

starters for Sunday

Palm Sunday

20 March 2016

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to thank the Very Rev David Lunan, former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland for his thoughts on Palm Sunday.

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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](#)

Into Your Hands

[Isaiah 58: 6](#)

Rather, is this not the fast I require: to loose the fetters of injustice, to untie the knots of the yoke, and set free those who are oppressed, tearing off every yoke?

[John 12: 12-13](#)

The next day the great crowd of pilgrims who had come for the festival, hearing that Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem, went out to meet him with palm branches in their hands, shouting ‘Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel!’

I would like to read from St Luke (9: 44). ‘The Son of Man will be delivered in the hands of men.’ Later Luke writes, (Luke 18: 32) ‘They will mock him, insult him and spit on him. They will whip him and kill him, but three days later he will rise to life. But the disciples did not understand any of these things.’ Before his death Jesus said, ‘Father into your hands I commit my spirit.’ (Luke 23: 46). Jesus commits himself into many hands, into the hands of men, the hands of God, our hands.

Today is Palm Sunday, but it is also the first day of Holy Week, the last days of our Lord’s earthly life. Palm Sunday was a demonstration. It was a demo. It was the unplanned, raucous, emotional outburst, by the people of Jerusalem and many pilgrims there for the Passover, of their desire for a king. They wanted and expected a freedom fighter, a warrior, who would lead them in an uprising against the detested Roman occupation. They had always assumed the Messiah would be a soldier, like Joshua, or David or a Judas Maccabaeus, two centuries before, or even a Gideon of the past. Further, in a demonstration of popular support, and perhaps to stampede Jesus into action immediately, to force his hand, they took advantage of a religious



festival for *political ends*. You will know that on the accusation affixed to the Cross, Pilate had written 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews'. The Pharisees tried to get Pilate to change it to 'He claimed to be King of the Jews'. However, Pilate insisted, 'What I have written, I have written.' It was a political crime.

We can imagine then the crowd's disappointment and disenchantment when, instead of proceeding to the Governor's House to tell him his time was up, he went to their Temple, their most sacred place, and told his own people to get out! In the words of a sixties musical 'We looked for a leader to free us from Rome, we thought we could rule much better at home; so we welcomed the Saviour with noises and din, but we didn't much want him to free us from sin.' Through his actions, Jesus was saying, don't blame the government for our problems: the faults lie within. It's always easier to point the finger, to find a scapegoat, to blame someone else, than to accept responsibility for ourselves. It is always easier to see the speck of dust in my brother's eye than the beam of wood in my own. We can begin to see how by Friday the crowds could be manipulated to call for Jesus' crucifixion, and why they asked for Barabbas to be released: he was a real freedom fighter, a real terrorist.

Crowds are notoriously fickle, but we can understand why their support evaporated, their false hopes and misguided dreams were dashed, and come to nought. Their mistake was to try to make Jesus the kind of person they wanted him to be, the kind of Saviour they were expecting. When he didn't fit their image of a Messiah, they turned their backs on him. They got rid of him; handed him over to the Romans.

It is a mistake we can still make – trying to make Jesus the way we'd like him to be. We are made in the image of God, but we try to make God in our image. And whenever we try to make God what he is not, we will be disillusioned, disappointed, disenchanting and heading for disaster. We will not find peace, we will not find that *shalom*, that wholeness, that holiness, that health and healing of body, mind and spirit, that reconciliation with God, that healing of our relationships, that healing of the nations that we long for – and that God wants to give us, and that *will* one day come: when at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord.



Prayers

Call to prayer, adoration, confession, supplication

Behold your king comes to you;
he is just, he brings salvation, he brings peace.

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest!

Let us pray

Lord Jesus Christ, we welcome you,
our Lord and our Saviour, our Servant and Friend.
We welcome you to this place, where your people have gathered.
We welcome you to our worship, we welcome you to our lives.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Blessed art thou Redeemer King,
for you reign sovereign in our hearts.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed art thou o saviour of the world,
for you have saved us from ourselves, giving yourself for us in love.

We greet you that we might learn of you,
we learn of you that we might love you.

Yet our love is lukewarm so quickly;
we forget you so easily;
we disown you so readily.
We are changeable in our devotion to you,
bending with the strongest wind, blown off course,
capitulating to our culture.
Lord have mercy.



We want you to help us, without our helping you;
we want your words of comfort, but not your words of rebuke.

Lord have mercy.

We want you to be nice, even if we are not.

We seek heaven hereafter, but worldliness now.

Christ have mercy, and grant us your peace.

Lord save us from our fickleness;

help us to stay the course, to stay with you,
to stand with you, and for you, and beside you.

Grant us your grace to overcome our sin,
grant us your Holy Spirit to enable us to follow you, Lord Jesus,
to have your compassion, your courage, your obedience;
that we might be strong enough to forgive others,
to love our neighbours, to strive for justice, to endure the cross,
and to conquer all things with love.

Help us o Father, to open ourselves to receive your Spirit,

and to walk with your Son;

that even we might be blessed in the name of the Lord;

that even we might sing, now and forever,

'Hosanna in the highest!'

Hear this our prayer o God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Dedication, thanksgiving, intercession, thanksgiving for the blessed departed, Lord's Prayer

Lord God, we bring you our offering, the sign of our love for you.

We could have done other things with this money,

some good, some not;

some wise, some not;

but we've chosen to give it to you.

For the purposes of your kingdom,



to bring good news to the poor,
and sight to the blind,
to bind up the broken-hearted.

Be thou our vision Lord God;
give us a glimpse of the glory beyond the tragedy,
of light at the end of the tunnel,
of Easter beyond Calvary.

Be our vision when the way before us is not clear;
when the way before us is not pleasant;
be our vision when our sight is dim,
and blindness paralyses us;
be our vision when insights are failing,
when revelations are rare;
be our vision, that we press on,
be our vision, that we perish not.

We give you our thanks Lord God,
for the life and teaching of your Son;
for his example of devotion, and courage and love;
help us to listen to his word, for his word is truth,
his words mean life, his words bring grace.

Help us not to overlook the words that make us uncomfortable,
that dying to ourselves we may rise to a new life in you;
in comfort beyond our imagining,
in the peace only you can give.

May we learn to give thanks for your harsh sayings,
that walking humbly we might stay close to you.



Hear us as we pray for others;
 those for whom every day is a season of Lent;
 of self-doubt, of suffering, of fear, of sorrow.

Those for whom every day requires courage, and sacrifice,
 living under the shadow of death.

We remember those who live with pain or loneliness,
 those who live in war zones, or in poverty, or oppression.

We hold them before you,
 and ask that you reach out with your powerful hand to heal, protect and restore.

And use us we pray to be the answer to our own prayers,
 and answers to the prayers of those who cry out to you.

United with them, united with one another, united with all the company of heaven,
 hear us, all-loving God, as we say together the prayer your Son has given us;

Our Father...



In addition to the above prayers, prepared by our contributor, other prayers may be found in *Living Stones* which is the theme for this year's Pray Now. It was also the theme for Heart and Soul 2015. *Living Stones* is available from [St Andrew Press](#)

Musical Suggestions

- | | |
|---------|-------------------------------|
| CH4 364 | All glory, laud and honour |
| CH4 374 | The Servant King |
| CH4 399 | My song is love unknown |
| CH4 365 | Rider on, ride on in majesty |
| CH4 367 | Hosanna loud hosanna |
| CH4 366 | Come into the streets with me |



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. [Living Stones](#) is available from [St Andrew Press](#).



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 pages [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 i the Kirk series for Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and other times of the year

[Wurship 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 Very Rev David Lunan 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.

