



St Marylebone
Parish Church

Palm Sunday 2021 8.30 am

The Palm Gospel (Mark 11)

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.*

On Palm Sunday, a procession of people carrying palms and singing 'Hosanna' speaks for itself as we journey out of the wilderness of Lent from the hill village of Bethphage in through the gates of Jerusalem. Sadly, for the second year in succession there will be no procession today and we shall have make do with holding our blessed crosses of palm.

Today the Lenten injunction to 'Repent' morphs into the joyous shout of 'Hosanna', but within a few days it will transpose itself into the impassioned and terrifying cry of 'Crucify'.

We do well to remind ourselves at the start of every Holy Week, that it was the very same people who jostled for position at the gates of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday who jostled for position to see Christ carry his cross through the alleyways of Jerusalem of just five days later on Good Friday.

The same men and women and children who welcomed Jesus into their city as their long-awaited Messiah at the start of the week were the same men and women and children who just a few days later could not wait to see him ejected through the same city gates on the way to his execution.

Having mounted Jesus upon a donkey and strewn his way with palm branches and their coats; the same people, when he passes their way again, this time trip him up, spit at him and hurl abuse at his torn and bleeding body.

Now, lest we try to distance ourselves too far from the people of Jerusalem; we know, deep in our hearts that we too readily and easily cry ‘Hosanna’ one moment and ‘Crucify’ the next. Yet, the glorious, wonderful message of this and every Holy Week, is that no matter how fickle human nature, no matter how fickle the crowd, no matter how fickle **we** are, no matter how fickle **I** am, the permanent, unchanging, fixed point of humanity is the One who, today, rides a donkey in triumph, and who, on Friday, hangs dying from a rough cross of wood.

I have mentioned before, that high in the nave of Peterborough Cathedral hangs George Pace’s magisterial blood red crucifix. The cross bears a great golden twisted Christ by the sculptor Frank Roper and underneath the ever-arresting image of the dying yet triumphant Christ, is the arresting Latin statement: STAT CRUX DUM VOLVITUR ORBIS.

“The Cross stands firm whilst the world changes”.

This is not just the incomparable message of this holy week, of the days which lie ahead of us, but the words which underpin our faith; the cross might, temporarily, hold the world's saviour, but it is the still centre around which not just the world but the whole of created being turns; the cross to which Jesus is pinned by cruel and fickle hands, is the still centre of this and every possible universe, the point of rotation about which humanity restlessly tosses and turns; the point about which all the changes and chances of this fleeting, ephemeral world are centred.

Our only true stability, the only true peace, the only escape from restless searching, uneasy jockeying for position and status, comes when we discover that still, fixed point. When we discover the crucified, hanging Christ on Calvary; when we take up the challenge to place the cross at the centre of our tumultuous, restless lives.

That's the point at which our capricious shouts of 'Hosanna' and 'Crucify' find their resolution; the moment when we will find our perfect rest.

O Saviour of the world, who by thy cross and precious blood hast redeemed us: Save us and help us, we humbly beseech thee, O Lord.