

starters for Sunday

Palm Sunday

Sixth Sunday in Lent

13 April 2014

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to thank Rev Grant Barclay, Minister of St Kentigern's Church, Kilmarnock and Convenor of the Council of Assembly, for his thoughts on the sixth Sunday in Lent.

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Quick Guide...

Helping people prepare for reading the Bible in worship can make a real difference. Overcoming nerves, reading in ways suitable to the text, speaking clearly etc.

You may wish to email these three links to the people reading Scripture on Sunday to support them in their involvement in worship: [Managing your nerves](#); [Creative readings](#); [Worship at the Lectern](#)

Introduction

The Revised Common Lectionary readings for Palm Sunday reflect the focus of the day, Christ's entry into Jerusalem. The comment in Common Order, 1994, p.623, though, suggests that considering the Entry alone is insufficient without at least paying some attention to the Passion narrative.

Attending church only on Sundays presents a particular problem at this moment in the Christian year. A generally positive and upbeat mood on Palm Sunday as Jesus is welcomed into Jerusalem with shouts of 'Hosanna' ('God saves!') is, if anything, enhanced on Easter Sunday as Christ's resurrection, God's saving act, is celebrated. While this joyful double celebration is appropriate, there is the risk that it masks the intervening conflict, betrayal, isolation and death of Christ's passion without which Easter would have little meaning and no context.

This might be most noticeable in relation to children's involvement in both these services, but the experience of adults who do not participate in worship services during Holy Week is similar.

These two great events, the enthusiastic acclamation of Jesus as he enters Jerusalem and Christ's victory over sin and death certainly ought to be celebrated with great joy. They need to be seen, though, in the context of the whole events of Holy Week.

[Matthew 21: 1-16](#)

The crowd is described as 'shouting' or 'crying out'. While the word can mean simply to shriek or make a loud noise, it generally means to shout words which are meant to be heard (BAGD, 2nd Ed., p.447). That is likely to direct any hearer's attention both to the people who are shouting, and the object of their cries. No doubt the shouts of the crowd draw people's attention; bystanders look around as it were, asking the question: Who is shouting? Those who are



shouting must be, to some extent, aware that people will look at them. Their act is one of witness.

The shouting, though, is primarily intended to draw attention to its object. The people are not shouting, 'Notice us!' They are shouting about 'the Son of David,' the 'one who comes in the name of the Lord.' Jesus' act in entering Jerusalem on a donkey is deeply significant, but would Jerusalem have been stirred simply by someone riding into town on a colt, had there been no acclamation? Did it take a shouting crowd to encourage people to pay attention to the fact that something special was going on? Was the crowd's lively involvement itself a signpost to Jesus' entering Jerusalem as he did? If so, it might be possible to speak of the 'ministry' of this crowd, performing a service to Jesus by making him the focus of more popular attention, and drawing people to notice him. The crowd may, then, be said to have a part to play in the fulfilment of scripture, if the suburbs (the 'daughter') of Jerusalem are not only to see but to recognise their king coming to them (Zechariah 9:9).

The same kind of double-effect can be seen in verse fifteen. The children's 'shouting' in the Temple area (using the same verb as the crowd 'shouting' at the Entry) seems to scandalise the chief priests and teachers of the law. They are indignant both at who is doing the shouting ('the children') and the message they're exclaiming: 'Hosanna to the Son of David.' Jesus appears, though, to welcome both the children and their specific contribution. In an age which did not care greatly for children, and among Temple leaders who may not have had much time for them, it is particularly noticeable that in a fast-moving series of significant events Jesus is recorded as welcoming what the children shouted; indeed, he affirms it with a reference to Psalm 8: 2.

What the crowd does actually matters. The crowd has an important part to play. Adults drawing attention to the fulfilment of scripture is entirely valid and appropriate; the contribution of younger people shouting acclamation to the Son of David is completely fitting.

