

24 March 2024 at 9.00 am and 10.30 am services

JESUS COMES TO JERUSALEM AS KING

Sermon preached by The Revd Dr Tony Martin delivered at Cromwell
Presbyterian Church



READINGS:

Psalm 118:1-2,19-29

**1 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.**

2 Let Israel say:

“His love endures forever.”

19 Open for me the gates of the righteous;

I will enter and give thanks to the Lord.

20 This is the gate of the Lord

through which the righteous may enter.

**21 I will give you thanks, for you answered
me;**

you have become my salvation.

22 The stone the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone;

23 the Lord has done this,

and it is marvelous in our eyes.

24 The Lord has done it this very day;

let us rejoice today and be glad.

25 Lord, save us!

Lord, grant us success!

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

From the house of the Lord we bless you.

27 The Lord is God,

and he has made his light shine on us.

**With boughs in hand, join in the festal
procession**

up to the horns of the altar.

28 You are my God, and I will praise you;

you are my God, and I will exalt you.

29 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;

his love endures forever.

Philippians 2:5-11

**5 In your relationships with one another, have
the same mindset as Christ Jesus:**

6 Who, being in very nature God,

**did not consider equality with God
something to be used to his own advantage;**

7 rather, he made himself nothing

by taking the very nature of a servant,

being made in human likeness.

**8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!**

**9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest
place
and gave him the name that is above every
name,**

**10 that at the name of Jesus every knee
should bow,**

**in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus
Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.**

Luke 19:28-40

Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King

28 After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 29 As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 30 “Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it.’”

32 Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. 33 As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?”

34 They replied, “The Lord needs it.”

35 They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. 36 As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

37 When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

38 “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”

40 “I tell you,” He replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

SENTENCE FOR THE DAY

At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is

**Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
Philippians 2:10-11**

INTRODUCTION

I believe that for most people there is a focal point in the history of their life.

I am talking about moments in the lives ... of all of us ... where the sum total of our past experiences and circumstances converge ... into a key period of time ... where we make choices ... or do something ... that drastically impacts ... not only our own life ... but the lives of people around us.

Or we may do something ... or say something ... that rescues a person ... or encourages another person through a critical time ... changing their destiny or ours.

In **my own life**, I know of three key focal points: the day I gave my life to Christ under an oak tree in Keirunga Gardens in Havelock North, the day I

was married to Katherine Craig in Roxburgh, and the day I was commissioned an officer in the Royal Army Chaplains Department of the British Army in Bagshot Park, Surrey, England.

From biblical history let us consider the focal point of **Queen Esther ...** and the words she spoke to her husband, the king.

Her appeal to the king saved the Jewish people in the Persian empire.

In Esther 4:14, when the danger to the Jews was obvious and imminent, Mordecai said to her,

For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"

Or consider the focal point of a man named **Saul**. He accepted Christ as his Saviour on the Damascus Road and went on to be one of the greatest Christians that ever lived in the history of Christendom.

Because of that day and his decision inspired words flowed from his pen as the Apostle Paul ... and continue to influence us today ... almost two millenniums later.

In recent time, consider the focal point of **Winston Churchill** and his determination to never surrender to Adolph Hitler, and to rally the British Empire to keep on fighting the Nazi tyranny.

On June 4, 1940, his closing and challenging words to the House of Commons in London were these:

We shall not flag nor fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France and on the seas and oceans; we shall fight with growing

confidence and growing strength in the air. We shall defend our island whatever the cost may be; we shall fight on beaches, landing grounds, in fields, in streets and on the hills. We shall never surrender and even if, which I do not for the moment believe, this island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, will carry on the struggle, until in God's good time, the New World with all its power and might, sets forth to the liberation and rescue of the Old.

Churchill and the empires resolve changed the course of history and freedom, impacting our lives today.

The examples of defining focal points in people's lives are abundant. We are all mindful of course of **Volodymyr Zelenskyy**, a Ukrainian politician, former actor and comedian, and now the sixth president of Ukraine ... taking on the might of the Russian military ... on the land, air and sea.

And in our morning's reading from Luke, we come to a defining moment in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not too strong a point to say ... from a biblical point of view ... divine plans ... that were made before the foundation of the world ... converged into this moment in time.

The sand of history's hourglass flowed to this very moment ... where the Jewish people ... would have to make a choice ... to either accept Jesus as their Messiah ... or to reject him.

