**Home Service Sheet for 2nd April 2023 (Palm Sunday)**

**Call To Worship                  Isaiah 46:8-11**

“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.

**Prayer**

Triumphant Lord, we rejoice in Your entry into the world and into our lives afresh today. Joining with the crowds about whom we read in the Scriptures, we sing Your praises and exalt Your Name, which is above every other name. Yet, O Lord, our hearts are often far from true worship of You, and our minds are distant from a true understanding of who You are and all that You have done for us. Help us instead to reflect in our lives the glory of Your Son and to live faithfully here and now. Have mercy on us, Saviour of all, and forgive us our faithlessness. Forgive what we have done and who we have been. Bring us home again and impart within us a new song of joy and celebration. In Jesus’ Name we pray, amen.

**Hymn                                     Ride on, ride on, in majesty** by ***Henry H Milman***

<https://youtu.be/g-qDQSjnzH8>

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.

**Bible Reading**Matthew 21:1-11

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me.If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” This took place to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

“Say to the daughter of Zion,
‘Behold, your king is coming to you,
    humble, and mounted on a donkey,
    on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”

**Reflection**

The prophet Isaiah, inspired by the Holy Spirit, tells us that God knows the end from the beginning, as we read in our call to worship today. What this means is that with God nothing happens ‘by chance’. Rather, He has planned everything out in advance from before time began. God is sovereign, and rules over all things from the greatest to the least, over the big picture and the finest details of life alike. Isaiah also reminds us to stand firm and remember what God has revealed and promised to us in His Word, the Bible. We can rest assured that God will accomplish all His purposes or plans that He has revealed to us in the Scriptures!

This, I believe, is the wider context that we need to help us understand what is going on in the first half of our Bible Reading today from Matthew’s Gospel. God had set His detailed plans in place 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 that it would. By riding into Jerusalem in this way, Jesus was fulfilling a prophecy spoken several hundred years before.

It’s also good for us to note the way in which the crowd shouted out praises to God, directly quoting from Psalm 118. It is a Psalm that would have been sung or spoken by the people of Israel on the way to the temple for worship. However, these words of worship and celebration at what God had done are also appropriate to praise God for Jesus, the Lamb of God. Praise, celebration, death and sacrifice are all in view here! It is a good reminder for us that resurrection morning comes only as a result of Jesus’ crucifixion. Both are necessary for our salvation.

Matthew describes Jesus entering Jerusalem a few short days before He went to the cross for us, in obedience to the Father’s will. Perhaps it’s worth noting that the shouts of praise and acclamation take place outside of the city walls before Jesus actually enters into the city. This detail may point to the crowd in question being pilgrims coming with Jesus to Jerusalem rather than the regular residents of the great city. Maybe we should be seeing a contrast between the shouts of Galileans hailing Jesus, and the later shouts of the Jerusalem crowd shouting ‘crucify’? They may not be the same individuals at all.

Palm Sunday is traditionally a time of celebration for us, as Christians, but it’s also an opportune time for us to stop and think about our walk with Christ. Which crowds are we more like ourselves? Are we enthusiastic and sincere with our faith in Jesus as the Son of God, expressing our praise to Him, or are we more like the crowds who were stirred up by the Pharisees to demand the death of Jesus the troublemaker? The Son of God would soon re-enter Jerusalem, escorted by Roman soldiers, heading for a mock trial before Pilate. Yet even this was God’s plan. God was in control then, and He is still in control now. Our King is still on the throne! Hallelujah!

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank You for revealing Yourself to us in and through Your Word. We rejoice in the fact that You are in control of all things, from the greatest to the least, and we can trust in You. Today we place into Your hands friends, family members, neighbours and acquaintances who do not know the saving power of the Gospel. We ask that You would work in their hearts by the power of Your Holy Spirit, and grant to them the gift of faith with repentance. We pray for Your Church worldwide that You would keep all of us faithful in proclaiming in love the truths that You have shown us in Your Word. In Jesus’ Name we pray, amen.

**Benediction**

Almighty and eternal God, in Your tender love towards humanity You sent Your only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take on Himself our flesh and to suffer death on the cross. Grant that we may follow the example of His patience and humility, and also share His resurrection life. This we ask through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever, amen.