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From the Pastor



Friends,

'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!' – Luke 19:38

It's a joy to worship with you this Palm Sunday. This is the day in the church year that we reflect on Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem with shouts of 'Hosanna!' Some churches are creative in the ways they participate in the narrative with the shaping of palm leaves into crosses to symbolise the palms that were waived and laid down in front of Christ as he entered the Holy City. Although we won't be making palms, you'll see in my sermon that there are certainly other ways we can reflect on this famous story together.

The story also launches us into Holy Week, the week we as Christians sit in the agony of the Passion narrative before the jubilation of Resurrection Sunday, one week from now. For us as a church there are several things planned to encourage you in your worship this week...

On Wednesday, 31st March, the church sanctuary will be open for prayer from 2pm-8pm. You can come individually or as a household. Face masks, distancing and hand-sanitising stations will ensure that we remain Covid safe. There will be a number of interactive prayer stations, suitable for children too, that will help you enter into the journey of Holy Week as well as finish off our season of listening

through Lent. At set times in the day, 2pm-4pm and 6pm-7pm, I'll be there to share communion with those who would like to do so. We will use individual communion sets, which will not have been handled by anyone previously, and will be Covid safe. Please try and find time to come for a visit.

For those who would like to continue to stay at home we want to make sure there are opportunities for you to join in also. The weekly prayer meeting on the church Zoom link will meet as normal at 10.30am-11am. A pray at home sheet will be circulated with some Scriptures and other stimuli for prayer early in the week. And we are also hoping to do an illustrated video of the stations that will be posted on the church Facebook page on Wednesday afternoon.

On Good Friday, at 10.30am, we are invited to join with the other Churches of the Nazarene in England and Wales for a combined worship service which will include communion. The service is a huge team effort and our own contribution includes a worship piece by Jack and Leah Bolton. This will take place on Zoom and Facebook and the details are below. Note that this will be a different link from our own church Zoom link.

Next Sunday is Easter, Resurrection Sunday, and we have been working hard to bring some new elements to our online worship including some new music and a special Easter celebration by the children in the church!

That's a lot of activity in comparison to the last few months. I pray that it is a sign of things to come!

Peace,
Mick



Daily Reading and Prayer Guide

Date	Reading	Pray for
Monday 29th March	Luke 3	Lucy Frost
Tuesday 30th March	Luke 4:1–30	Suzanne Gallier
Wednesday 31st March	Luke 4:31–44	Margaret Gallagher
Thursday 1st April	Luke 5:1–26	Bill, Lorraine Graham
Friday 2nd April	Luke 5:27 to 6:11	Will Graham
Saturday 3rd April	Catch up	Brenda Hambleton and family
Sunday 4th April	Luke 6:12–36	Diane Hallam

Special Prayer Requests

- ◇ Pray for Pastor Michael's dad, Mick, who recommences chemotherapy this week.
- ◇ We join with Bill Ellis who rejoices after receiving good news from the doctor this week regarding his health.
- ◇ Isobel Cave also received news from her consultant, and whilst we are thankful that early signs are encouraging, we continue to pray for her healing.
- ◇ We continue to pray for others in experiencing ill-health in these days – Jon, John, Claire.
- ◇ We continue to pray for Brenda Hambleton following Keith's funeral last week.
- ◇ Cameron, who has asked for prayer support for his studies at NTC. We pray that his relationship with God will grow stronger as he seeks to do the Lord's will.

Encounters on the Road to the Cross (5)

Palm Sunday 2021

Luke chapter 19 verses 28 to 44

I find it difficult to celebrate this story. In fact, as I read the story I find it quite a difficult story in and of itself. I find it quite a sad story, actually. Now the reason for that is in the text itself, I wonder if you picked that up. The story actually finishes with Jesus in tears, crying over the city of Jerusalem. That's not often an image we think of on Palm Sunday, is it?