[Psalm 118](#)

Although the Lectionary reading here focuses our attention on verses one and two, then nineteen to twenty-nine, it might be worth spending a moment reviewing some of the actions described throughout the Psalm, for they are not dissimilar to the Palm Sunday crowd. In giving thanks to the Lord for his enduring love, Israel is encouraged to 'say' (v.2), is invited in times of



anguish to 'cry' (v.5) and, experiencing the Lord's help and rescue, 'shouts [for] joy and victory' (v.15) in order to 'proclaim' (v.17) what the Lord has done. The clear focus of the Psalm is on the initiative of God, on God's acts, on the refuge, rescue and salvation which God provides. In this the Psalm clearly foreshadows the work of Christ which culminates in the events of Holy Week and Easter. Equally clear is the response which God's people, those who have received God's help and rescue, are to make. It is not muted. It is loud, heart-felt and full of reverence.

Passion

[Matthew 27: 11-54](#)

Not all shouting, though, is good. This time the crowd, assembled before Pilate to choose the one prisoner whom Pilate would traditionally release at the Feast, does not listen to the governor's advice. Pilate doesn't simply try to understand why Jesus should be crucified: he argues for this prisoner's release. It is clear Pilate does not agree with the crowd's wish. Yet the only response the governor receives is a louder and more insistent clamour for Christ's crucifixion. Pilate foresees a riot and gives in.

Leon Morris offers an interesting perspective when he suggests that the crowd before Pilate consisted mainly of Jerusalem locals who would not have known Jesus well, as opposed to the Galilean crowd who welcomed him on Palm Sunday. The Jerusalem mob were more keen on political freedom perhaps even by revolutionary means; those whose vision was more religious were largely silent. Perhaps today, as then, Jesus needs those who follow him to speak out clearly for him in the midst of many voices, all competing to have the attention and allegiance of their hearers. Faced with the real risk of riot in a tinder-box situation in Jerusalem at Passover, Pilate is in Morris's words 'a governor who was not thinking clearly and who was ready to take the easy way out' (Morris, p.707). He took that route, though, pressured by the shouting of the crowd.

[Isaiah 50: 4-9a](#)

In the light of Pilate's experience with the crowd, the reading from Isaiah 50 is interesting. The decision to have Jesus crucified does not follow careful examination of the facts. It could be said, instead, to be a rash decision, not one flowing from an 'instructed tongue (v.4) which is the



gift of the sovereign Lord his servant. Yet the thrust of this passage is the openness of the faithful believer to obeying God's will, even to the extent of yielding to mockery and abuse. Isaiah presumes in vv.8-9 that there will be some form of legitimate legal process, that proper charges will be brought, that the accused will know the identity of his accuser, that there might be proper debate and the examination of evidence. Instead, in the courtyard of the praetorium, individual members of the crowd may feel the security of anonymity and a sense of release from their usual obligations to pursue justice. Inflamed by emotion, and pulled on by the common clamour all around, we see that Jesus stands alone, sentenced but without any real accusation and with little supporting evidence. 'Crucify him!' they shout, listening to no reason, and seeking only his death. There is some irony reading this passage in the context of the crowd before Pilate.

[Psalm 31: 9-16](#)

The contrast in this Psalm is remarkable, for here the Psalmist appears to speak quietly and from a position of oppression, confident that the Lord will certainly hear him, and will also be his rescuer. The pleas in this Psalm, placed on the lips of Jesus as he is condemned by popular assent, are powerful. 'Never let me be put to shame'(v.1), 'come quickly to my rescue, be my rock of refuge'(v.2), 'free me from the trap set for me'(v.4), 'Be merciful to me, O Lord, for I am in distress'(v.9).

