

Note

This year the calendars of the churches are aligned so that we are celebrating Holy Week and Easter together: Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, and Reformed. May we all know the joy of the gospel together!

Call to Worship

Like the crowds so long ago we will praise God joyfully, saying
Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

If these disciples were silent the stones would shout aloud.
Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Prayers of Praise & Confession

Lord Jesus, on this day the people went out with palms to meet you,
and we meet you now with our prayers and our praise.
Blessed are you, for you come to us in God's name!
Blessed are you, for you inspire the deepest joy within us!
Blessed are you, for the whole company of angels and all creation sings your praise!

With the children who praised you on Palm Sunday,
with all who cried Hosanna,
with the crowds who welcomed you
and with those who danced beside you,
we offer today our joyful praise!

We offer too our prayer of confession.
We live in world suspicious of joy,
where violence too often breaks out
and in which truth can be stifled by lies.

We confess that our communities do not always welcome strangers,
provide safety for children, or peace for all the people.

We are sorry for our own sins
and for the sinfulness of the world in which we share.

We ask your forgiveness,
we hope for the grace to forgive those who sin against us,
and for the courage to forgive ourselves so that we can begin again.

Christ, who entered the city in peace and in joy,
bring your peace to us that forgiven and free,
we may cry Hosanna with a pure heart.
In your name we pray, Amen.

Jesus came to welcome and to forgive,
to bring new life and the joy of the Kingdom.
Let us receive these holy gifts with gladness! Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

All-Age Activity

Today, in our churches, we often bless and share palm crosses, to remind us of the story of this week. In some of the gospel accounts people waved branches to welcome Jesus into the city, but within days he had been arrested and crucified. So, the crosses made of palms remind us both of the joy of waving branches in welcome, but also of the sorrow of Jesus' death on a cross.

In some parts of the world, like El Salvador, Christians often make crosses out of card or wood and paint them with pictures of their own communities, saints, and lives, in bright and vivid colours. They do this to celebrate with joy what God has done in reaching out to us all in Jesus Christ, wherever we are in the world. Here is an example of a cross from El Salvador, in Latin America:



Today, on Palm Sunday, a day of celebration and rejoicing, you could make some crosses of your own and decorate them with vivid pictures of the community where *you* are.

A Prayer before the Readings

God, open us to the Holy Spirit, that we may hear your Word,
open our hearts to receive it and learn to live it in our daily lives, today and always,
Amen.

Readings

Philippians 2: 5-11 | St Luke 19:28-40

Sermon Notes

Philippians 2:5-11

These verses form one of the very oldest parts of the New Testament. They may be even older than Paul's letter, because they may be from something that he is quoting. They seem to have the shape of a kind of poem or prayer that Christians had been using to describe who Jesus was, before even Paul set pen to paper, perhaps a hymn that was sung at baptisms. It's interesting that, even though this passage is so early in the New Testament, it strongly affirms the divinity of Jesus as well as the profundity of his humanity. The passage focusses on Jesus as one who was 'in the form of God' and yet who died the death of a slave (in the Roman way of thinking the lowliest form of humankind). Here the paradox of the incarnation is made vivid. Jesus was divine and yet also human – from 'heaven' and yet absolutely bound to earth. Like the story of Palm and Passion it holds together praise and suffering, glory and self-emptying. We have our own hymns that mirror it – like 'At the name of Jesus'. Today is a day to sing praise joyfully and confidently, but also never to forget that the glorious Jesus was also the crucified Jesus, that both belong together. This could lead to a reflection about who we think Jesus is. What language would we use to write a hymn like the one Paul either wrote himself or quoted in his letter? Who is Jesus for us?

St Luke 19:28-40

Each of the four Gospels has an account of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on what we have come to call Palm Sunday. There are slight differences between them, but there is much material in common. They each use phrases from Psalm 118, to echo older stories of King David (or other kings) entering the holy city and being welcomed by cheering people. It's interesting that Luke is the only Gospel not to mention the waving of branches, but that detail is certainly there in the other three (as it is in Psalm 118).

