

Palm Sunday 2020

Collect and Blessing of Palm Crosses

Almighty and everlasting God, who in your tender love towards the human race sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ to take upon him our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross: grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility, and also be made partakers of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Matthew 21.1-11

¹ When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, just say this, "The Lord needs them." And he will send them immediately.' ⁴ This took place to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, ⁵ 'Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.' ⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷ they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. ⁸ A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!' ¹⁰ When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?' ¹¹ The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'

A Poem followed by a Reflection

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood and sorry I could not travel both.....

Then took the other, as just as fair, and having perhaps the better claim,

Because it was grassy and wanted wear;

Though as for that the passing there

Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay

In leaves no step had trodden black.

Oh, I kept the first for another day!

Yet knowing how way leads on to way,

I doubted if I should ever come back.....

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.

I have always found these verses from the poem "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost very thought provoking. On what we call Palm Sunday Jesus was taking a particular path and there was no going back. The journey he took led to his death.

Our journeys are limited but if you are taking a daily walk it might be that you have walked along an unfamiliar path and in so doing found that you have a different view of the landscape. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on what we call Palm Sunday gave him and his followers a different view of the city and those watching had a different perspective of him and of the mixed band of people travelling with him.

The last days of Jesus' life continued like this. Peoples' perspective on him changing. We find that some close friends desert him, one denying that he has ever known him, one betraying him. Many of the religious leaders seek more urgently to have him put to death and political and civic leaders concur with this. But some of his friends do stay with him. At the last supper, those closest to him receive in that meal a clear and hopeful sacramental way for their future living.

And we find that John the disciple, Jesus' mother Mary and some other women are at the foot of the cross when he is crucified. That a man called Simon helped carry the cross and that on the way women consoled Jesus. And after he dies a pharisee Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea lay his body to rest.

Of those who travelled with Jesus on Palm Sunday some do stay with Him though others do not. Of those watching his entry into Jerusalem some do stay with Him even though many do not. What seems most evident is that from both groups of people with their different perspectives, individuals are making up their own minds, coming to their own conclusions as they respond to the events that lead to Jesus being crucified and then to his death.

At the present time we cannot be part of a crowd, either we are living isolated as individuals or in small household groups. Our perspective is not that of a group of people looking out or a large crowd looking in. The four Gospel narratives of the last days of Jesus' life have that perspective. Once the large gathering of Palm Sunday ends, we are left in the main with descriptions of situations in which there are isolated individuals and small groups, making or responding to decisions. In all of this we find Jesus showing humility and patience.

Each year John's Gospel Chapters 18 and 19 are read out in many churches. This year we will need to do this either on our own or as a small household group. If it is possible try reading some or all of this out aloud. Or during this week visit the prepared service on www.kingscliffe.church and take time to think about anything in the passage that particularly connects with you and then reflect on it.