**Worship Sheet for Sunday 28th March 2021: Palm Sunday - Second Sunday of the Passion. (Compiled by Revd. Pam Siddall of Buckden Methodist Church)**

**Call to worship**: “Shout for joy, you people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you! He comes triumphant and victorious, but humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” Zechariah 9, v.9 (cf. John 12, v 15)

**Reading: John 12, v.12-16**

**Hymn:** All Glory, Laud and Honour - Hymns and Psalms 160/Singing the Faith 262

**Introduction:** “It’s not fair!” said the donkey. “Only yesterday I carried Jesus through the streets of Jerusalem and everyone was shouting and waving and patting me and saying ‘well done’, but today nobody’s noticing me at all!” “Well it just goes to show,” said his stable-mate, “we’re nothing without Jesus.” (Well it made me smile when I saw this on Facebook and there’s a grain of truth there after all.) Perhaps, like me, you have mostly joyful memories of Palm Sunday services, maybe with children parading round the church waving foliage and singing Graham Kendrick’s **hymn** (Singing the Faith 264/Songs of Fellowship 384) “Make way, make way for Christ the King in splendour arrives; fling wide the gates and welcome him into your lives.” The hymn celebrates Jesus coming to heal broken hearts, free prisoners, to heal the deaf, the lame and the blind and bring comfort to those who mourn. It’s a message we so much need to hear at the present time, pointing towards the hope we shall celebrate next week on Easter Day and resonating with our tentative sense of a possible easing of the current lock-down.

There is a danger, though, of moving from Palm Sunday’s triumph to the joy of Easter Day without acknowledging what comes in-between, the price that Jesus willingly paid so that we could share the life of heaven with him for all eternity. The triumphal entry is really a prelude to the sufferings of Jesus and if it were portrayed in a film clip I would imagine it with warning throbs of background music as Jesus rides bravely to face his trial and death. Are we willing to accompany Jesus on his journey to the cross this Holy Week? We begin with prayer.

**Prayers: We still our hearts and quieten our minds to make way for you to enter in, our Lord and our God.**

We worship God who loved his world so much that he sent his only son for our salvation. **Hosanna to our Lord.**

We worship God in Jesus who sacrificed his life that we might be saved. **Hosanna to Christ our Saviour.**

**We worship God as Holy Spirit breathing hope, courage and guidance into our hearts. Hosanna to the Spirit of Love.**

**As we worship, we remember how far short we fall, in daily living, of the worship God deserves.**

**So, we confess: Lord, when we are fearful of the way ahead, feeling overwhelmed and finding it hard to trust in your promises, please forgive us.**

**When we are afraid to follow you into the challenges of tomorrow forgive us and strengthen us.**

**When we fail to step out and share the good news of your love in word and action, forgive us and set us on the right path again, for we ask it in Jesus’ name.**

**We thank God that in Jesus our sins are forgiven. We humbly ask for help and strength for the journey ahead. Amen**

**Hymn**: Ride on, ride on in Majesty - Hymns and Psalms 159/Singing the Faith **265**

**Reading: Philippians 2:5-11 (NB v. 8)**

**Reflection:** “Look, your King is coming to you,”said Zecharia. “Look!” shouted the crowds and the disciples and the children as a man on a donkey rode into Jerusalem, though even the disciples didn’t yet understand what they saw. And now the writer of the letter to the Philippians also invites us to look, to take a hard look at the character of the Lord Jesus Christ and to respond to what we see. This little passage is perhaps some of the earliest worship material in the New Testament; a sort of creed which we may imagine being regularly recited by little gathered groups of the first Christians to remember and celebrate the character of Jesus as the pattern for their own living. It sends shivers down my spine to think that we can exactly share in their worship even after around 2000 years.

So, let us look at Jesus in all his humanity. He had a human body just as we do, capable of pleasure and joy (he loved a good feast; he loved his friends) but also of pain and suffering (he wept in compassion for the suffering of others; he endured injustice, mockery, whipping and the agony of the cross). His nature was at the same time God’s very own nature, which he demonstrated not by wielding power but by healing and helping, by teaching and compassion, by kneeling to tenderly wash the feet of his disciples as a servant would do, and by self-sacrifice. He was obedient, even to death on a cross.

(***Take some time to think about these qualities. When have we been joyful lately? When have we suffered or shared the suffering of others? Perhaps the pandemic has brought us closer to suffering than ever before in our lives. When have we taken a truly servant role? How willing are we to be obedient Christians, whatever the cost? Maybe we can understand the words ‘obedience’ and ‘sacrifice’ more fully after the demands of lock-down.)***

The Jesus who shares all of this in his humanity is the very Jesus that God has ‘exalted to the highest place’, with the ‘name above every other name’ and we are called to bow before him.

***(Take time to sit quietly with closed eyes imagine yourself at the foot of the throne of heaven gazing on the glory of the Lord. Allow yourself to be over-awed in worship.)***

**The challenge:** Look! Your King is coming to YOU. He is calling each one of us to watch with him and to walk with him on the way of the cross so that we might the better also share in resurrection joy on Easter Day. Will you set out with him this very moment? The challenge is to commit to taking time over the next few days to study and really enter into the entire story of Jesus’ passion from his anointing at Bethany, through the last supper, the garden of Gethsemane, the arrest and trial with Peter’s denial, the flogging, the mocking, the crucifixion, the death of Jesus and his burial. I invite you to read **Mark’s gospel chapters 14 and 15,** a portion each day, until by Good Friday you have participated whole-heartedly in that journey Jesus made, willingly, for our sakes.

**Prayers for the needs of the world:**

Humble Lord, we pray for all those with power and influence in the world that they may learn the path of humility and service to carry the nations through this troubled time with equity and righteousness, as in your own Kingdom. **God is with us. Thanks be to God.**

Suffering Lord, many are walking the way of suffering at this time. May they be comforted by your presence and touched by your healing Love. **God is with us. Thanks be to God.**

Compassionate Lord, many are striving selflessly to serve and help others at this time. May they be strengthened by your presence and enabled by your power. **God is with us. Thanks be to God.**

Obedient Lord who died for us, we thank you for the lives of those who have gone before us. May we be assured that they are gathered to your heart. **God is with us. Thanks be to God.**

Glorious Lord, may we your people gaze constantly on your majesty and offer your love to the world. **God is with us. Thanks be to God.**

**Amen.**

**We say the Lord’s Prayer as we picture all of us praying it together**

**Hymn: “Lift high the cross”:** Hymns and Psalms 170/Singing the Faith **276**

**Sending out prayer**:

Jesus invites us to a way of celebration, meeting and feasting with the humble and poor.

**Let us walk his way with joy.**

Jesus beckons us to a way of risk, letting go of security.

**Let us walk his way with joy.**

Jesus challenges us to listen to the voices of those who have nothing to lose.

**Let us walk his way with joy.**

Jesus points us to a way of self-giving where power and status are overturned

**Let us walk his way with joy.**

Jesus calls us to follow the way of the cross where despair is transformed by the promise of new life.

**Let us walk his way with joy.** *(Jan Berry. Used in “Bread of Tomorrow”, Christian Aid. 1992)*

As we journey through this Holy Week, may God’s blessing and grace sustain us and all for whom we pray. **Amen**