In this section of Luke, Christ is going to ride into the city of Jerusalem in fulfilment of Zechariah's prophecy.

NOW, DO YOU REALISE THERE WERE TWO PROCESSIONS AT THAT PASSOVER WEEK?

From the west came **Pontius Pilate** (governor of the Roman province of Judaea) draped in the gaudy glory of imperial power: horses, chariots, and gleaming armour.

He moved in with the Roman army ... at the beginning of Passover week ... to make sure nothing got out of hand.

Insurrection you see was in the air ... with the active memory of God's deliverance ... of the Hebrew ... people from slavery in Egypt ... and on numerous occasions since then.

From the east came another procession, a commoner's procession: **Jesus** in ordinary robe ... riding on a young donkey.

And we notice ... the careful preparations ... suggest that Jesus planned ... a highly ritualised symbolic ... prophetic act.

Luke has in mind the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9-10, the coming of a new kind of king, a king of peace.

Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!

Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!

See, your king comes to you,

righteous and victorious,

lowly and riding on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

10 I will take away the chariots from Ephraim

and the warhorses from Jerusalem,

and the battle bow will be broken.

He will proclaim peace to the nations.

His rule will extend from sea to sea

and from the river to the ends of the earth.

As Jesus enters, a **“whole multitude of the disciples,”** throng around, spread their cloaks on the road, and lift loud their praise: **“Blessed is**

the king who comes in the name of the Lord.”
Ps. 118:26

And they add: **“Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven.”**

Now, this is more than a song of heavenly rest ...
and hope in the world to come. It is about the
“kingdom of the heavens,” as Matthew called it, ...
which has drawn near ... in Jesus ... to challenge
and change the kingdoms of this world.

And do you notice this **“multitude”** echoes the
song of the **“multitude of the heavenly host”** in
Luke’s birth narrative: **“Glory to God in the**
highest heaven, and on earth peace” (2:13–
14).

You see, a dramatic, traumatic, defining moment
in human history is playing out ...

- where blood will be shed ...
- a mother’s tears flow from a torn heart ...

- close friends will be cast every which way in disarray ...
- believing they were loyal ...
- but whimpering away in cowardice ...
- religious authorities energised with hatred in their hearts ...
- demanding the cruel public torture and death of an innocent man ...
- and fermenting the blood curdling violence of a maddened crowd.

The stage was set for the greatest act in history ... which would forever define our thinking ... our believing ... and our behaviour.

The question was ...what kind of king?

You see we have a clash of kingdoms: Caesar's and Christ's.

Caesar's kingdom is based on domination and ruthless power ... it was the kind of kingship ... Jesus refused ... when tempted in the wilderness.

The kingdom of God ... which Jesus inaugurated ... is based on justice, mercy, and the love of God (Luke 11:42 and Matt. 23:23).

So, we have our choice: Pax Christi or Pax Romana.

In the years that followed ... the gospel of Jesus Christ ... would nonetheless ... have political implications ... that transcended, challenged, and changed political kingdoms everywhere.

SO, JESUS CONTINUED HIS JOURNEY TOWARD JERUSALEM

And he approached the towns of Bethphage and Bethany.

You will probably know that these towns were located about a mile apart ... on the east side ... of the Mount of Olives ... and less than two miles from Jerusalem.

Bethphage was probably the first village he reached. Curiously, its name means “House of Unripe Figs.”

It was here where Jesus commanded two disciples ... to go into nearby Bethany ... and retrieve a donkey.

Now ... we know that Jesus was familiar with Bethany.

This was the place where Lazarus was resurrected from the dead.

It was also the home of Mary and Martha and Simon the leper.

From here, He would continue his journey to the 2,660' summit of the Mount of Olives, overlooking the city of Jerusalem of Mount Cargil at 2230'?

The Mount of Olives also faced the Kidron Valley ... and the Eastern Gate ... where Jesus would enter Jerusalem.

It also included the Garden of Gethsemane ... where Jesus would weep ... and pray ... before his crucifixion.

The donkey ... that the two disciples were instructed to bring back to the Lord ... was one that had never been ridden by anyone else.

You see the Old Testament teaches that only animals that had not been used ... for ordinary tasks ... were fit for sacred duties.

For example, the red heifer ... used for a sacrifice ... could not have had a yoke placed upon it ... in its past.

But have you ever wondered why Jesus wanted to ride a donkey in the first place?

