



Good morning everybody, Welcome to our Palm Sunday All Age Worship Service. Albeit of a digital kind!! I trust you have all got nice, clean palms...that's your hands I'm talking about.... not literally the branches!

I trust you are keeping your spirits up, your social distance at an acceptable measure, but most of all I hope you are all keeping safe and well.

If you are lucky enough to have the essentials in and haven't run out of loo roll then... a big Amen to that!

I sent my husband out to the shops and made the mistake of saying- "Just get what you can, you know what we are short of." He duly went off on his bike, and returned home very triumphant with... 2 pizzas, 2 bags of crisps, milk and bread, he said he didn't know what all the fuss was about, and he didn't have to queue in Waitrose either ...."didn't I do well", he asked.

"So, did you look for the loo roll?" I asked, no he replied, "I only got the essentials!!!"

I was going to plant some seeds later today, if I thought there was the remotest chance, I could plant toilet roll tubes...I jolly well would! So, there you go, I hope you all continue to keep clean palms and... pants!!!

Palm Sunday marks the start of Holy week and the last week of Lent...if you've managed to give up something for lent...either by choice or simply because you can't get it.... and you are *still* resisting temptation, use your palms to give yourselves a pat on the back, but remember to wash them afterwards!!

I'm looking forward to a bag of kettle crisps instead of an Easter egg ...yes, It's the simple things in life that keep you happy...that, and knowing you have enough loo roll!

Today, like many Christians around the world, we commemorate Jesus's triumphant arrival into Jerusalem on a small donkey. This is the start of the most important biblical documentation in our history. All four gospels give accounts of this special day. Today we remember what a multitude of people did over 2000 years ago, paying tribute to the true King of Kings.



Now I wonder what sort of King or Queen you would be if you suddenly found yourself in that position?

Now I'm not talking about a King or Queen with little power, but the power to do anything you want. You have the power to snap your fingers and people will do just what you tell them to do...including staying at home to self-isolate when the government has told them to!

How would you use that power?

***This is the bit where you have to use your imagination...work with me people...pretend you are in church sitting at a safe distance from each other and I have a willing child volunteer to assist me... again at a safe distance!***

Now then, there is a throne behind me. Who would like to be King or Queen for the day?

Ok, thank you King/Queen .... (*Name of volunteer*)

Let's start by putting this rather magnificent cloak around you. What else do we need, a crown would be a good idea as well, now you look like royalty.

Please sit on your throne, your majesty. (*bow as I direct to throne*)

Right now, some your loyal servants have come to pay their **very high taxes**, as I said before, you have the power to do anything you want, and today you have requested they pay what they owe.

So here we have your people, (***Other child volunteers come forward***) they have been working very hard in the fields all week and they have each earned £5.

King/Queen- (*Name of volunteer*) has ruled that you must each give £3 of your earnings to keep him/her in the manner to which he/she has become accustomed! So please hand over your taxes.... and as you do so, please politely bow to your King/Queen.

Thank you all for paying your tax bill, please sit down....on separate pews please at least 2 meters' apart!

Now then King/Queen (*Name of volunteer*), you obviously like the finer things in life, so I suppose you do need to ask for **more than half** of the people's earnings to pay for the large army you have, and so you can stockpile all the essential luxuries such as hand sanitizer, loo paper, tinned tomatoes, pasta... because you are such a powerful King/Queen. Would you ever consider taking less tax so your people aren't in debt and have enough money to feed their families and look after themselves properly at this unprecedented time?

King/Queen (*name of volunteer*) Is prompted to say YES! (hopefully!!)

Thank you, it would mean however that you may have to travel by donkey rather than horse from now on!!

But it's good to know you are now thinking about the people instead of yourself.

I just have a couple of questions for your Royal Highness, (*hand over 'answer card' for them to read*)

What would you do, to make the lives of children better?

King/Queen answers, *“ I would make a rule that every child is kept safe, every child is fed, clothed, cared for and loved...all children matter and where possible pocket money should be in line with inflation!”*

Thinking about the world that you live in, is there anything you would want to change?

King/Queen answers, *“ Yes, I would like the power to win a war with an invisible killer called coronavirus. I pray that a medicine is found quickly to heal the sick. I pray that the NHS can cope, and all our key workers keep safe and well.”*

Thank you very much King/Queen (*name of volunteer*) would you please sit down; you are excused from sitting with the common people due to the current social distancing rule!

King/Queen (*name of volunteer*) had to choose what sort of King /Queen they would be, didn't they, whether they would be kind and loving to the people of their Kingdom, or whether they would be selfish and demanding. In today's uncertain, anxious times, I pray we all have the presence of mind to think about our most vulnerable, and our most needy.

