



The Church of Scotland

Weekly Worship
28th March 2021

Taking part in today's service:-

Rt Rev Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly, The Church of Scotland
Derya, Tunay and Kerem Ersoy, Forfar: Lawson Memorial
Lorna Buchan, Youth & Family Worker, Orchardhill Parish Church
Rev Karen Fenwick, Forfar: Lawson Memorial
Rev Keith Blackwood, Aberdeen: Mannofield
With music from Reawaken Hymns and Diocese of St David's, The Church in Wales.

Introduction – The Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly

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

Hi, everybody. It's Palm Sunday. Certainly one of the most exciting days in the Christian year as we remember and try to imagine ourselves into that scene as Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem by those adoring crowds. We know well, don't we? They laid their cloaks before him and cut palm branches to wave to honour him, and yet we know what came later in the week. The same crowds began to cry out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" This is the beginning of the last week of Jesus' life. And so as we worship today in song and in prayer and in reading and reflection, let us open ourselves to Jesus that we might be near to him and him to us through the whole of this week.

Let us worship God.

Hymn – 'All Glory, Laud and Honour' performed by Reawaken Hymns

All glory, laud, and honour
To thee, Redeemer, King
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring
Thou art the King of Israel
Thou David's royal Son
Who in the Lord's name comest
The King and Blessed One

All glory, laud, and honour
To thee, Redeemer, King
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring
The company of angels



Are praising Thee on high
And mortal men and all things
Created make reply

All glory, laud, and honour
To thee, Redeemer, King
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring
To Thee, before Thy passions
They sang their hymns of praise
To Thee, now high exalted
Our melody we raise

Prayers of Adoration and Confession – The Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair

Loving Lord, from that moment when Jesus approached the fishermen at Galilee, you've been in the business of calling us to follow in his footsteps. You have set a path before us. It is the way of life. And you have instructed us not to turn from it to the left or to the right. And yet the truth is that all too often, we go our own way. Perhaps telling ourselves that we know best, that there's a shortcut, that there's an easier way, that everybody else is going that way. Forgive us, Lord that we have not followed obediently. Yes, Lord, forgive us, we pray and by your Spirit, strengthen us that in all the days to come we might follow more faithfully, that we might be more so the disciples you need us to be, and yes, especially through this holy week, might we find the strength to stay closely with Jesus; not falling asleep, not denying, not betraying, but being faithful and loving as Jesus calls us to be. These in all our prayers we ask in Jesus' name, amen.

Scripture Reading – Derya and Tunay Ersoy, Forfar: Lawson Memorial

The reading is Mark 11:1-11: the triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

"As they approached Jerusalem near the towns of Bethphage and Bethany, they came to the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent two of his disciples on ahead with instructions. 'Go to the village there ahead of you. As soon as you get there, you will find a colt tied up that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. And if someone asks you why you're doing that, say that the master needs it and he will send it back at once.' So they went and found the colt outside in the street tied to a door of a house. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders asked them, 'What are you doing untying that colt?' They answered just as Jesus had told them and the crowd let them go.

They brought the colt to Jesus, threw their cloaks over the animal, and Jesus got on. Many people spread their cloaks on the road while others cut branches in the field and spread them on the road. The people who were in front and those who followed behind began to shout, 'Praise God. God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord. God bless the coming kingdom of King David, our father. Praise be to God!' Jesus entered Jerusalem, went into the temple and looked around at everything. But since it was already late in the day, he went out to Bethany with the twelve disciples."



All Age Talk - Lorna Buchan, Youth & Family Worker, Orchardhill Parish Church

Hello! Today, I would like to ask you to think of some famous people. Shout them out. Maybe you're thinking of a film star or a great musician or maybe a famous sports person, your favourite footballer or athlete. Now unfortunately, I cannot hear what names you are shouting out but I'm going to hazard a guess that there will be quite a difference across the different generations watching. My 10 year old would choose a singer I've probably never heard of, or a YouTuber that I have definitely never heard of. It makes me feel a bit like an old fuddy duddy when kids talk about TikTokers they love. And by the same token, my children have likely never heard all of the famous people that I'm thinking of. In fact, they'd probably roll their eyes, walk away, saying how embarrassing I am. But that's okay. Every generation has its heroes and its idols, and that has been the way for a long, long time. I do think though that we probably all have a similar perception of how the famous live.

