

worship notes

from the United Reformed Church

Sunday 29 March 2026
Palm Sunday
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Welcome and Call to Worship

Hosanna to the son of David, the King of Israel.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.
Let us worship God.

Prayers of Adoration and Confession and the Lord's Prayer

Living God, on this Palm Sunday we join with the crowds to say,
“Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.”
We praise you for your steadfast love that endures for ever,
for your mercy that is new every morning,
for Jesus Christ our King, humble and riding on a donkey,
coming not to dominate but to serve.
We praise you for your power,
shown not in might but in mercy,
not in fear but in forgiveness,
not in violence but in vulnerable love.

Yet, God, as we lift our hosannas,
we confess how easily our praise can turn to silence.
Sometimes we have sought the parades of power
more than the procession of peace.
Sometimes we have wrapped our faith in our own causes,
or been quick to judge and slow to forgive.
Sometimes we have stayed on the pavement
when you called us to follow behind the donkey.

Forgive us.
Strip away any pride, any fear, and any guilt.
Renew in us the mind of Christ,
who took the form of a servant for our sake. Amen

Hear the good news: The same Jesus who entered Jerusalem in humility
went on to the Cross for our sake and rose again for our salvation.

In him we are forgiven; in him we are made new!
Thank you, God.

As a redeemed and renewed family,
we join together in praying the Lord's Prayer...

Prayer of illumination

Humble King,
who came riding on a donkey and not on a warhorse,
open our hearts now to your Word.
As we have heard the voices of the crowd,
quiet the noise within us, so that through
and the words of Scripture we may hear your Spirit speak.
Show us the way of your kingdom,
not the parade of power, but the path of peace, mercy, and truth.
Through Christ our Lord, the One who comes in the name of the Lord. Amen.

Readings

Psalm 118:1-2,19-29 | St Luke 19:28-40

All Age Activities

1. *Palm Sunday*

Key Points to Highlight:

- Jesus' Arrival on a Donkey – Explain that Jesus entered Jerusalem riding a donkey, not a horse, to show humility and peace rather than power.
- Crowd Response – People waved palm branches and shouted “Hosanna!” to celebrate him. Connect this to the idea of welcoming someone important.
- Lesson for Today – Emphasise that following Jesus is about kindness, courage, and helping others, not being bossy or showing off.

Interactive Elements:

Show the donkey or palm branch and invite people to guess what it is or what it represents. Ask simple reflective questions:

- “Who was riding into the city on a donkey?”
- “What did people wave in the parade?”
- “Was Jesus showing off power like a king on a horse?”

Closing Idea: Encourage everyone to think about ways they can follow Jesus today: by helping, being kind, and showing love.

OR

2. Story approach

Props:

- Small toy donkey or picture
- Palm branch or paper palm
- Optional: small “crowd” of toy figures to act out the scene

Key Points to Highlight:

- Story Analogy: Tell a short story about a small animal (like a donkey) being chosen for an important job—not because it’s the fastest or the strongest, but because it can help in the best way.
- Example: “Imagine a school choosing someone to carry a special message. They could pick a big, fancy horse, but they pick a little donkey instead, because it’s calm and steady.”
- Jesus’ Choice: Explain that Jesus chose a donkey for his entry into Jerusalem to show that God’s kingdom isn’t about being the biggest or the strongest—it’s about helping, caring, and being humble.
- Our Turn: Encourage people to think about small ways they can be like the donkey in the story: helping quietly, being kind, noticing others, sharing, or saying a kind word.

Interactive Elements:

Ask: “Why do you think Jesus didn’t ride a horse?” Invite people to gently wave their palm branch as a way of welcoming kindness and peace, just like the crowd welcomed Jesus. Prompt reflection: “Can you think of one small thing you can do this week to follow Jesus’ way?”

Closing Idea: Remind everyone that Palm Sunday isn’t just about a parade or waving palms—it’s about noticing who needs help and choosing love and peace, just like Jesus did.

Sermon Notes

1. Two Parades, Two Kingdoms

Luke’s story of Palm Sunday is far from a charming children’s procession; it is a deliberate, public confrontation between two visions of power. On one side, Pilate rides into Jerusalem with soldiers, horses, and banners, demonstrating that the Roman Empire enforces order through fear, intimidation, and displays of force. On the other side, Jesus rides a humble donkey, accompanied not by troops but by ordinary followers, embodying a kingdom of humility, nonviolence, and service. The crowd chooses to cheer for him,

recognizing a different kind of authority — one rooted not in domination but in love, justice, and mercy. Palm Sunday asks us which parade we will join: the one that upholds power and privilege through coercion, or the one that seeks to bring life, hope, and healing through self-giving love. It challenges us to examine our own loyalties, to notice when faith is co-opted by fear, and to step deliberately into the procession of God's kingdom, even when it looks small, messy, or countercultural.