The Psalm also introduces the opposite of a crowd motif. Neither neighbours nor friends are willing to stand alongside the afflicted one in this Psalm. Instead, they flee from him or forget him, thrown away like discarded broken pottery. In this the disciples' flight in terror at Christ's crucifixion is foreshadowed, and in such isolation Jesus, like the Psalmist can only trust in the Lord (v.14). Yet that trust is not misplaced, even if Jesus' experience on the cross is one of forsaken-ness. For God has promised, in covenant, to be the Psalmist's God, and Christ's Father for ever. This is the Lord who holds the Psalmist's life (his 'times') gently but securely (v.15). This is the Lord who saves according to his unfailing love (v.16), and who demonstrates salvation for the world through giving up his only Son to death.



Philippians 2: 5-11

This reflection on the humility of Christ, some think, is an example of an early Christian hymn. If so, it would have been sung or recited by a group – a crowd, if you will. There is, in this understanding, a corporate element to the use to which this passage may originally have been put. There is also teaching about how those who are Christ's should live in relationship with others. Their attitude should be one of service and of humble self-giving. Christ's giving of himself is, though, greater than any offering we can make, for he not only humbled himself to death but made himself nothing, not clinging or grasping to equality with God but being made in human likeness.

The purpose of this hymn is to encourage practical attitudes and action among the people of God: 'In your relationships with one another, have the same attitude of mind Christ Jesus had.' (v.5). There is a social element to this teaching: this hymn to Christ's humility is not only to be honoured in singing but in the lives of those who, trusting him and following his example, are to look out for the interests of others in the group and not simply their own. This crowd, formed in Christ's life, death and resurrection, is not simply to be a disparate gathering of like-minded people. Much more than a crowd, this is a church – at least in its early stages. It is a united people, ambitious not for individual gain but for corporate blessing, as together with one another and indeed with 'every tongue' on earth and heaven they praise the Christ who is Lord and give glory to God. The whole company of heaven constitutes quite a crowd! We are part of God's people, and as such we have the privilege of serving his world, and speaking out to praise the One who comes in the name of the Lord.

Sermon ideas

Who really commands our attention? Various people and groups in the Gospel narratives speak out: the Palm Sunday crowd, the children in the Temple area and the crowd before Pilate. It was a noisy world then, as now, and sometimes the volume of the shouting may have been more forceful than the quality of the argument. These days we may have less opportunity to be moved by the united shouts of thousands, though the experience of rugby and football matches is well-known. It is more likely that the voices which inform our attitudes and decisions about how to live and what to buy are transmitted over airwaves and through the Internet. Big



business spends a great deal to communicate many messages, and more recently the effect of social media can be seen to have a potentially powerful impact. Perhaps crowd-based influence is giving way in a technological world to cloud-based influence. What is our response, as Christians, to these modern influences?

What would you say if someone asked you what you thought about Jesus? A friend of mine was approached on the high street of a large town one Saturday afternoon by a man with a microphone. They were recording some 'vox pops' for a local radio programme to be broadcast near Easter. The question was: 'What do think about Christianity?' If the microphone was under your nose, the tape was running (this was indeed some time ago!) and a reporter was expecting you to say something, what would you say? Would your faith in Jesus inform your speaking, or would your first reaction be to apologise for having faith? Those who were in the crowd on Palm Sunday drew inspiration for their acclamation of Jesus from the Psalms, using phrases not unlike modern sound-bites to say something which would resonate both with them and with many others in Jerusalem at that time. Perhaps opportunities do come to us to make statements about Jesus. We needn't shout or be unpleasantly insistent, but our comments may help others to see Jesus in a different light.

The world might have changed a lot and become more inter-connected by technology, but there is great power when a crowd gathers. Great political change has been encouraged through the united voice of thousands, and this continues to the present day. We can also think of regimes which have manipulated crowds' emotions for their own ends. People spend significant sums to be part of a crowd at a sporting event, or a pop concert, and some remember large Christian gatherings in the past in Scotland, or at contemporary gatherings like Clan, Spring Harvest or Greenbelt. What do we think about crowds, especially from a Christian perspective? Are we inherently suspicious of them, or perhaps envious and wish our church experience had some of these elements more of the time? When we gather with small numbers of other believers we can be tempted to be discouraged. At those times do we have the sort of outlook suggested in the letter to the Philippians and remember that our voices, perhaps few in number, are joined with the whole company of heaven? We are less alone than we may at first think!