Do we all think they have fancy cars, big mansions, staff to do all the chores, and lots and lots of money? Some may think that sounds amazing. I'm not quite so sure but now let's think, who's the most famous of all? Who has stood the test of time? Who has been admired over many many generations, and who continues to be an idol? Yes, of course, it's Jesus loved irrespective of what age we are.

So being so famous and admired means he must have had all the benefits to go with that. Right? Well, when we go back to the beginning, we know that he was born in a stable, hardly what you would expect for the future King. And let's fast forward to later in his life, in fact, a very special time in the Christian calendar that begins today, Palm Sunday, the start of Holy Week, leading up to Good Friday. On this special day, Jesus was travelling to Jerusalem where crowds were gathered celebrating Passover. They were cheering and chanting, so excited to see this man, Jesus, who was going to be their saviour. Praise God! God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna!

Now nowadays, if we saw clouds gathering and cheering like that we would be looking out for a limo, a red carpet, bodyguards, not with Jesus though. On this day, Jesus asked two of his disciples to go and get a donkey for him to ride in on from a nearby village. He didn't even have his own transport. He told the disciples that if anyone questioned them, they were to say, "The master needs it and we'll send it back at once." So he rode into the crowds onto a red carpet. Well, not quite. The crowds did lay a carpet, but they were of palm leaves which they laid down for him, and coats, not quite as glamorous as you might expect for this VIP, but Jesus didn't care about all these materialistic things and neither did the crowds. He was there to save them, and this he did. Jesus used his status in such a selfless way. He didn't need things or symbols to do this. His status was shown by his behaviours and the way he treated people, not by his possessions.

Jesus' stable was good enough for him to be born in. He did not need a mansion. The only crown Jesus wore was one of thorns not long after Palm Sunday. No red carpet for Jesus, however, I'm sure he was honoured that the crowds made a carpet of palm leaves and coats for him. No servants for Jesus. He did have his disciples, they did help him and were



his companions, but they were not servants living in different quarters. Jesus still knew how to make an entrance. No fancy car was required for this. A borrowed donkey was sufficient. So it doesn't matter how old you are, what your interests are, where you live, what car you have, what clothes you wear. The most famous person will always be the most amazing hero for us. We have welcomed this VIP into our hearts, and for this, we are truly blessed.

Let us pray. Dear God, thank you on this most special of days for your Son who became a saviour for everyone. Thank you also for your comforting arms around us as we navigate our way through these difficult times. Amen.

Song – “Jesus rode into town on a donkey”

Jesus rode into town on a donkey
Jesus rode into town as king
Jesus rode into town on donkey
And the people gathered round to sing

Sing hosanna, sing hosanna
Sing hosanna to the king of kings
Sing hosanna, sing hosanna
Sing hosanna to the king

All the people went wild with excitement
As the king and his friends went by
All the people went wild with excitement
Lifting up green branches to the sky

Sing hosanna, sing hosanna
Sing hosanna to the king of kings
Sing hosanna, sing hosanna
Sing hosanna to the king

And they laid down their coats on the roadway
Which was dusty and hard and dry
And they laid down their coats on the roadway
As the celebrated king rode by

Sing hosanna, sing hosanna
Sing hosanna to the king of kings
Sing hosanna, sing hosanna
Sing hosanna to the king



Sermon – Rev Karen Fenwick, Forfar: Lawson Memorial

Hello, I'm Karen Fenwick from Lawson Memorial Parish Church. And it is so good that we could take a little time out together this morning because that's what we've been missing, time together. We've missed out on all kinds of celebrations this last year from the birthdays to the weddings, to any opportunity to come together to celebrate. You'll notice in my mind, celebration means cake. And it's always good just to take time out even if it's to meet with family and friends and have a little bit of a celebration together. It has to be said that the people of Jesus' day also loved to celebrate. It was hard for them. They were a nation living under occupation. There was a Roman force that was there and that imposed on their ordinary everyday lives but they still had their religious festivals, and it was a big thing. They celebrated the goodness of God, the God who loved them, the God who rescued them from being slaves in Egypt and brought them out of captivity to be a nation. They celebrated the past, the wonderful things that God had done for them. And so as they're heading into Jerusalem, it's for a religious festival. There is this attitude of celebration. They'll get together with family, with friends and they will come and celebrate the goodness of God, and that was important.

