

Good morning everyone

Today, as I'm sure you know, is Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week. I am pleased that, unlike last year, we are at least able to have some services in church during this most important week of the Church's year, including Easter communions in all our churches. As ever, I know not everybody will yet feel confident about attending in the church buildings and our online services continue. So today we have services at Hurley at 9.30am and Kingsbury at 11am, but also this service filmed in our homes.

<https://youtu.be/0JFu6JXw00I>



Palm Sunday Service

A Service for Palm Sunday (28 March 2021) from the Kingsbury and Baxterley Group of Parishes.

[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/0JFu6JXw00I)

Attached is the newsletter for this week, which has details of all our Holy Week and Easter services, in the buildings and online. I've also attached the (increasingly lengthy!) document of readings and reflections from Mark's Gospel for those who are interested in catching up on those.

I wish you all a holy and blessed Holy Week, and look forward to seeing you all before too long.

John

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Reflection for Palm Sunday 28-3-21 – Mark 11. 1-11

A King comes to Jerusalem riding on a donkey! A Roman Emperor would have been in full regalia and riding a stallion, but this king comes in humble clothes riding a young colt.

Not the sort of king the people were expecting – ie a leader who would free them of Roman oppression, but a king nevertheless. They didn't know then how by the end of the week this king would be crucified. This king knew only too well how close he was to the end of his earthly life. But let us focus for a moment on this entry to Jerusalem.

Ruth spoke last week about journeys, and this is the start of the final journey for Jesus towards the cross. As it had been written, Jesus arrives on a previously unriden donkey colt – and as placid as donkeys can be, I wouldn't want to ride an unbroken animal! Having said that, animals are way more perceptive than we are, so this colt no doubt perceived the honour of having Jesus ride on its back.

This is not really a day for trivia, but it is said that donkeys didn't have the marking of a cross on their backs before the first Palm Sunday and it is the mark of carrying a king on his journey to glory.

There were very many people on their way to Jerusalem to get ready to celebrate the Passover, so the masses of crowds were nothing new at this time of year. But there was something different this particular year. The crowds' ecstatic response to Jesus' arrival. Laying a road of palm leaves and branches much as we would roll out the red carpet for our Queen if she were to visit today. There was joy in the air, much expectation and a definite tangible, buzz. I can imagine it but have never experienced a 'Royal Visit' – I've always been at work when royalty has been close by! But I imagine it to be like the buzz in a concert hall just before the main act makes an appearance, and I have been to plenty of concerts where the atmosphere has been electric! (I have also been to a Royal Garden Party for the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2002, but the crowds at Buckingham Palace that day were much more demure.)

So, the crowds lining the route to Jerusalem were all hyped up, excited to welcome this king of their dreams, shouting 'Hosannas' and hailing Jesus as Messiah. But what of Jesus? What was going through his mind as he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey? He knew what was coming. The agonies he would endure. As ordinary mortals we probably wouldn't have been able to keep our cool and would have wanted to run the other way much like Jonah being asked by God to visit Ninevah to sort them out; yet Jesus seems calm, at least on the outside. This apparent calmness must come through Jesus being continually in prayer to His Father; and having spent a morning this week listening to a Bishop's Study Day on the theology of prayer, prayer is something we need to do more of if we want to access such calmness, but more on that will have to be for another day.

As many of you know, I am a Stephen King fan. Not all his writings are dark, macabre, horror stories, and his serialised book, *The Green Mile*, was made into a film with Tom Hanks which you may have seen. It is a story set in 1935 where Louisiana prison guard Paul Edgecomb (played by Tom Hanks) meets convict John Coffey (played by the late Michael Clarke Duncan) and it is an experience which will change his life forever. Coffey, an eight-foot giant in the film (though he was only 6ft 6 in real life), is on Death Row, convicted of the murder of two children - and despite his size he is afraid to sleep in his cell without a night-light. Coffey also has a special gift, one which he uses to prove to the guards that he has been wrongfully convicted. It is well worth watching just for the side story of a mouse called Mr. Jingles who is brought back to life by John Coffey after being stamped on by another vindictive prison guard. Mr. Jingles then lives on for a great many years, as does Tom Hank's character who is also 'healed' of an illness by John Coffey's special gift. Both live for far longer than any human or mouse could normally have an earthly life, and all because of the hugely generous actions of an innocent inmate who finally has to walk the 'green mile' from the cells to the

execution room despite his innocence. His stay of execution comes too late. The story has many similarities to the account of Jesus' journey to crucifixion and it is a quite powerful film – certainly much easier to watch than Mel Gibson's 'The Passion of The Christ'.

Jesus was and is a person of hugely generous actions, and likewise as an innocent, he was executed. This ride into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday is the start of Jesus' walk on the green mile to be crucified. As the journey of the whole of Holy Week opens before us, we will see it is an epic tale set in the public gallery. We have not had the Passion Narrative today giving us whole story as it unfolds, but we do have the benefit of hindsight – we know how the story progresses, how it appears to end on Good Friday with the crucifixion and if you are able to join us for any of our services through this coming Holy Week to hear reflections on this the greatest story ever told, you are of course most welcome. To walk this story of Jesus' final earthly journey to the green hill far away, to the foot of the cross, to finally stand with Mary as she watches her son die is so moving and one of the reasons that Christianity is so compelling that it has continued for over 2000 years.

We need to make this journey however tempting it might be to jump straight to the joy of the resurrection next Sunday. The journey is fraught with pain but is the reason we have the promise of everlasting life for those who believe.

Amen.

Keep Singing from Sarah

Hello everyone

I hope you are all well.

Please find some music below to accompany Palm Sunday.

583 - Ride on, ride on in majesty - [WINCHESTER NEW-RIDE ON,RIDE ON,IN MAJESTY - YouTube](#)

195 - From heaven you came - [From Heaven You Came - YouTube](#)

572 - Praise to the holiest in the height - [Praise To The Holiest In The Height - YouTube](#)

463 - [My Song Is Love Unknown - King's College, Cambridge - YouTube](#)

And some more.....

And now, O Father, mindful of the love - [Unde et memores "And Now, O Father, Mindful of the Love" - YouTube](#)

A Palm Sunday Antiphon Morgan - [A Palm Sunday Antiphon - David Morgan - YouTube](#)

Be still and know that I am God - [Be Still, And Know That I Am God - YouTube](#)

Walker My God, my God - [My God, My God - YouTube](#)

Taizé In manus tuas - [Taize song - In manus tuas Pater - YouTube](#)

thou didst leave thy throne - [Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne - YouTube](#)

Lift up your heads (Messiah) Handel - [Handel Messiah - Lift up your heads, O ye gates - YouTube](#)

This week the girls were very happy to finish school for Easter and we also celebrated Tom's birthday. We have been enjoying the lighter evenings and preparations are underway for some early planting in the garden. We are experimenting with a new crop of cucamelons this year! Seeds are ordered and we have no idea what to expect so it will be fun to try something new!

Today as I write is Emily's birthday (I can't believe she is 14 already!). She has requested a tirimisu instead of cake and so our lockdown party plans are to have this and play a murder mystery game together. Phoebe is also taking her Guide promise via zoom this evening as they are having an online Easter "camp"! We are hoping there's not too many midnight snacks involved lol!!

We hope you are all doing ok. We send thoughts and prayers to those preparing for a slight easing of restrictions next week and also to those for whom there is a little while of shielding still to go.

Lots of love and hoping to see you soon

Sarah and family xxxx