Prayers

Collect

Lord Jesus Christ,
on the first Palm Sunday
you entered the rebellious city
where you were to die.
Enter our hearts, we pray,
and subdue them to yourself.
And as your disciples blessed your coming
and spread garments and branches in your way,
make us ready to lay at your feet
all that we have and are,
that we too may bless your coming
in the name of the Lord.

or

Almighty and ever-living God,
in tender love for all our human race
you sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ
to take our flesh
and suffer death upon a cross.
Grant that we may follow
the example of his great humility,
and share in the glory of his resurrection;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Preparation for Worship

As the crowds welcomed Christ, acclaiming him as the One who came in the name of the Lord,
give us insight not only to recall these events but to discern their meaning for our lives now as
we gather to offer you our praise, in the name of Jesus. Amen.



Call to worship

Blessed is he who comes in the Lord's name!

Hosanna in the highest! (Matthew 21:9)

Scripture sentence

See – your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey; on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
(Zechariah 9:9)

Adoration

Redeemer God, we praise you for all that you have done for your world.

As Christ entered the city to waving palm branches, cloaks spread as a carpet
and the cheers of those who proclaimed him Messiah and king;

may we today follow Christ whom we worship,

even travelling in the way of his cross;

so that, dying and rising with him

we may enter your kingdom

and joyfully claim you the God who rescues your world

in and through the same Jesus Christ who lives and reigns

with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.

God whose love lasts forever,

your only Son took the form of a servant and,

not holding on tightly to equality with you,

gave himself completely, remaining obedient right to death.

Through your Spirit's work in us,

help us to think like Christ, so that having his attitude

we may share his humility

and be with him in his glory.

Confession

We confess that we are not so different

from those who welcomed Christ into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday



yet later shouted 'Crucify him!' or remained silent in the face of injustice.
We have betrayed you too, Lord Jesus
by our sins both secret and known.
Yet you died for people like us,
and you rose on the third day that we might be redeemed.
For the sake of Jesus Christ do not hold our sins against us.

Jesus Christ, our King of glory,
we have not been outspoken for you.
We have not called for your death,
but neither have we shouted of your greatness,
nor expressed delight in the salvation you have won for us.
Help us to see your glory, draw us closer to you
that we may become more faithful, and more joyful
servants of the King.

Assurance of pardon

The Psalmist says:

But I trust in you, O Lord, I say 'You are my God.'

My times are in your hands;

deliver me from my enemies

and from those who pursue me.

Let your face shine on your servant;

save me in your unfailing love.

In Christ, God hears; God answers; God sets us free.

In Christ we are forgiven. Thanks be to God!

Supplication

Gracious God, your Son invited those who would follow him
to deny themselves, take up their cross each day and follow him.
Strengthen our will that, as we obey Jesus our Lord



we may find grace to put him before all,
to deny our selfish interests
and follow where he leads,
all to your glory through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

Illumination

Lord who still speaks,
in all the clamour of the world
none is more true than you
and no word is more reliable than yours.
Through your Spirit's working in our lives
enable us to quieten all these other voices
and listen for your Word.
Speak to us of our King who draws close in peace
and offers life even at the cost of his own;
that we might be faithfully, joyfully and clearly his
in lives given to your service.

Thanksgiving

God who is present everywhere and at all times,
we praise you that in the events from Palm Sunday to Good Friday
as Jesus Christ entered the city, taught in the Temple,
broke bread in the upper room and was lifted up on the cross,
you opened to us the path to eternal life.
Trusting in the One who has come in your name
may we serve you in the new life you offer us
and walk faithfully in your ways
all the days of our lives
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit
one God, now and for ever. Amen.