Mark and the other gospels tell us that things have been building up for Jesus and the disciples. Jesus has been doing some amazing things. And on top of these amazing things, comes a crowd who also want to celebrate what he's been doing. They're starting to kind of put two and two together and suss out that this could be the one. They have been waiting a long time for God to send his chosen one, the Messiah. They're longing for someone from the past like King David, under whom they prospered as a nation, someone who would come and be a mighty King and get rid of all of these oppressors and help them to be a nation once more. And there are many in the crowd who are starting to think that Jesus is the one. And as he comes into Jerusalem on a donkey and it looks as though this has been organised, they go and they get the donkey that he needs, so they bring this donkey and he comes in on the donkey, it evokes a kind of a memory in the crowd.

Look, those of us who live here in Scotland, north of the border, we know all about evoking a memory. For example, all we need is to hear this sound of an accordion, and already we're looking from side to side to see if there's anyone who breathes, that we can grab and run onto the dance floor with. The memory is there, it evokes it and it demands a response from us. And in the same way, there will be those in the crowd who have heard about their history.

Their history was important to them. And it evokes a memory of something that happened 200 years before when someone else, Judas Maccabeus, rides into Jerusalem. For him, it would have been on a horse. Him and his people had defeated the Syrian army and he was riding into Jerusalem triumphant to go to the temple and cleanse the temple and rebuild it and enable them to be a nation once again. And this memory that is evoked also stirs them to do something else that happened at that time. For at that time, they picked up palm branches and cried out hosanna for the one who had conquered. And so once again, they pick up their palm branches, they put down their cloaks, and they celebrate, "Praise to God for the one who is coming in the name of the Lord." For others in the crowd, that wouldn't be a very good thing to hear because there will be other people there, Roman leaders, Jewish leaders, who were going to feel very threatened by what is just happening. You see, people don't put down their cloaks or wave a palm branch for just anyone. It has to be someone who's considered to be royalty.



There's a signal being sent here. I'm sure Mark, when he wrote the gospel, is convinced that yes, Jesus is of the lineage of King David. He is the true and rightful King; he is the Messiah, And Jesus himself knows that he is riding into a storm. So while the crowds are shouting and waving their palm branches, there are others already plotting. It is the perfect storm.

And for us here in 2021, we have lived through a perfect storm and it's not over for us yet. It's been a perfect storm that's involved climate change, involved our modern lifestyles of cruises or business travel, flying from one country to another, and it's allowed a very deadly disease to spread all around the world. And that has had tragic consequences that has impacted on all of us in one way or another. We have also lived through this perfect storm.

This time last year, I was wondering, how can I hold us together as church family? And I came up with this idea. Let's get everyone to draw round their palm and colour it in green and email it to me. We weren't allowed to come together but they could send it to me. Now I have to be honest and say, I hadn't properly thought this through because I'd forgotten that that meant I was going to have to print out all of these palms and cut round them, yes, every finger. But from that, I produced our own palm branches and our own palm tree. Okay, I'm taking a liberty, but you know what I mean. And it was as I was putting the palms onto each branch, just because I'd photocopy them in a particular way and printed them, I realised that I had families. It was like a family tree, if you like. Branches that had an entire family on and people who were on their own, well, that didn't matter because there were other parts of the church family here that they could be with and be part of. For the people who were there waving their palm branches to Jesus as he came in and cheering and singing praise to God, they were giving a particular message, yes. They were recognising that he's the one, the chosen one, the Messiah, the king, the king. However, there's something a little bit more as well. They were waving those palm branches in a sense to say, that we're part of this. He's not just a king, he's not just any king, he's our king, he's my king.

