

**Written Service Sunday March 23rd**  
**A service of worship for use at home**  
**Prepared by Jan Davies**

Nottingham North East  
Methodist Circuit  
WWW.NNEMETHODIST.ORG.UK



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**Palm Sunday - Where Two Roads Meet**

**Introductory Verses:**

Give thanks to the Lord, because He is good,  
And His love is eternal.  
Let the people of Israel say, "His love is eternal!"  
Let the priests of God say, "His love is eternal!"  
Let all who worship Him say "His love is eternal!" (Psalm 118:1-4)

**Hymn** Singing the Faith: 238 Lead us heavenly Father lead us

Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us o'er the world's tempestuous sea;  
Guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us, for we have no help but thee,  
Yet possessing every blessing if God our Father be.

Saviour breathe forgiveness o'er us; all our weakness thou dost know,  
Thou didst tread this earth before us; thou didst feel its keenest woe;  
Tempted, taunted yet undaunted, through the desert thou didst go.

Spirit of our God descending, fill our hearts with heavenly joy,  
Love with every passion blending, pleasure that can never cloy;  
Thus provided, pardoned, guided, nothing can our peace destroy.

**Prayers of Adoration and Praise**

Jesus, our Lord, with all the people of Jerusalem, and with Christians the whole world over,  
We acclaim you as King.

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

If we had been there that morning; would we have spread our cloaks at your feet?  
Waved our palm branches over our head, and worshipped you as our Messiah.

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

As we join with your people all over the world this morning, we offer ourselves to your service.  
We adore you with our whole hearts; we worship you as our Saviour.

**Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name  
of the Lord! Hosanna to the Son of David!**

Hosanna to the Son of David! We greet you as the fulfillment of all our hopes.  
You alone hold the keys to the Kingdom. You alone can show the world,  
How leaders should lead, how kings ought to rule,  
How power should be exercised, how politicians ought to serve,  
How priests should minister, how ordinary people can be saints.

**You are worthy of honour and power,  
Yet you come to us in meekness;  
You deserve worship and glory**

### **Yet you come in humility.**

Accept our Hosannas this day. May they be accompanied by lives of obedience  
And deeds of service and reconciliation  
In your name  
**Amen.**

### **Reading - Mark 11:1-10**

As they approached Jerusalem, near the towns of Bethphage and Bethany, they came to the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent two of His disciples ahead with these instructions: "Go to the village there ahead of you. As soon as you get there, you will see you will find a colt that had never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. And, if someone asks you why you are doing that, tell him that the Master needs it and will send it back at once."

So they went and found a colt in the street, tied to the door of the house. As they were untying it some bystanders asked them, "What are you doing, untying that colt?"

They answered just as Jesus had told them, and the bystanders let them go. They brought the colt and threw their cloaks over the animal and Jesus got on. Many of the people spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches in the fields 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 God!"

### **Reading - Zechariah 9:9-10**

Rejoice, rejoice, people of Zion!  
Shout for joy, you people of Jerusalem!  
Look, your King is coming to you!  
He comes triumphant and victorious, but humble and riding on a colt, the foal of a donkey.  
The LORD says,  
"I will remove war chariots from Israel,  
And take the horses from Jerusalem;  
The bows used in battle will be destroyed.  
Your King will make peace among the nations;  
He will rule from sea to sea,  
From the River Euphrates to the ends of the earth.

### **Hymn - Singing the Faith 263: Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest**

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 your name, with hearts full of  
praise;  
Be exalted, O Lord my God!  
Glory to the King of Kings! *(Sing through twice)*

### **Sermon**

#### **Introduction:**

There is a traditional way of looking at the Christian life and seeing it as a journey along a road. Have you ever looked back at your life and seen the decisions you have made that determined the path that you have followed. Try it sometime – it is a good exercise - and ask yourself 'what influenced me to take the path you did?'

- The path that Jesus was travelling was chosen right at the beginning of His ministry when He was tempted by Satan in the wilderness. He decided not to choose the path of political power; not the path of wonderworking miracle man and certainly not the path of compromise with evil.
- But the temptations didn't stop once the decision had been made. Jesus was always being tempted to leave the path He had chosen. In fact the temptations got stronger the nearer He got to the end. The crowd wanted to make Him king, but He walked away. He asked people not to talk about His miracles but they didn't listen and the crowds followed looking for more wonders. In Gethsemane He longed for a way out and even on the cross He was taunted about saving Himself. But Jesus had chosen the path of self-sacrifice and He would not be diverted.
- The entry into Jerusalem on that Sunday was a continuation of His chosen road and it was planned in detail to declare to the crowd who He was and what He had come for. Jesus was following the tradition of some of the Prophets like Jeremiah and Ezekiel who sometimes acted out their message. Everything He did that day was symbolic. The Jews were people who understood symbols. His message should have been clear. He clearly declared His Messiahship. He made sure that He fitted the Prophecy of Zechariah perfectly. He was saying 'I am the one you are expecting - the one who was sent by God.' He also declared His Kingship. He rode into the capital city on donkey. We tend to see a donkey as a lowly animal, as a beast of burden but in the Middle East it was an animal who was fit for a king - who comes in peace. A warrior king would come on a horse in full regalia. He was showing clearly that He was not coming to destroy Rome and rule over them like King David.
- And finally He declared His role as a priest. There is disagreement among the Gospel writers as to the number and type of donkeys. But all agree that at least one was an unbroken, unblemished young donkey. In other words one fit for ceremonial use. So, this was a **religious** and not a **political** act.