Dedication

Gracious God,

As the whole city was stirred when Jesus entered Jerusalem,
the shouts of the crowd heard above the clamour at market stalls,
the eager discussions of the theologians, the ordinary business of life,
we give ourselves heart and soul, mind and body, time and wealth
to honour Jesus Christ your Son as Lord
that those who live and work around us may see him
and trust in his redeeming love to your glory.

**Jesus Christ we acclaim you,
for you come in the name of the Lord.**

Amen.

Intercession

Things change so quickly. For Jesus, the cheers of the crowd became jeers from those who wanted him condemned. We know in a world of quick and sometimes terrible change, we need to pray continually.

We pray to you, Lord of palm-branches and the cross,
for you understand us and in love you have promised
not to push away any who come to you.

So we pray for people who feel pushed away:
pushed away from a living faith in Jesus by pressure from friends and family;
those who feel pushed away by other people in churches
if they do not share the same kinds of ideas, or ways, or clothes;
for people who are pushed out by those who want power,
whose main love to be noticed, to have control.

We pray for your church that all those who trust in Jesus
will be made able by your Spirit to follow his humility,
to see and imitate his servant life, to welcome and not to condemn.



Help your church to be like Jesus.

We pray to you, Lord of palm-branches and the cross,
for you know the warm glow of being praised and the loneliness of being hated.

We pray for world leaders,
quick to stand in the limelight taking decisions which affect everyone in the world
but slow at times to do the steady, less glamorous work to which they are called.

We pray for world leaders to understand their role to serve the peoples of the world,
that posturing will be replaced by practical action to make a difference,
and jockeying for position be replaced by genuine efforts
to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and care for those who are weak.

In days when food banks are required in our land
to feed families who struggle to provide the basics for life,
we ask that you will re-arrange our priorities and help us to live more like Jesus.

We pray to you, Lord of palm-branches and the cross,
because you know how quickly life changes to death.

We pray for those who have recently lost those whom they have loved.

In the shock, confusion, pain and sorrow especially of unexpected loss,
we pray for hearts to be open to the comfort of your Spirit,
shown through friendship and community and as deep calls to deep.

We remember those we know who mourn in these days,
who need to be sure of that you invite those in sorrow to turn to you;
and we name them before you now...

We ask, God of grace, that you will make us more like some of the crowd:
that we will follow Jesus and give him our praise in the way we live;
that we will turn away from wrong and evil and stand on the Master's side,
that we will be faithful in worshipping the one who has come in the Lord's name
through our singing, our worship, our prayers, our attention,
in giving our skills, time and means through the days of our lives;



and in the offering which we make now.

Bless, we pray, all that is given to your glory and the good of many.

Through Jesus who is the Saviour of all. Amen

Commemorating the Faithful Departed

God of all ages

whose Son received praise from a crowd one day at Passover outside Jerusalem

and who is honoured with unceasing worship from saints throughout the generations

we thank you for those who have lived by faith in deed and word

in all times and places; and for those whose lives have encouraged us

to join the great crowd who proclaim Christ as Lord.

As we remember their witness and give you thanks

enable us to live like them, to be encouraged by our continuing partnership in Christ

and bring us with them to everlasting glory where all your people praise you

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Other Prayers

Worship Now Volume II, published in 1989 by the Saint Andrew Press, contains an insightful introduction and two prayers for Palm Sunday under the theme 'Outreach'. Given the comments on the passages above, this contribution may be appropriate and is repeated here since the book may now be more difficult to obtain. It is available second-hand through [Amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk) used for about £3.

Introduction

Leader Let us draw near to God

All For whoever lives in the shelter of the Most High is safe in the shadow of his wings.

Leader Let us bring our lives to God

All For God carries us day by day, he never slumbers and he never sleeps.

