

Rainham Christian Fellowship Palm Sunday Worship at Home

It seems strange not to be meeting together for this Palm Sunday, but then much is strange in our lives at the moment. Even though we are apart I thought it would be good to share some thoughts together and to remember, even in our own homes, we can be together in worship.

I hope you find these ideas helpful and encouraging and know God's presence with you
Peter

Reading: Mark 11:1-11 Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, ² saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'"

⁴ They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, ⁵ some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" ⁶ They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. ⁷ When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. ⁹ Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

"Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

¹⁰ "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

¹¹ Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

A Prayer.

Lord Jesus, we worship you this morning and ask that, as you came to Jerusalem all those years ago so you will come to us this morning.

We ask you to come as our king, but gently lest we be overwhelmed by your holiness.

We ask you to come as our saviour, to enable us to rejoice in your presence

Take the best and the worst of us and make us into something precious for you.

Give us the courage to follow you through the valley of death, to fear no evil and know you are with us.

Keep us faithful in the certain hope of your resurrection to come.

For your precious name's sake

Amen

A Song: (Click the link below and don't be distracted by the advert!)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YApEljvE6S4>

Dinah's Lamb. - A story for Passover

I was woken as the first hint of daylight could be seen in the sky. With a thrill of excitement, I hurried myself ready. Today was going to be a special day. I love my mother dearly but, in common with most children, there is a special excitement of being allowed to spend the day with your father.

We set out together, my hand in his, skipping along at his side, my mother's admonitions ringing in my ears.

"Be good! Don't run off! Don't get in the way! Keep warm! Take your shawl off it gets to hot!" her anxiety lending an unintended harshness to her voice.

"Don't worry mummy" I called, my mind already leaving such concerns behind. I prattled away happily as we strolled along the road, my father smiling in indulgent disinterest in my nonsense.

At the city gates, we met up with our travelling companions. Once we had dutifully fulfilled the required courtesy of greetings we continued on our journey, three men and a little girl together.

"Shouldn't she be at home helping her mother prepare for the feast?" One challenged my father

"No!" he replied firmly "She comes with me to fetch the lamb" confirming his words by hoisting me on his shoulders and bearing me in pride along the road.

We covered several miles with me happily perched on my father's shoulders, the early morning smells of the city faded into the fresher wider smell of the countryside whilst beneath me the men happily grumbled about the need to travel out of Jerusalem for the lamb.

"No way am I paying those ridiculous prices in the temple"

"They're just out to make money"

"It's not supposed to be like that"

"One day God will really turn up at the temple, that'd shake them up. I'd like to see the look on their smug faces then"

Feeling far above such worries, secure in my vantage point, I happily daydreamed the morning away, my hands entwined in my father's curly hair. It was in this manner with the city long vanished behind us that our destination began to materialise out of the haze of the morning sunshine.

As we approached I saw my aunt and cousins come out of the house and my father lowered me to the ground to run ahead to enjoy their praise at how grown up I looked before being eclipsed by the adults' arrival.

Once settled in and refreshed I begged permission to play with my cousins and we vanished into our own world of adventure and exploration inevitably ending in the barn with the sheep. It was there that I first met our lamb. All soft woolly playfulness, half fright and half fun at the petting of our little group of children. Eventually our game was curtailed by the emergence of my father from the sunshine outside.

"Come on Dinah" he teased me "Don't play with your food"

I laughed delightedly, not because the joke was new, or funny, for that matter, but because it was a moment of tradition. The same joke played out each year as a gesture of affection and belonging. My father expressing his love with banter in the way that men do.

There is always that tinge of sadness, the unspoken knowledge that the lamb was to be sacrificed as a reminder God freeing us from slavery in Egypt. My Father often tried to explain it to me with another joke.

"It's the difference between involvement and commitment" he would say,
"In the Passover meal, we are all involved, but the lamb is committed"

We began our farewells, the sadness of parting assuaged by the knowledge we would soon be together again when they joined us for the Passover meal so busily being prepared by my mother. With the lamb usurping my place on my father's shoulders we set off retracing our steps of this morning. The journey seemed different now. It was not just the call of home after a busy day, but a sense of excitement and expectation seemed to hang in the air.

As we travelled the number of people along the road was growing, snatches of comment increasing my father's disquiet.

"What's going on father", I whispered, somewhat overawed by the growing crowd.