As we come together today to celebrate Palm Sunday, it's hard for us. We can't go back in time and pick up a palm branch. Yes, we can have our symbolic kind of a palm tree, but it was hard for us. How can we truly celebrate and say yes, he's not just a king, he's my king, he's our king. Well, we need to remember that when Jesus came in, he came in on a donkey, not on a stallion as the king before him. Jesus is sending a great signal here that God turns things upside down. He doesn't build on the world's values of power and riches and fame and celebrity. He builds on the values of love and forgiveness and grace and mercy. If we want to celebrate this Palm Sunday and wave those flags, the palm branches for Jesus, we do it by waving the flag of our life: the things that we say, the way that we act, the things that we do, all built on those foundations that Jesus has laid for us. And one more exciting thing. He doesn't expect us to do it on our own. By the power of the Holy Spirit, he helps us to live his way. He helps us to shine for him in our communities, waving those flags of praise through our own personal lives as we help him to build God's kingdom right where we are.

As we close today, Kerem is going to say a wee prayer for us.

“Let us pray. Teach us Lord to walk with you through sadness and pain, to joy and happiness, amen.”



Prayer of Intercession - Rev Keith Blackwood, Aberdeen: Mannofield

Let us pray. Lord God, the people of Jerusalem sang praises and welcomed Jesus. They spread out a carpet of palms and cloaks and rejoiced at his coming. Their souls who are full of craving, a longing for a change of fortune, for an experience of divine presence. For too long, they had been living in fear and darkness. And with the first few glimpses of your Son's new style of authority over the malaise of this world, they put their hope in him and in your redemptive love. Today, we equally place our trust in you and we thank you for the glimpses of your glory that we see in our creation and across humanity.

We come with a deep sense of thanksgiving for all in life that is good. Creation bursts forth with goodness. It's beauty and splendour remind us of how blessed we are that you took time to create the landscapes that please our senses, the bountiful fields, the waterways and oceans, the diversity of human beings. Let us not take such creative life for granted. Humanity bursts with natural ability and giftedness. Putting the human resources of intellect, creativity, strength, conscience, intuitiveness, feeling and faith together leaves us in awe at how incredible your gift of human life is at a personal level and together as a family of your people. Let us not take such created life for granted. Lord, sadly we know that despite the potential of creation and human life, the reality is that not all experience these good things in the way that others can.

Today, we call upon your Spirit to lead us towards deeds of goodness and justice that the poor may be lifted by our work, that the sick and the needy may be healed by the comfort and support you offer, that the grieving find comfort and are led to see the opportunities that are still awaiting as we offer them support and gentle encouragement. That the voiceless are given a voice by our readiness to advocate for them. That those who are oppressed are set free by our campaigning for a fairer world. Lord, your concern for all your children is vast.

We rejoice in your unconditional love. Let such love as exuded by the crowds who greeted your Son be evident in our faith and in our good works for we are loved, all are loved. Amen.

Hymn – “Ride on, ride on in majesty” – Diocese of St David’s, The Church in Wales.

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, thy triumphs now begin
O'er captive death and conquered sin

Ride on, ride on in majesty
The winged squadrons of the sky
Look down with sad and wondering eyes
To see the approaching sacrifice



Ride on, ride on in majesty
Thy 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 thy meek head to mortal pain
Then take, O God, your power and reign

Blessing – The Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly

Go in peace and may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with you all now and forevermore. Amen.

Well, you'll see, I'm already for the journey, and a journey it is from now until Easter Sunday. You can't get to Easter Sunday without going through Holy Week. And so, I invite you to join me in that journey every morning of this week from 8:00 AM on the Church of Scotland social media pages. You'll find a reflection just right for each day of the week. And then beyond that, come with me because yes, tomorrow morning, I am setting out on a week of pilgrimage, journeying towards Easter.

Come with me. You'll find updates throughout the day on the moderator's Facebook page and all the while, thinking together of all that Jesus went through in that last week as we head towards Easter.

Thank you.