Leader Let us open our hearts to God



- All** For he knows all about us and has discerned our thoughts from afar.
- Leader** Let us confess our sins to God
- All** For he is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- Prayer 1**
- Leader** Jesus said, 'We are now going to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be given up to the chief priests and the doctors of the law; they will condemn him to death and hand him over to the foreign power.'
- Let us pray:** Lord our God, on this day, Jesus your Son entered Jerusalem, the centre of politics, the capital of religion, the heart of the nation's life, for you are the God who is always pressing at the centre and striking at the heart of things.
- All** Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord.
- Leader** In the market-place, where people buy, and sell, and trade,
- All** Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord.
- Leader** In the board room, where people wheel, and deal, and bargain,
- All** Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord.
- Leader** In the law court, where people probe, and debate, and judge,
- All** Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord.
- Leader** In the school and the college, where people teach, and learn, and discuss
- All** Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord.
- Leader** In the council chamber, where people argue, and plan, and compromise,
- All** Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord.
- Leader** In the home, where people grow, and share, and create,
- All** Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord.
- Leader** In the Church, where people pray, and worship, and betray,
- All** Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord. For your love's sake.
Amen.



Prayer 2

Lord our God, you have called us to be the Church: on the move, travelling light, dying to live, ready to lose ourselves for the sake of the world.

You have invited us to be the Church with a purpose, sustained by your Spirit, united for outreach, committed to the gospel for the hope of the world.

We are the Church, but with a problem: for the Church is too strong for the weak, too staid for the young, too respectable for the poor, too divided for mission, too much of a reflection of the culture around us, too unsure of our message to speak to the world.

Move us from where we are to where you want us to go: so that we have a sense of your world-wide communion, and share something of the vitality of the Church in Africa, the vigour of the Church in South America, the poverty of the Church in India, and the courage of the Church on lands where she is persecuted.

Take us from what we are to what you want us to be, so that we become a community where all are welcomed and no-one is excluded, all are valued and no-one is made to feel inadequate, all are forgiven and no-one is too ashamed to belong, all are encouraged and no-one is too hurt to come among us. Lead us from who we are to who you want us to be, so that patience is developed in us, kindness is assumed in us, gentleness is part of us, compassion flows out from us, truth is second nature to us, no score of wrongs is kept among us, goodness is our everyday pattern, and the commitment of love is binding upon us, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, in whose words we say the prayer that spans the world: Our Father...

Other Prayers

Holy God, we come here to worship you at the start of this important and mixed-up week. We remember that one day a crowd shouted praise when Jesus came into Jerusalem, while only a few days later a crowd cried out that he should be crucified.

We remember the people who ran where the action was, who saw Jesus having authority and control as he overturned the money-changers' tables and beat clever people in debates. Only a few days later this same Jesus was their prisoner, unable to escape, powerless to do anything when people laughed and made fun of him and his ideas.



This is day of children singing but it leads to a day when grown men lied or ran away afraid. This is the world in which our Lord spent his last few days on earth.

Holy God, your friendship and your self-giving are wonderfully beyond us. We come with the sweet-sour flavour of Palm Sunday in our minds and hearts. We do not come here to try to ignore the looming shadow of the cross. We come here because of it.

We come, praising you for the life of Jesus, that he did entirely as you wished as he came to look for and rescue all those who are lost, that in doing your will he showed wonderful, loving courage.

We look to Jesus. We come, adding our hosanna to the millions of voices, past and present, who have entered into the freedom which has come from you at such a high cost through the deep obedience of Christ.

God of Jesus, we adore you; give us grace to love you more! Hear us as we join our voices in worship and in prayer as we say together: Our Father...

Lord Jesus Christ, you had no interest in serving yourself. Your focus was entirely on obeying your Father and in serving others. You did not seek your own glory, only the glory of the Father who sent you. Because of that God has highly exalted you, giving you the name that is above every name. Teach us today what it really means to have authority, what service may look like, how power can be used wisely and well. Help us the better to honour you as you desire, through loving God with heart, mind and soul; and loving our neighbour as ourselves. So may we build the kingdom for which we pray – your kingdom, until you return in glory and gather all things to yourself. In the name of Christ. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, servant of all, friend of all, Saviour of all, ruler of all: receive our worship. To you be glory and honour, praise and thanksgiving, this day and for evermore.