Early last year, just before the pandemic and the restrictions, I got visit Israel and as part of that I got to visit Jerusalem. And while I was in Jerusalem I went up the Mount of Olives, where this story takes place. At the top of the Mount of Olives is a viewing platform that looks over the old city of Jerusalem. And as I stood on that platform I understood that I must have been around the same place as where this story took place and I found myself getting emotional.

As I reflected on the centuries of violence in the city that I looked at and considered the events that took place there pertaining to my own faith - including the death and resurrection of Jesus. It was an emotional experience. I stood where Jesus did and cried over the city.

But why was Jesus crying? It doesn't seem like a sad story at first glance, and as I've mentioned already, we tend to celebrate it as a joyous occasion with palm leaves and praise, but it does end with Jesus crying. And it tells us that he is crying because the people didn't recognise him. Now that seems strange to me because as we read the story we see people praising Jesus. Surely if they are praising him then they know who he is, right? Well, apparently not. He was weeping because the people didn't recognise him.

This is of course affirmed later on in the Bible narrative, as a week later the same people who were in this crowd would have been among the

people crying 'crucify him!' - Only 1 week later! How do you arrive there? One day you are crying Hosanna and no more than 7 days later to the same individual you are chanting crucify him? How do we get there?

Well, the people thought they were getting something different in Jesus. Their understanding of God and a saviour was very different from what Jesus came to reveal to us. They were expecting a liberator, a warrior. Someone who would come and free them from the captivity of the Romans. Scripture foretold it in Zechariah 9. History had affirmed it in the Maccabean Revolt, 150 years previous. Its leaders, after their victory, rode into Jerusalem to the waiving of palm branches. And so people when they see Jesus coming must have been thinking the same thing is happening again. But they had it completely wrong. Jesus wasn't coming to bring violence or war, he was coming with a message of peace. The people wanted violence. Later in the week they would call for Barabbas to be freed over Jesus. Violence over peace. Jesus knew all this and that is why he wept over the city. The people were hoping for a saviour of a different kind.

Now, before we are quick to criticise the crowd for this we need to realise this passage provides us with an opportunity to ask ourselves the question, 'are there times when I am guilty of this?' Not seeking a violent revolution but looking for our salvation in a different kind of saviour? Do we ever look for safety in other things? Our hope and our trust in things other than the Jesus of the Scriptures?

Finances, education, career, status, romance, sex, there are many things in our lives we might develop an unhealthy de-

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At Brooklands, we are big enough to be part of a world-wide denomination, yet small enough to invite you to make our church your home. Please visit our website and contact us if you would like to get in touch or need more information on any of our events.

During the Coronavirus pandemic, we are holding weekly services on our YouTube channel, starting at 10:30 am each Sunday.

We look forward to welcoming you to our fellowship!

Manchester Brooklands Church of the Nazarene, Registered Charity No: 1159881

pendence on - The Bible might call this idolatry. And on a day where we usually make palms and wave them and lay them down, but we can't today, are there other things in our life that we need to lay down? Things that we have put our hope in instead of a peaceful saviour.

As we think of this even more and the state of the world right now. Does this provide us with an opportunity of introspection? What are the things we are missing right now? What are the things we will pick back up when things return to normal? What will we leave down? Take the opportunity to reflect.

Holy Week is the annual reminder that this journey of following Jesus leads to death. That's what Lent is all about. So what are the things in our life that need to die? That need to be cast off and laid down in front of God?

But remember that in dying we find new, better and resurrected life!

So on this Palm Sunday, let's take it as an opportunity to admit that we sometimes get caught up in the crowd, and sometimes we put our hope and trust in the wrong thing. And so instead of laying a palm down I'm going to lay the things I've sought for safety in other than Jesus.

Like the crowd, we are so good at singing the hymns and the songs – Hosanna! - But if this story teaches us anything it reminds us that we can sing the right songs and pray the right prayers but still miss the point completely. So let's take this as an opportunity to cast off our idols and lay them before God.

Pastor Mick