**Matthew 21:1-11 Palm Sunday Homily 5th April 2020**

Matthew 21:1-11 New International Version - UK (NIVUK)

**21**As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, **2**saying to them, ‘Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. **3**If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.’

**4**This took place to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet:

**5**‘Say to Daughter Zion,
    “See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
    and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”’

**6**The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. **7**They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. **8**A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. **9**The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’

‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’

‘Hosanna in the highest heaven!’

**10**When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, ‘Who is this?’

**11**The crowds answered, ‘This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.’

It is Palm Sunday, and although the world around us seems to be out of joint, the Church calendar rolls on helping us engage with the Lord’s work and our place in His universe.

And in His world we can sometimes find ourselves getting caught out: We think that we know someone, we know their personal life and what they are like. But then we find that the reality can be quite different from what we thought we knew. We can particularly see this when tough situations arise and suddenly ideals are ignored for the sake of what we feel we need..

God, however, has revealed himself to us. We know what he is like because he has told us. We know that he is before and beyond all things, he is love, he is grace, always just, and he is truth. Always and unchanging. He is all these things.

But, the other side of this is that WE sometimes get it wrong. We can have a fixed view on something that may not be quite right, and yet, we will not change our view. We can stubbornly refuse to adjust even when we are shown it to be wrong. Our pride can get in the way.

Here we are on Palm Sunday. We may have to keep our 2m distance from everyone else, but on that day outside of Jerusalem, the crowds were thick and close together. Their focus was on Jesus, the miracle worker, the one who spoke with authority and could control the wind and waves of a sea.

But who did the crowd that day think that he was?

When Jesus called for a colt to ride into Jerusalem it marked him as a king, because the prophet Zechariah, 500 years earlier, proclaimed these words from God:

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.

Zechariah 9:9. (NIVUK)

The crowd saw Jesus as being of royal lineage, calling him the son of David. David being the greatest king of Israel.

They said that Jesus was sent by the Lord himself when they cried out that he ‘came in the name of the Lord.’

They shouted out the words “Hosanna to the Son of David.” A cry calling for them to be rescued by this saviour. They also recognised him as a prophet, one who brings the very words of God to be heard and trusted.

They said all these things, but what sort of king and prophet did they thing Jesus was?

Perhaps a triumphant one, who had come to overthrow the Romans and all other political oppressors?

And there lies the problem. They didn’t quite get it. They understood the titles: King, Messiah, prophet, Son of David. Even the disciples had struggled to understand and now we find the crowds struggling to realise what this really meant.

But the Lord’s scriptures tell us that Jesus Christ is the servant king and the Son of God.

He came to die and through his death, to bring freedom for all people who truly put their faith in him. And not just for Israel, but for everyone throughout the world.

The crowd praised Jesus, but were they willing to submit to him, to trust him even if they didn’t quite understand his actions?

The events over the following few days show their incomplete understanding. Instead of embracing him and his teaching fully, and being blessed, they called for his death.

This is a complete contrast to Palm Sunday where they had cried out “Hosanna” – Save us!

It was a prophetic word pointing exactly towards what he came to do; to rescue us so that we could know the glory of eternity in a new earth and a new heaven. A true, everlasting rescue.

For us today, we stand on our side of the cross, and we are given an even clearer understanding of Jesus. But do we fully accept it?

Jesus is Lord, the Son of God, the servant king and that through his death, the debt we owe God for our rebellion against Him, has been paid. Jesus paid the price for us, for he is our rescuer, the Messiah, the Christ.

It is so important that we get our understanding right.

If we don’t, it will lead to disappointment or discouragement or even worse.

Disappointment, if we think that life is always going to go easier for us because we love Jesus. Difficulties will continue to come against us, if not more so as Christians. Jesus’ example of sacrificial service, is to be our benchmark.

Discouragement, if we think that we can save ourselves with Christ’s help. For time will show us that it is impossible for us to rescue ourselves with the additional help of Jesus. It has to be all of God. It is against God that we have done wrong and so it is only God who can pay the price for our forgiveness.

It is our rescue by His sacrifice for us, that is all important.

It is like someone who has been stranded on a desert island with nothing on it. They cannot do anything to help being rescued in that situation, but to wait and trust that those seeking him will find him. It is all down to their effort, not his.

He is Lord, Not us! He is the central image in the Revelation to John, even kings bow down to him.

And so we come back to Jesus’ Triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It points forward to what we as Christians have to look forward to. But it is essential for us to have a right understanding of Jesus, and where our thoughts aren’t right, we need to be open to change. We need to pray and ask for help to correct our understanding of who he is, and how we are to respond. And whilst praying, to ask that the lord gently helps us to overcome our pride and stubbornness in the overcoming of our own made up understanding.

For the truth is far, far better than anything we can make up about our king Jesus.

May the Lord bless you and yours this Palm Sunday.

Amen