Lord, teach us whoever we are, however little we think we have to offer, that someday, some time, our moment will come. Help us not to be slow to listen for the day when our contribution to Christ's kingdom will be requested in those lovely words: 'The Lord needs it.'



Lord, you invite us to be your followers and friends not only when the sun shines and all is well, but also in times of darkness and cold. Make us the type of friends you want. Then, when you need a friend to be there, we shall not make excuses or turn away or pretend that we don't know you. Give us grace that we might see more clearly. Make us able to see you in those who are poor, struggling, cold, hungry, naked or without hope, and inspire us by your Spirit to be friends so that many people, all loved by you, may see your care through us even though what we do may be far from perfect.

Lord Jesus, we stand at the start of a week which is mysterious to us; a week which is filled with forgiveness as deep as our deepest needs; a week in which you promise through your Son life which far outstrips our greatest imagining. The road there lies along a valley of darkness, loneliness, suffering and death.

Lord Jesus, we thank you that for us you accepted the crowd's acclamation. For us you endured mockery at the hands of Herod and the soldiers. You took the betrayal of the crowd who called for a murderer to be freed, and you took the forsaken-ness of the Cross where you hung as a criminal and traitor. For us you transformed all that into life eternal: the very heart and centre of our faith and our hope. There you revealed the extent of the forgiveness of a holy, loving and faithful God.

Teach us the extent of your self-giving, so that we may acclaim you our King of love, hands held wide in welcome and bearing the marks of nails. Accept our worship Lord Jesus, whose name is above every name; and to Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, be all glory, world without end. Amen.

All-age worship and activities

Palm Sunday is an opportunity for the church of all ages to worship and learn together, either for part or the whole of the service. This range of ideas is meant to stimulate planning for all-age parts of the service.

A Holy Week Frieze

The whole events of Holy Week might be illustrated in a frieze. This has the benefit of capturing the whole of Christ's Passion, and Resurrection, in one image. The left side of the frieze could be



coloured for Palm Sunday, leaving only outlines for subsequent events. Parts of the image could be drawn separately and children invited to add these sections at appropriate parts of the service. Would it be possible for all those in worship, taking their cues from the shouts of acclamation of the crowd on Palm Sunday, to add what they would shout if Jesus were entering their community? These could be written on separate sheets, or pre-printed speech bubbles, and affixed to the frieze. If all-age activities are planned for some days during Holy Week there might be opportunity to see the frieze become progressively coloured, and completed on Easter Sunday. A simple example of this sort of idea can be seen at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgrVjlwzrul.

Radio Play

The shouts of the two crowds might be contrasted through a short play in which sections of the congregation contribute at particular times. While a script is not given here, the idea is that a narrator could hold the piece together, with contributions from 'crowds' both positively for Jesus (using words from Mt 21:9) and negatively against him (using words from Mt 27:22-23). The narration might make clear the distinction between the two crowds, and the piece could be developed to ask us as a gathered group for whom we shout, and when and why? Whom do we support through our words, our presence, our interest? Whom do we condemn through disinterest, criticism, or by being swept along on a tide of negativity?

Pop-up Palm Sunday

'Pop-up' things are those which happen without apparently very much preparation. This all-age presentation of elements of the Palm Sunday story from Barnabas in Churches at www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk/easter-palms-for-holy-week/ requires no preparation on the part of the congregation.

Palm Sunday and Easter dramas

Three dramas, from Palm Sunday through the Crucifixion to Easter Sunday are available free of charge, though requiring registration, from engageworship.org at www.engageworship.org/ideas/Easter_Dramas and may be useful for a church drama group or youth group contribution to services and worship events around Easter.



