

Worship Material
Not the obvious choice
Material from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 13th April

Begin with an opening prayer

God of surprises, riding on a donkey,
not the obvious kind of king,
we come to follow you with palms and praises,
cloaks and crosses,
thankful that we are all welcome
in your love that lasts for ever.

Amen.

Read Luke 19:28-40 or Luke 22:14–23:56

Bible notes

There are two Gospel readings for today, Luke 19:28-40 for the Liturgy of the Palms and Luke 22:14–23:56 for the Liturgy of the Passion. Luke's Gospel closely connects Jesus' coming to Jerusalem with his crucifixion there. Jesus is always on his way to Jerusalem (9:53, 13:22, 17:11); 'I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed away from Jerusalem' (13:33). In Luke, the crowd both greet him on Palm Sunday (19:36) and follow him to the cross on Good Friday. Jesus had addressed Jerusalem while still on his way there: 'How often have I desired to gather your children as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!' (13:34). And as he is led to execution, Jesus says to the weeping woman in the following crowd, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but for yourselves and for your children' (23:28).

Jesus rides into Jerusalem, 'the city that kills the prophets' (13:34), as a prophet. His advance arrangements indicate a deliberate action. It is a very bold prophetic sign, indicating that the promises of Israel's deliverance are being fulfilled. The two disciples collecting the colt are told to expect an appropriate response to the Messiah: 'The Lord needs it' is all that need be said. This colt seems a surprising choice, since it is unbroken and would be difficult to ride. But this animal was destined for this purpose, as were the previously unyoked cows that brought the ark after its journey from the

wilderness to its final resting place in the sanctuary in Jerusalem (1 Samuel 6:7, 2 Samuel 6:2). And Jesus' ability to ride the colt suggests the fulfilment of Isaiah's Messianic vision of humanity's harmony with all living creatures (Isaiah 11:1-10). The multitude's shouting of the pilgrim psalm makes this identification explicit: 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord' (Psalm 118:26). But this too takes us to the Passion, since it was this very psalm that helped his followers understand that the crucified prophet was their risen Lord: 'the stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone' (Psalm 118:22, Mark 12:10, Acts 4:11).

Prayer

Father God, you sent your Son to earth to establish your eternal kingdom.

He came without blemish, the perfect sacrifice.

We give you our heartfelt thanks for the gift of your Son.

Lord, you were not the people's obvious choice of a messiah.

You didn't come with an army behind you brandishing weapons.

No, you came with a mantle of love, riding a colt, a symbol of your peace.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for putting aside your divine privileges to travel to the cross.

We give you our heartfelt thanks for your ultimate sacrifice.

Holy Spirit, you strengthen us as we build our lives with Jesus as the cornerstone

and seek to emulate his example of humble obedience.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, no words can adequately express our heartfelt thanks. We praise your glorious splendour and celebrate your faithful, eternal love.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

Let us journey on, people of the cross,
following a king riding on a donkey.

Servant of the world, let us serve with love

Jesus, our Saviour, as we follow you on the story way to the cross.

Amen.

