos, to bring justice, to bring order.

You don't want a tyrant - a dictator who is drunk with power
tells you what to do.
You want a king, who holds off chaos, who holds off violence,
who holds the planet as a place where you can live.

I am starting to get a little enthusiastic about kings.

But there is one miracle, one sign, that seems to dominate this crowd of palm branch wavers more than any other.

It is that this king has raised Lazarus from the dead.

All kings have limits.
They can bring about justice,
but this king has an ability to reach beyond to the most chaotic parts of all being,
the most fearful parts.

The chaos of disease with its random threat,
The chaos of the mind,
The chaos of the demonic.

All the things that we most truly fear, in the pit of our stomach,
About others, about our very selves.
He seems to be able to reach to that place with his king.

Do not be afraid, Daughter of Zion,
Look your king is coming.

So the invitation of Palm Sunday is to wave our palms
for the idea of kings,
the king who creates the space in which we can live.

Do you crave your flourishing
away from your fear of test results?
Away from your fear that the decision you are hanging on may wreck you?
Away from a destructive enemy? Oh we *do* have enemies, the Christian command is
not to *not* have enemies; it's to love them,

To wave, to say, "Here comes the king!"

And then there is the donkey.

What about the donkey...
What about the king on the donkey?

This almost comedy, this satire, this desire not to be enamoured by power....

For this king recognises that it is kingship with a gentleness, a humility.

True kingship is not about the acquisition of power,
the ability to pull lever A - it is a gentler thing.

This is something that I believe very much about the spiritual life.
It is not about acquiring the fire of the gods as a possession.
It is not about acquiring super-powers.
It is about the power of a gentler life.

“Blessed are the meek,” said Jesus “for they will inherit the earth.”

That is the mystery - that we cannot fix each other,
even Kings and Queens.
What we *can* do is allow the Spirit to move through us.
That is how change occurs, that is how we acquire power,
That is how we become kings.

So the challenge here is for quirky power.
It is the power of going to the place of danger.
It is the power that sits alongside, not commands from above -
that power!

Oh, there is such great power for us, if we, somehow, let go of it.

That is the power of the donkey king,
who will fool us into believing in the place that is defeated,
who fools us by taking us to the cross,
who fools us until we see that the kingdom is come through a persistent, knowing
gentleness of power.

Romanian Communism was brought down by a candle-lit protest.
South African Apartheid was brought down through a man who went to prison for 27
years.

And George VI, King George, was lauded for his speeches, his words,
even though he struggled through his adult life with a stutter
like the great leader of Jewish liberation, Moses,
who spoke with a stutter.

There is great, great power in the human life.
There is power to participate in the kingdom.
It is not by grabbing,
It is the one who rides on a donkey.

That is what changed us.

And it's through that that we will change.

AMEN

Our next hymn is CH4 Number 367: Hosanna, loud Hosanna!

1. Hosanna, loud hosanna
the little children sang;
through pillared court and temple
the lovely anthem rang.
To Jesus, who had blessed them,
close folded to his breast,
the children sang their praises,
the simplest and the best.

2. From Olivet they followed
mid an exultant crowd,
the victory palm branch waving,
and chanting clear and loud.
The Lord of earth and heaven
rode on in lowly state,
nor scorned that little children
should on his bidding wait.

3. "Hosanna in the highest!"
That ancient song we sing,
for Christ is our Redeemer,
the Lord of heaven, our King.
O may we ever praise him
with heart and life and voice,
and in his blissful presence
eternally rejoice.

Prayer for Others

Jesus Christ,

Ride on, Ride on
With the power of grace
The sovereignty of your kindness
Your irresistible mercy
To make this world new.

Come to bring the landless a home.
Come to bring the silenced a hearing.

Come to bring the imprisoned to freedom.
And let the whole earth cry "Hosanna,
Hosanna,
The king has come!"

May you come to bring the justice of your kingdom.

Ride on, Ride on Lord Jesus
To be the king our hopes have prayed for,

To bring peace into the world's chaos,
To bring change where only the worst is expected,
To gather your people,
To establish the goodness of your reign.

In the silence, we ask you to hear our prayer...

Silence

And now hear us in the words of Jesus:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
Forever and ever. AMEN

This Sunday is also known as Passion Sunday. As we sing our final hymn, let's prepare ourselves to reflect on Holy Week.

Our closing hymn is CH4 Number 283: O sacred head, sore wounded,

1.O sacred Head once wounded,
With grief and pain weighed down,
How scornfully surrounded
With thorns, Thine only crown!
How pale art Thou with anguish,
With sore abuse and scorn!
How does that visage languish
Which once was bright as morn!

2.O Lord of Life and Glory,
What bliss till now was Thine!
I read the wondrous story,
I joy to call Thee mine.
Thy grief and Thy compassion
Were all for sinners' gain.
Mine, mine was all transgression,
But Thine the deadly pain.

3. What language shall I borrow
To praise Thee, heavenly Friend,
For this Thy dying sorrow,
Thy pity without end?
Lord, make me Thine for ever,
Nor let me faithless prove.
O let me never, never
Abuse such dying Love!

4. Be near me Lord, when dying,
O show Thyself to me.
And, for my succour flying,
Come, Lord, to set me free.
These eyes, new faith receiving,
From Jesus shall not move,
For he who dies believing
Dies safely through Thy Love.

Benediction.

Go into Holy Week, walking in the footsteps of Christ.
May facing hard things allow transformation of your being
that Easter light might be born in you.

The blessing of the God of light,
Creator, Guide and Inspirer,
rest and remain with you now and forevermore.

AMEN.