Re-telling the Story

The resource freely available from the Barnabas in Churches website at www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk/easter-palm-sunday/ offers a contrast between a grand-looking horse and a humble donkey.

Musical Suggestions

CH4 396	And can it be that I should gain
CH4 367	Hosanna, loud hosanna
CH4 365	Ride on! Ride on in majesty!
CH4 36	Come into the streets with me!
CH4 370	Ride on, ride on, the time is right
CH4 369	Here comes Jesus on a donkey
CH4 651	Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might
CH4 768	Holy, holy, holy
Mission Praise 725	We cry hosanna, Lord
Junior Praise 264	We have a king who rides a donkey

RESOUNDworship (www.resoundworship.org) is a good source for contemporary praise available to download for a small fee in a range of styles. 'King of glory' from that collection may echo themes from the Philippians reading. It is, though, a hymn more suited for Easter.

Resources

C. John (Jack) Miller, formerly Professor of Practical Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary and Director of World Harvest Mission offers some of reflections about sharing faith and growing communities of Christian believers in an autobiographical work *A Faith Worth Sharing* (1999), available from www.amazon.co.uk/Faith-Sharing-lifetime-conversations-Christ/dp/0875523919/.

Newly available is *Scots Worship: Lent, Holy Week and Easter* by David Ogston and Johnston McKay which contains poems, prayers, liturgies, reflections and ideas for creative worship. There is more information at www.amazon.co.uk/Scots-Worship-Lent-Holy-



Easter/dp/0861537874/. More information is available from the Church of Scotland website (www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news_and_events/news/archive/2013/reverend_releases_new_worship_resource_book).

The issue of the relation between grassroots activism and the power of a relatively small privileged group, which some might see reflected in the Palm Sunday crowds and the instruction of the Pharisees that children be stopped from shouting, is explored in a piece by Symon Hill published in 2012, *The Hashtag Revolution*, available from www.thirdwaymagazine.co.uk/editions/sept-2012/features/the-hashtag-revolution.aspx.

For those whose memories go back far enough, the power of crowds might be illustrated through the 'Clapometer' from Opportunity Knocks. There, the volume of audience reaction to performers gave an initial indication of their popularity. It would be a trip down memory lane for some worshippers, and possibly entirely strange to anyone under forty! A clip is available on Youtube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=JOOYVCjCdvo.

Everett Rogers studied how ideas spread (Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 1995, New York: Free Press). He points out that while mass media channels allow the greatest number of people to hear about new ideas, products and practices, 'interpersonal channels are more effective in persuading an individual to accept a new idea'. (p.18). In other words, what we tell (or don't tell) one another matters greatly.



Additional Resources

Resourcing Mission



[Resourcing Mission](#) is host to Starters for Sunday and other key mission resources for download and purchase. Online booking is available for [Mission & Discipleship events](#). Please check back regularly, as new items are being added all the time. If there is something you'd like to see on this new site, please [contact us](#) via the website.

Prayer Resources

These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might look for in prayers. [Pray Now 2013](#) is available now from [St Andrew Press](#). [Revealing Love](#) will be available to purchase from November 2013.



Music Resources

The hymns mentioned in this material are ideas of specific hymns you might choose for this week's themes. However, for some excellent articles on church music and ideas for new music resources, please check out our online music magazine [Different Voices](#).

Preaching Resources



These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might preach this Sunday. [Preachers Perspectives](#) is a resource where we have asked twelve preachers to share the insights they have gathered through their experiences of writing and

delivering sermons regularly.

Scots Worship Resources

[The Kirk's Ear](#) - Scots in the Kirk series for Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and other times of the year

[Worship Ouk bi Ouk](#) - Metrical psalms, hymns, prayers and words for worship

[Scots Sacraments](#) may give you helpful material if you are celebrating Communion or have a Baptism.

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to express its thanks to the Rev Grant Barclay for providing us with this Sunday's material.

Please note that the views expressed in these materials are those of the individual writer and not necessarily the official view of the Church of Scotland, which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.

