O Lord, open our lips, and our mouth shall proclaim your praise. Hear our voice, O Lord, according to your faithful love, according to your judgement give us life.

**Call To Worship**  Psalm 118:1-2

Blessed are you, God of compassion and mercy, to you be praise and glory for ever. In the darkness of our sin, your light breaks forth like the dawn and your healing springs up for deliverance. As we rejoice in the gift of your saving help, sustain us with your bountiful Holy Spirit and open our lips to sing your praise. This we ask through Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen.

Sing or read **Ride on, ride on, in majesty** by Henry H Milman (1791 - 1868)

1 Ride on, ride on in majesty 2 Ride on, ride on in majesty,

as all the crowds 'Hosanna!' cry: in lowly pomp ride on to die:

through waving branches slowly ride, O Christ, your triumph now begin

O Saviour, to be crucified. with captured death, and conquered sin!

3 Ride on, ride on in majesty 4 Ride on, ride on in majesty,

the angel armies of the sky the last and fiercest foe defy:

look down with sad and wondering eyes the Father on his sapphire throne

to see the approaching sacrifice. awaits his own anointed Son.

5 Ride on, 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!

**The Lord’s Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.

**Old Testament Reading** Psalm 118:19-29

**New Testament Reading** Matthew 21:1-11

**Reflection**

In the Bible there’s a wonderful phrase that tells us that God knows the end from the beginning. Here it is from the book of Isaiah the prophet in its immediate context.

“Remember this and stand firm,

recall it to mind, you transgressors,

remember the former things of old;

for I am God, and there is no other;

I am God, and there is none like me,

declaring the end from the beginning

and from ancient times things not yet done,

saying, ‘My counsel shall stand,

and I will accomplish all my purpose,’

calling a bird of prey from the east,

the man of my counsel from a far country.

I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass;

I have purposed, and I will do it.” (Isaiah 46:8-11)

This short passage reminds us that with God nothing happens ‘by chance’ – rather he has planned everything out in advance from the very beginning of time. It reminds us to stand firm and remember what he has revealed and promised to us in the Bible. God states that he will accomplish all his purposes or plans.

In a very real sense this is exactly what is going on in the first half of our New Testament Reading from Matthew’s Gospel. God had prepared things long ago, and had proclaimed what he would do hundreds of years before through the prophet Zechariah (9:9). We don’t know exactly how Jesus had organised for the donkey and her colt to be ready, but everything happened just as Jesus told his disciples it would. In riding into Jerusalem in this particular way Jesus was fulfilling a prophecy spoken several hundred years before.

We should also notice the way in which the crowd shouted out in praise taken directly from Psalm 118. Yes, they are taken from a Psalm that would have been sung or spoken on the way to the temple for worship, but they are at least as appropriate as Jesus, the lamb of God enters Jerusalem as he prepares to go to the cross for us.

Palm Sunday is a time of celebration, but it’s also a time to stop and think. The crowds would soon turn against him, and he would soon re-enter Jerusalem under the escort of soldiers, heading for a trial before Pilate. Yet even this was God’s plan. God was in control then, and He is still in control now. Try to focus on this wonderful truth now as we obey the Government’s instructions to stay home. Our King is still on the throne! Hallelujah!

**Prayers of intercession**

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, as I spend this time with you now, I also remember the needs of the world, your church and those in need. Today I pray for…

* the world and its needs – think of medical workers and those suffering with Covid-19 in particular.
* the Church and the challenges we faith at this time.
* those serving the church and local communities through leadership
* those who are misled by the false gods of this present age
* all who are hungry and thirsty
* those who lack care and medicine
* individuals you know who need God’s help at this time
* yourself in your own needs and difficulties

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.

**Prayer of Blessing**

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant us all to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together we may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. May God’s blessing me upon me, my family, friends and brothers and sisters in Christ, today and every day. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen. (Based on Romans 15:5-6)