

## **Palm Sunday**

It's going to be another Palm Sunday without a procession this year. Can you remember 2 years ago when we met in the garden of the almshouses and then walked up by the river and round the church and into the west door? It was always chancy as to whether the singing would last out and how soon the choir at the front of the procession would be on a different verse from the people at the back! It may have felt quite amusing or even embarrassing at times but it was a good moment of "Christian witness" - of what goes on inside the church coming out into public view for all to see. As such it is of great value.



Today's reading shows public witness to Jesus as he is welcomed into Jerusalem by crowds laying down their precious cloaks for him to ride over.

### ***Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King. Mark 11: 1-11.***

*As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, 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. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'"*

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

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

*"Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"*

*"Hosanna in the highest heaven!"*

*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.*



But there's something not quite right here; the man welcomed as "he who comes in the name of the Lord" and as "the coming kingdom of our father David" is riding on a 'colt', which is a young horse, one that has not been yet trained for riding. Other Gospels refer to Jesus riding a donkey, an animal used to carry goods or for poor people who could not afford a horse to ride. Its a bit like Jesus is coming in to Jerusalem on a bicycle rather than in a rolls royce. Could this be because Jesus wants to show he is coming in peace, not to conquer? That he is coming as a 'man' rather than a king? That he knows his death is nearing?

One of the things that always strikes me about the Palm Sunday - Good Friday week is how quickly the crowd turn from praising Jesus to calling for his death. But History shows us lots of examples of when people have

changed their views very quickly - usually when carried along by the feelings of a crowd. The French people in Paris ended up killing the man (Robespierre) who had led them to rebel and overthrow their king just a few years before.

Crowds can bring change; it was 'people power' which overthrew the Communist dictatorships in countries like East Germany and Poland in the 1990s; the **people** of Myanmar are trying to get rid of their military government at the moment.



But it was also crowds which 'worshipped' Hitler and voted for him, it was a crowd which stormed the American capitol in the run up to last year's Presidential elections. Crowds can be swayed by clever speakers; its hard for us to resist crowd pressure, to go a different way from our friends.



It's here that our Christian faith helps us stay strong. It gives us values, a knowledge of what is 'right' and 'wrong'. It helps us decide when we read something on social media if this is a good attitude to have or a poor one. In school it helps us to make 'good' or 'bad' choices in how we behave.

#### Things to do:

1. Read the following poem by G. K. Chesterton, called "The Donkey". It's a lovely reflection on Palm Sunday.

When fishes flew and forests walked  
And figs grew upon thorn,  
Some moment when the moon was blood  
Then surely I was born.

With monstrous head and sickening cry  
And ears like errant wings,  
The devil's walking parody  
On all four-footed things.

The tattered outlaw of the earth,  
Of ancient crooked will;  
Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,  
I keep my secret still.

Fools! For I also had my hour;  
One far fierce hour and sweet:  
There was a shout about my ears,  
And palms before my feet.

2. If you like art, try making an illustration to go with this poem. If you're not sure about drawing a donkey look up some images on Google and cut them out.
3. If you can, visit St. Helen's between Sun. 28th March and Wed. 7th April to see the Easter garden in the west porch and collect a bag of things to eat and do. The full opening times are in the poster, below.



## The Easter Garden at St. Helen's church



Come and see our **Easter Garden** in the West porch of St. Helen's church, opposite the almshouses. There will be bags of goodies for children to take home and a display about the Easter story.

Sunday 28th March to Thurs. 1st April 2.00 - 4.00pm

Fri. 2nd April 10.00 - 12.00pm

Sat. 3rd April 10.00 -12.00 and 2.00 - 4.00pm

Sun. 4th to Wed. 7th April 2.00 - 4.00pm

