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WEEKLY LETTER – 10 APRIL 2022



Luke 19.28-40

**Jesus enters Jerusalem, so begins the beginning of the end
and the beginning of something new!**

Over the years, you and I have heard numerous reflections on Jesus' entry into Jerusalem – Palm Sunday. The central themes being a heady mixture of humility, triumph, celebration, defiance, courage, misunderstanding and proclamation of who Jesus is, by fickle crowd.

As we all know this famous event is the beginning of Holy Week. So, perhaps this is a good moment to think about why Jesus chose to go to Jerusalem, knowing perfectly well what lay ahead of him – a roller coaster of triumph leading to treachery, torture, death and the unexpected climax to his life on earth.

You will have heard that Jesus chose to go to Jerusalem 'to save us from our sins by dying on the cross'. Boy oh boy, this is a highly concentrated statement, and to some will sound rather like a blind fanatical statement of faith. Of course, it's not meant to be that, but it does need explaining!

What is for sure is that Jesus came into this world not to be tortured and killed on a cross, but to reveal in the fullest possible way God's undying love for all – a love that demonstrates that there is nothing he will not do for everyone on his creation – even misunderstanding, betrayal, humiliation, torture and death imposed by the very people he created.

Therefore Palm Sunday is the beginning of a unique week in which you can read about the events that lead up to Good Friday, and ponder on all the steps that God willingly takes to reveal his unlimited love for you. A week that focuses on the cross more as an unassailable symbol of God's unwavering and unfailing love and commitment to you. I hope you will write some of your thoughts down as you read and think about the events of Holy Week.

Let us pray that we may continue to cherish the sacred scriptures because they reveal not only God, but also how his heart longs for our lives to be in tune with His.

Stephen

Sunday Morning Worship in Christ Well, and on Zoom, at 10.30 am will be led by Mrs Judy Harris.

Bible Readings: Zechariah 9.9: Luke 19.28-40.

Cycle of Prayer in the Swansea Region – we will pray for Tabernacle, Mumbles.

TEA AND CHAT....

**Tuesday 12th April at 2pm-3pm
at Christ Well URC. Manselton Road**

Come along for a drink and a chat ...a time to share news and views.

**Easter/Spring Quiz
Everybody welcome.**

GOOD FRIDAY MORNING WORSHIP – 10.30 am – in Christ Well and on Zoom led by Rev Neil Riches

SERVANT KING (Lectionary Readings: Isaiah 50.4-9a: Psalm 31.9-16: Philippians 2.5-11: Luke 22.14-23:56)

Jesus, thank you for living the life of God in our hurting world, our human nature, our mortal flesh,
Thank you for emptying yourself, for pouring your goodness into the currents of our living.
Thank you for not claiming your privilege, nor overwhelming us with power,
but bearing our pain in your body and beckoning us with love.

Jesus, thank you for your victory.

Through your servant life, out of your savage death, by your suffering love,
You are crowned with honour and glory.

We bow our heads and hearts to declare, with the voices of creation, with the joy of heaven,
that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the praise of God.

Lord Jesus, thank you for showing a new kind of leadership,
for walking among us in commitment and compassion,

Lord Jesus, thank you.

(John Proctor, URC Prayer Handbook 2022)





HOLY WEEK

Following Jesus during Holy Week helps us to discover more about why God loves, and it can help us to prepare for Good Friday, and then truly celebrate Easter Day, the Resurrection. I hope you will be able to go through Holy Week with John's gospel. So, what follows are daily Bible readings followed by a very short reflection.

Monday – Holy Week – 11th April. John 12.1-8. Jesus anointed before His death.

This act of love by Mary perhaps tells us that 'you only see well with your heart', and though we find this difficult, for we do not often see what is essential just through our eyes. Perhaps this event in Jesus' life reminds you, that when the heart speaks to the heart true change takes place?

Tuesday – Holy Week – 12th April. John 12.20-26. Through service we discover the fullness of Life.

One of the foundational truths of the Christian life is that we are daily encouraged to offer our lives in the service of God and our neighbour, while our dominant culture encourages us to focus on our personal security, plus look towards gaining wealth and use it for our advancement. All these are real temptations. But deep down we know in our hearts that focussing on our endless needs and 'rights' we only exist longer, rather than become alive. For our human history consistently shows us that through service we discover joy, dignity and a sense of clear purpose, which is in fact a gift from the One who revealed that in giving you will give life to others and yourself.

Wednesday - Holy Week – 13th April. John 13.21-32. Judas' betrayal.

We can notice how gentle and respectful Jesus is of Judas and of what he has chosen to do. You also sense the whole scene is tragic, for over and over again Jesus revealed profound love and affection to all. He appeals to the darkness in all our hearts, again and again. Let us pray that God will save us from being too distant and too cool about his love for us.

Maundy Thursday – Holy Week - 14th April. John 13.1-17. If you understand the value of being a servant, blessed are you.

We know from Christ what God is like, that he loves us, he believes in us and longs to be close to us. Perhaps if we let him come closer to us we might discover more about God? Yes, often we are bewildered, just like Peter in this passage. It took the disciples a long time to make sense of who Jesus is and what he revealed. As my old headmaster constantly said, "The more you give the more you!"

Good Friday – Holy Week - 15th April. John chapters 18 and 19.1-30

What was absolutely new about Jesus was that his claim to be the Lord was defined in terms of the cross. This King rules by faith and love, and by nothing else. This unthinkable truth could not have been made up by a human or a community. Right from the beginning it seemed completely senseless, for it is not connected to gaining power or to improve the interests of a group of people or a ruler. Only God could say this. Anyone reading about the life of Christ will see that every word and action has an inner unity and authenticity, right from his birth through to the cross. Ch. 18.v 37 – replying to Pilate Jesus said “You say that I am a King. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth, hears my voice”.

Holy Saturday – Holy Week – 16th April - All are in agreement, Jesus is dead and buried.

To begin with you might like to read George Mackay Brown’s poem ‘The Harrowing of Hell’, for it reveals the heart of Holy Saturday. A day in which we can express our heartfelt loss as Jesus enters into the very depths of ‘the dead’, and we can also rejoice that Christ out of the darkness or the depth of death calls us back to life. This message if rightly understood, proclaims that no sin cannot be forgiven, no defeat cannot become a triumph and no sorrow cannot be turned into joy.

Easter Sunday – 17th April - John 20.1-15. The Easter glory. Christ is Risen.

Three different short reflections on the resurrection.

- a) Love enables you to see, to be changed, to know you have a purpose in life. But also true love is not uncritical, and neither is it static, for it alone has the power to change, to build and to create new life.
- b) Christ’s resurrection completely confirms the value of your existence, the value of creation and the honest hope of a future life.
- c) Perhaps the resurrection encourages you to continue in your search for what is great and wholesome, to regularly worship on Sunday and tell people about Jesus. The resurrection may also inspire you to read the Bible as much as you can and to become more familiar with God’s word, and so understand more about how the world works and also who God is. For life is unique, life is beautiful, life is holy.

Stephen