"A rabbi from up north seems to be coming" He replied, pulling me to one side.

"I'd be happier if you were back on my shoulders" he continued "Don't want to lose you in the crowd"

I was more than pleased with this arrangement and used my vantage point to see what was going on

As we came over the hill and we could look down the road towards Jerusalem. The noise from the crowd increased. Swept away with the emotions of the moment we all began to sing those lovely psalms that were normally sung as we processed up to the temple on feast days.

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

Palm leaves and cloaks were thrown on the road making a path for a group of men trying to look important but their eyes betraying their bewilderment. Then I saw him. The man! I can't say what it was about him that struck me. He wasn't wearing any fancy clothes or gold rings. He looked very ordinary but at the same time he was different from anyone I have ever met.

He was riding on a donkey bouncing along in that rather ungainly gait, his head bobbing above the rest of the crowd. For a moment we looked at each other. He smiled at the strange sight of a little girl clutching a lamb sitting above the heads of the crowd. His eyes met mine the kindest, fiercest, gentlest and sternest eyes I have ever seen. There was something in them. Something that seemed to capture me, in one way they reminded me of my father, that look of love and pride he kept especially for me, but there was something else in them. Something I couldn't neither grasp nor forget.

Then he was gone, swept away on a tide of joy and excitement we fell behind the crowd as it raced the afternoon shadows to Jerusalem. Quiet now I was returned to the ground and walked by my father's side both of us silent as we dealt with the emotions of the day.

Finally, we arrived home and I was wrapped up in my mother's embrace. She ushered me into supper in contented weariness, my skin tingling from a day in the open air. With a pang of sadness, I gave the lamb one last stroke before my father led him away.

"We can't have Passover without the lamb" he reminded me ".

As he carried it off, I caught its eye. It was in that moment I understood the look in the eye of the man on the donkey - the look of a lamb being led to sacrifice. I suppose my father would say.

"God is not just involved in his people; He is committed to us."

Song: My Jesus, My Saviour (again, please ignore the ads)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mqSQvoinDE4>

Peter's Thoughts

We call it Palm Sunday - we wave imitation branches, sing triumphal songs and celebrate. Just as the people of Jerusalem did all those years ago. At the moment we may not feel like celebrating, it is hard to be so triumphal. We face an uncertain future and many of us are feeling anxious and afraid. Yet, I wonder if that is so much different to how Jesus felt. He knew why he was going to Jerusalem. He knew the awful ordeal he would face. In a few days' time he would be sweating blood in fear and distress at the thought of it.

In his Easter Hymn, Graham Kendrick expresses it like this

Led like a lamb to the slaughter in silence and shame
There on Your back You carried a world of violence and pain
Bleeding, dying, bleeding, dying

He goes on to celebrate the joy of Easter morning – *"You're alive, You're alive. You have risen, Alleluia!"*

But we haven't got there yet. We still have to walk with Jesus towards the cross. Can we stay faithful in prayer while he weeps in gethsemane? Can we say with Him, "Not my will but yours"?

This is the challenge of Holy week – the challenge to surrender to our Father's will and walk faithfully by His side, holding on to his hand and know that no matter what may happen he will never let us go.

Trusting him through the hard times in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection.

Worship Activity

1. Print some copies of the palm leaf on the next page
2. Write on one things you are grateful for
3. Write on another things you are worried about
4. Write on a third people you want to pray for
5. Place all the leaves on a Bible – The word of God
6. And say the words of this old chorus as a prayer

*Father, I place into your hands the things I cannot do,
Father, I place into your hands the things that I've been through.
Father, I place into your hands the way that I should go,
For I know I always can trust you.*

*Father, I place into your hands my friends and family.
Father, I place into your hands the things that trouble me.
Father, I place into your hands the person I would be,
For I know I always can trust you.*

*Father, we love to see your face, we love to hear your voice.
Father, we love to sing your praise and in your name rejoice.
Father, we love to walk with you and in your presence rest,
For we know we always can trust you.*

*Father, I want to be with you and do the things you do.
Father, I want to speak the words that you are speaking too.
Father, I want to love the ones that you will draw to you,
For I know that I am one with you.*

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Song: Casting Crowns - Praise you in This Storm (Official Lyric Video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0YUGwUgBvTU>

Blessing:

May the Blessing of God, The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be among you, and remain with you always

Amen