That was the road chosen by Jesus; it was one of peace and self-sacrifice. What about those people in the crowd? What about those who were shouting 'Hosannas!' that day? What did they see that day? What was the road chosen by them?

## Part One

- The crowd was made up of many people that day. Some were real disciples but there must have been many with their own agendas and who wanted to fit Jesus into that agenda. For a while it seemed that their roads were running together. However, they only saw what they wanted to see.
- My mum had a saying which said, "There's none so blind as they will not see and there's none so deaf as them who will not hear." Because of prejudice, fear or hope we do not see or hear what people are actually saying or doing. We decide beforehand what they will say or do and base our judgements on that.
- The people in the crowd saw and heard what they most wanted. What they wanted was a new King David to overcome Rome and establish a strong Jewish kingdom. They saw Jesus as that king. So, they went wild and stripped off palm branches and greeted His triumphal entry into His capital city. But Jesus and some of the crowd were following different roads.

- For Jesus, during the next few days, it was a painful road which led to rejection which in some cases turned to hatred; the agony of Gethsemane; desertion, betrayal and the Cross.....leading Jesus to utter those words on the Cross “My God, why have you forsaken me?”
- to hatred and mockery and finally the cry “Crucify Him!” The road of Jesus was hard and difficult.
- For the crowd, over the next few days it was an easier road to follow. There was mob hysteria, violence, compromise me.”
- As for the crowd? They must have looked for the call to arms. Disappointment and disillusion turned with the enemy and by Friday a sense of satisfaction and victory as they saw Him die.

## Part Two

- What does this have to say to us 20 centuries later? Well, the choices remain much the same: we can choose the more difficult road of peace, pain, love and obedience to the ‘Man of Sorrows.
- Or we can follow the easier road selfishness, dreams of glory or the compromise with evil. The great message of Holy Week is that the two roads can never be combined. There can never be a compromise or an accommodation with evil.
- Over the centuries Christians have tried to achieve good by compromise with evil; as in the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Spanish and British empires – conquered in the name of Christ and so on. Christians still try to compromise their faith with the values of society.
- But following Christ’s way can seem very hard! An advertising man would be hard pressed to sell any product which includes suffering, servanthood, pain or obedience!
- But, of course the roads didn’t stop on Good Friday. What we need to do is to look at the final destination. Yes, for Jesus there was the Cross but there was also Easter Day, resurrection, triumph and victory – and power released into the world which still continues today.
- And for the Jerusalem crowd? Rebellion bubbled away until 40 years later, in 70AD Jerusalem was destroyed and Israel ceased to exist and those who survived were scattered throughout the Roman Empire.
- **So ...** this event has many different messages depending upon where you are on your journey of faith:
  1. For those of you who are following Jesus but finding it hard going – remember the victory of Easter Day.
  2. For those of you who are attempting to follow the way of Jesus but still trying to compromise with the values of the world or to try to make Jesus fit into **their** dreams and visions – remember that the two ways don’t mix – you have to choose.
  3. And for those who are undecided about the road you are choosing to follow – look again at the final destinations of the two roads in front of you – and choose life!

## Prayers of Confession

Merciful Lord, today we are reminded of human fickleness,  
We cry 'Hosanna!' one minute and 'Death!' the next.  
We are a hot and cold humanity; unreliable and selfish.  
We have allowed Good Friday to be repeated,  
Throughout the generations,  
And across the centuries;  
We still refuse to see clearly the meaning of Palm Sunday.

**Forgive us for our hollow Hosannas;  
For seeking a God to match our dreams and private goals;  
For failing to look into the eyes of Jesus,  
To understand His heart and mind;  
For persisting in our worship of narrow horizons  
And exclusive attitudes.**

Ride into our lives,  
Turn over the tables of our prejudice,  
Put to flight our doves of deceit,  
And help us to build up our lives,  
As cities of love,  
And Temples of justice,  
Pointing to your Kingdom of liberation and joy. **Amen**

## Prayers of Intercession - A Prayer for Peace

**Jesus, you are the light of the world,  
May you shine in the darkness of violence and hatred?  
Be peace in our hearts, peace in our families.  
Be peace among our neighbours,  
Be peace among peoples of all races and religions.  
Jesus, let your light shine.**

**Jesus, you are the light of the world.**  
We pray for all caught up in violence, hatred and war.....

**Jesus, you are the light of the world.**  
We pray for our government and all world leaders.  
We pray for the governments of the world. Give them wisdom and compassion.....  
**Jesus, you are the light of the world.**  
We pray for all who are suffering because of global warming.....

**Jesus, you are the light of the world**  
We pray for all people who live in fear, through lack of the necessities of life, because of poverty, persecution or sickness.....

**Jesus, you are the light of the world.**  
We pray for this church, its mission and ministry.....  
And we pray for people we know.....

**Jesus, you are the light of the world;  
Help us to shine with your light in this dark world. Amen**

**Hymn - Singing the Faith 265: Ride on, ride on in majesty!**

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 winged 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, in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die;  
Bow your meek head to mortal pain, then take O God, your power, and reign.

### **Final Prayer**

Lord, whose touchstone is the desert and the cross,  
Draw near with your ancient strength,  
Which we experience but do not understand  
Know but never see.

**Accompany us throughout this Holy week,  
That we may face the demons, fantasies and fears which accompany us;  
So that, by journeying with Jesus  
We may, by your mercy,  
Renew our commitment to the life of Christ  
And our vocation to the way of the cross. Amen**