OR

2. When Stones Cry Out

Jesus declares that if his disciples were silent, “the stones themselves would cry out.” This striking image reminds us that God’s kingdom cannot be silenced, even when human voices falter. In our own time, Christian witness can be drowned out by louder stories: politics, nationalism, social media, or cultural cynicism. Faith can be misused, co-opted, or even silenced in the face of power, yet creation itself — the stones under our feet, the skies above, the earth itself — testifies to Christ’s humble kingship. Palm Sunday invites us to join the stones, to allow our words, actions, and choices to proclaim the love and justice of God. It calls us to act courageously in everyday life: standing with the marginalized, offering forgiveness where it is hardest, and choosing the path of mercy. Even when we feel small or inadequate, God raises up witnesses; our lives can become living psalms that echo through our families, communities, and beyond.

OR

3. The Humble King and the Nations

Psalm 118 celebrates “the one who comes in the name of the Lord,” and Luke shows us the surprising identity of that One: a king unlike any other. Jesus does not assert dominance, enforce borders, or build his kingdom through fear or coercion. His power is expressed through healing, teaching, forgiving, and welcoming those on the margins. Palm Sunday reminds us that the authority of Christ is universal, transcending nations, political systems, and ideologies. In a world where nationalism and triumphalism are rising, where some attempt to claim God for a single country or political cause, the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem reminds us that God’s kingdom cannot be contained or appropriated. It calls us to renounce the temptation to mix faith with force, to follow the way of the cross-shaped king, and to live out Christ’s love in humility, service, and reconciliation — showing that true authority is expressed in sacrifice, mercy, and universal welcome.

Prayers of Intercession

Generous God,
we thank you for all the signs of your kingdom among us:
for communities of welcome and service,

for people who choose the way of peace over the way of power,
for small acts of kindness that shine with your love.

We thank you for the gift of this day,
for Scripture read and proclaimed,
for hymns that lift our hearts,
for your Spirit moving among us even now.

Living God, King of peace, we pray for our world:
for countries at war,
for communities divided by fear or hatred,
for leaders who wield power and for those who suffer under it.

May your kingdom come, your will be done.

We pray for your Church:
for courage to follow Jesus in humility and service,
for unity in the gospel rather than in nationalism or fear,
for fresh compassion in ministry to the poor, the displaced, and the forgotten.

May your kingdom come, your will be done.

We pray for all who are in need:
for those in pain of body, mind, or spirit, and those who care for them,
for the lonely and the anxious,
for all whose lives are overshadowed by grief.

In silence we name before you those on our hearts...*(short pause)*

Surround them with your healing and your hope.

We pray for ourselves, that as Holy Week begins
we may walk more closely with Christ,
earning again the way of the Cross and the joy of the resurrection.
We offer you these and all our prayers, spoken and silent,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Offertory Prayer

We offer what we can each day, each week, each month,
of our money, our time, our energy, and our talents.
Let us offer all of this to God with a prayer:

True and humble king,
hailed by the crowd as Messiah:
grant us the faith to know you and love you,
that we may be found beside you this Holy Week on the way of the Cross,
as we try to serve you. Amen.

Blessing

As we go into Holy Week,
may our loving heavenly Father,
bring us by faith to his eternal life;
may Christ, keep us steadfast
as we walk with him the way of his Cross;
may the Holy Spirit, set our minds on life and peace.

Go into this Holy Week with the blessing of God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
upon you, and all God's people, now and forever.

Hymn Suggestions				
	R&S	CH4	StF	MP
All Glory, Laud and Honour	208	364	262	9
Hosanna, Loud Hosanna		367		
Ride On, Ride On in Majesty	209	365	265	580
Lord, Enthroned in Heavenly Splendour			593	431
My Song is Love Unknown	207	399	277	478
Meekness and Majesty		365	362	465
Christ is the King! O Friends, Rejoice	571			
Brother, Sister, Let Me Serve You	474	694	611	
For the Healing of the Nations	620	706	696	
Crown Him with Many Crowns	262	459	347	109
The King of Love My Shepherd Is	552	462	479	649
'Jesus is Lord' The Cry Goes Up				1078
Praise is Rising				1221
My Jesus, my Saviour		531	363	1003
Lord, I Lift Your Name on High		558	332	881
Ride On, Ride On, the Time is Right		370		
I will enter his gates	386			307
You are the king of glory	271			790

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