Sometimes biblical scholars point out that, at about the same time as Jesus was entering the city, the Romans would have made a procession from their barracks outside the city

to make sure that the Passover celebrations didn't become taken over by riots or unrest. The two processions would have been entirely different; the Roman soldiers with their chariots and horses, gleaming armour and sharp swords versus the Palestinian peasants who would have followed Jesus on the donkey – a mixed company of the shabby, dusty and dishevelled. The Roman procession demonstrated the power of the Empire, and Jesus' procession the hope of an alternative rule, the reign of the God of justice, peace and love. (See *The Last Week. What the Gospels Really Teach about Jesus's Final days in Jerusalem*, by Marcus Borg and Dominic Crossan, SPCK, 2008). Do we need to ask which procession we might join?

An interesting reflection for Palm Sunday, and particularly on that phrase about 'the stones will shout aloud' can be found here:

<https://www.frederickbuechner.com/quote-of-the-day/2017/6/13/the-king-does-come>

Do the stones of our church buildings shout aloud in praise of God? Do the living stones that we are rejoice in what God has shown us in Jesus? How can we renew our praise and our worship so that it deepens true joy and faith in us and in our lives?

Affirmation of Faith

This is the gate of the Lord; those who are righteous may enter.

**I will give thanks to you, for you answered me,
and have become my salvation.**

The same stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

**This is the Lord's doing,
and it is marvellous in our eyes.**

On this day the Lord has acted; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Hosanna Lord, hosanna! Lord, send us now success.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord;
we bless you from the house of the Lord.

**God is the Lord; he has shined upon us;
Form a procession with branches up to the horns of the altar.**

You are my God, and I will thank you; You are my God and I will exalt you.

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good; His mercy endures for ever.

based on verses from Psalm 118

Offering

Let us now receive the offerings of us all and offer our lives to God.

O God, who offers us the gift of joy, we offer to you our lives and all we have, that we may be bearers of joy to each other and to your beloved world, in the name of your Son, who was received with joy, as he entered the city on this day.
Amen

Prayer Over the Crosses

whether customary palm crosses or the ones decorated in the all-age activity above

O God, may these crosses be signs of good news for us this week, and bring blessing to our homes and our lives. Let them reveal to us the joy of Palm Sunday, remind us of the mystery of the cross, and lead us on to the celebration of Easter, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

O God, we thank you for the joy, deeper than any sorrow, which you bring to us and with which you bless us.

Help us to find this joy and to live it as a blessing for the world. May there be times for all of us when we can let go of the things that bind us to sorrow and fear, so that we can praise you and let our hearts may dance. Let us be bearers of true joy to the world.

We pray for those who are sad or suffering.
We pray for those for whom depression or anxiety brings a denial of joy, that they may find healing and release.

We pray for those made sad by loss and death, that they may grieve honestly and freely and find even in grief true comfort and hope.

We pray for those saddened by disappointment, by betrayal, or by the failure of something important to them. May they find healing and hope again.

We pray for all who are ill, and who for those who love them, for those who have heard fearful news from the doctor or who worry about their own state of mind. Bring them peace and the certain comfort of love.

We pray for places scourged by violence and war,
for lands where there is poverty and hunger for the powerless,
and for nations where hubris and wealth bring blindness to the needs of others.

O Christ, who entered the city in peace and was greeted with joy,
bring your peace and your joy to our world and to your Church,
this day and every day.

Silence

O God, hear our prayers, spoken and offered in silence.
Show us where we may begin to answer them ourselves
or persuade others to answer them.
And where we can do little, help us to trust in your unfailing love.
In Christ's name, Amen.

Dismissal and Blessing

May the Christ who came to the city and who provoked a carnival of hosannas
come to your heart, your life, this church and our world, to bring joy and hope.
And the blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with you this Palm Sunday and always. **Amen.**

Hymn Suggestions				
	RS	CH4	StF	MP
At the name of Jesus	261	458	317	41
Lord of the dance	195	404	247	
My song is love unknown	207	399	277	478
The Sanctus	13	769	785	240
Make way, make way!	141	279	264	457
Ride on, ride on in majesty	209	365	265	580
All glory, laud and honour	208	364	262	9
Come into the streets with me		366		
Hosanna Loud Hosanna		367		
Ride on ride on the time is right		370		
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest			263	242

RS – *Rejoice & Sing* | CH4 – *Church Hymnary 4* | StF – *Singing the Faith* | MP – *Mission Praise*

Another alternative is the Iona Community's *Jesus Donkey-Carried Treasure* to the tune *Quem Pastores* which you can find in this order of service on page 6

<https://www.standrews.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2016-03-20-Lent-6-Palm-Sunday-.pdf>