If we go back over 2000 years ago, the Jewish people of the day saw Jesus riding on a donkey into Jerusalem. They thought this was a sign he was claiming to be the Messiah, and had come to set them free from Roman rule and oppression.

The people made a path of cloaks and palm branches to honour his arrival, similar to laying a red carpet today for the v.i.p's or celebs of our modern times.

Palms today are still a symbol of victory and goodness.

The Roman governor at that time, Pontius Pilate would have ridden into Jerusalem with his soldiers for Passover. He showed his strength and power through the display of arms his men carried, and by way of riding a magnificent steed prepped for the victory of war.

Jesus came unarmed, his disciples were unarmed. Jesus came riding on a donkey with peaceful intentions, he is often referred to as the Prince of Peace. He came to declare and demonstrate God's grace, he did not come to wage war or judge the people, he came as a **Humble** King.



Jesus's glory as King was not seen on earth with him having a large army, great riches and wearing magnificent robes, he came to set people's lives free from the power of sin ruling over them.

The people praised Jesus, shouted Hosanna, they acknowledged Jesus as Christ the King. They expected Jesus to save them, the word hosanna means 'save now'. Jesus knew when he chose to ride into Jerusalem so publicly that he was putting his life at risk, because many of the religious authorities hated Jesus and were plotting to kill him.... but he did it anyway, because he knew it was Father God's will.

Jesus knew that the very same people hailing him as their Saviour, less than a week later would change their **Cheers** of 'hosanna'... for **Jeers** of 'crucify him!'

The bible says that Jesus wept for Jerusalem, he knew in his heart that the people he came to help and serve would turn their backs on him including some of his own disciples. His sacrifice is the most important time in history and pivotal to our understanding of his love for us, a deep never ending, unconditional love.

Jesus came as a **Servant** King. The most amazing way he served us was when he lay down his life upon the cross, so that we could be set free from sin and have peace with God.



Palm Sunday is a reflection on the final week of Jesus's life. It is a time for Christians to prepare their hearts for the agony of his Passion and the joy of his resurrection.

It is a time for us, especially now, to remember his word, to love one another, look after each other, and pray for the whole world and its wellbeing again.

We are all experiencing an unprecedented time, uncertain about the future, but one thing is certain...

With acts of human kindness positively impacting on those who are without essentials and facing isolation. People are going out of their way to help in times of crisis.

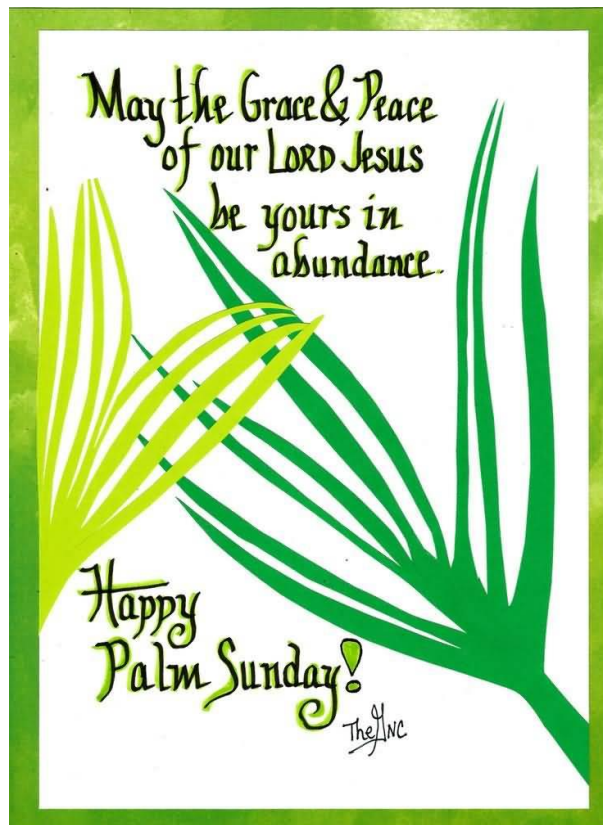
We give thanks for all those key workers, hospital staff, and brave volunteers who are on the front line serving our communities. They act in love and compassion putting themselves at risk, to help others and stop the rise of fatalities.

We can all serve as Jesus did, we can all participate in the power of healing prayer... and we can all give thanks to God for the goodness and grace we have in our lives, during these very difficult times.



Keep each other safe, keep each other in our thoughts, and keep smiling....Jesus loves you!

Amen.



Dot Jackson-Lawer

This would have been for All Age Worship in St Edmund's Allestree

Palm Sunday, 5 April 2020