We believe he had just walked about 18 miles ... and had about two miles to go.

The answer is ... the donkey ... at that time ... was not the lowly animal ... that we might imagine it to be today.

A donkey ... was considered ... to be a noble animal.

When a king went to battle, he rode upon a horse.

But when he came in peace, he rode on a donkey.

And so, the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem ... upon a donkey ... was a message of peace.

Jesus was emphasizing his kingship ... he knew exactly what he was doing ... and he knew the

message that he was sending to the Jews ... and to the world

Jesus was not coming as a conquering hero ... which was what the people desired.

When he returns, however, to earth, the Book of Revelation says ... he will come upon a white horse ... to destroy the armies of the Antichrist. Changing the metaphor ... he will return as the conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah.

So, as Jesus made his way to Jerusalem, the people spread their clothes ... or outer cloaks ... on the road in front of him.

And the Gospel of Matthew and Mark mention that ... cut branches ... were also laid in his path.

- By covering the road with their clothes, they acknowledged that Christ was more important than their possessions.

- By covering the road with their clothes, they were honouring Jesus with behaviour that was fit only for a wonderful king. They didn't do that for Pontius Pilate ... who entered Jerusalem that Passover.
- By covering the road with their clothes, they were making their possessions available to the Lord if he had need of them.
- By covering the road with their clothes, they laid before Christ their source of security, shelter from the cold, and sound health.

So, let us ponder this for a moment.

Do we have the same attitude?

Is Jesus more important to us than our possessions?

Do we honour Jesus with what we have?

Have we trusted him ... with the cares of our ... security ... our shelter ... and our health?

**NOW, JESUS ENTERING JERUSALEM
MUST HAVE BEEN QUITE A SIGHT.**

Jesus reached the crest of the Mount of Olives and began his descent down the slope.

The multitudes that flocked ... and their shouting and singing ... must have echoed across the Kidron Valley ... and seen ... from the city of Jerusalem.

The people were crying out the words of **Psalm 118:26, “Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD....”**

And did you know ... the day of Jesus’ arrival into Jerusalem ... was a special day. It was the 10th of Aviv.

The theme of this day in ... Jewish life ... was sanctification ... or being set apart for the holy purpose ... of serving God.

In fact, this was the same day the nation of Israel finally crossed into the Promised Land. The theme of that day was sanctification ... in doing the will of God.

Joshua 4:19 And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho.

And the 10th day of Aviv was the first day ... of a four-day inspection of the lamb ... that would be sacrificed for the Passover feast.

It was on this day ... that the procession of the national Passover lamb ... for the entire nation of Israel ... took place.

You see, for four days, the Passover lamb was kept in public view for everyone to examine ... to make sure that it was perfect ... and without defects.

Four days later, on the 14th of Aviv, the lamb was led into the city from the east.

The lamb was met by crowds of people ... waving palm branches ... and joyously singing ... Psalm 118 ... as they remembered God's miraculous delivery ... of their ancestors ... from Egypt.

Meeting the criteria of perfection ... it was then slain ... at the altar in the temple.

And just as the Passover lamb ... was inspected ... for four days for flaws ... so Jesus, the Lamb of God ... was inspected.

During this time ... the chief priests, elders, Pharisees, and Sadducees ... interrogated him.

But Jesus left them speechless ... because they could find ... no fault with him.

Pilate himself said ... he found no fault with Jesus.

Jesus presented himself ... as the Messiah ... but they rejected him.

I wonder if they rejected ... what was obvious ... and true ... because they did not want to see it?

And perhaps today ... people continue to reject the truth of Christ ... even when it is staring them in the face.

What about you?

Do you accept the truth of Christ or reject it?

Jesus paid the price for our sins, dying on the cross. He was the sacrificial lamb of God.

Yet, the world today ... is still looking for flaws in Christ.

They are still inspecting him ... and looking for blemishes.

To be sure, you will find faults in his followers ... the church ... God save us from the church ... for we are all sinners ... but I believe you will find no fault in Christ.

If you have never trusted Christ as your Saviour ... why not take the next step ... and put your faith in him today.

The time for looking ... for flaws ... is over ... for you will not find any in Jesus.

He is the sinless Son of God ... who entered
Jerusalem ... to die on the cross ... to save you
and me ... to present us faultless to God ... as the
Passover lamb ... and to take us to our eternal
home.

AMEN