

## Pastor Stephen's Message for Palm Sunday, April 5, 2020

As I write this to you, we continue our time of physical distance from each other. Even so, our prayers bind us together in Christ as we lift up our hearts to God. We are always one in Christ and we are never alone. We shall meet again and our hearts will be filled with joy.

Our prayers this week include prayers of thanksgiving for our beloved ones, Arnold Kruschenske and Ellen Gorr. Their lives among us have been a great blessing and we will miss them and their gracious, generous hearts and warm and loving ways. We celebrate their deep faith and devotion to Christ and his Church. They will continue to inspire us by the lives of grace which they lived. May God comfort their families and hold them in love and mercy as God's beloved ones.

Our readings today are for Palm Sunday – normally read as part of the Great procession with palm branches. Today, they take on a renewed meaning as we welcome the one who is our salvation and joy.

### **Prayer**

Gracious and tender-hearted God, we welcome your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, as he comes to us with gifts of life and peace. Give us courage to follow him to the cross where we shall find the path of life from death to resurrection, and help us cry out with joy, "Hosanna, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord". Amen

## **Readings:**

Please read Zechariah 9: 9 – 10 and the Gospel of St. Matthew 21: 1 – 11.

## **Homily**

Palm Sunday, with its celebration of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, marks the beginning of Holy Week and the story of Christ's death and his resurrection on Easter morning.

This year, the Gospel is from St. Matthew. As the writer of Matthew's Gospel tells the story, he is careful to show us how the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday was the fulfillment of Hebrew scripture. This was very important to the writer of Matthew's Gospel, which was written primarily for Jewish Christians.

Jesus is the one who was spoken of through the prophets; he is the promised one. As he enters Jerusalem, the words of the prophet Zechariah come to mind and God's promises are fulfilled in Jesus the Christ.

Jesus is greatly honoured as he enters Jerusalem and is called the son of David, which is a great title indeed for the Jewish people. In their joy, they cry out, "Hosanna" which roughly translates as "deliver us".

In Matthew's Gospel, there is some confusion about who Jesus is as they welcome him. He is greatly honoured by the title 'Son of David', and yet the people still ask, "Who is he?"

The words of Zechariah the prophet is the key to understanding who Jesus is for us – "a humble king...he shall command peace to the nations".

Jesus was not what many were looking for. They wanted someone to help them overthrow the Romans and restore Israel to greatness.

Many people would soon flee from Jesus when they saw him on the cross. But some would return, and to others Jesus himself would return, and in our Lord they would find the path of life... the path that leads from death to life...the true source of our hope and peace, which passes all understanding.

We, who welcome Jesus as he comes to us, have the joy of knowing who he is and what he has done for us – so our hearts welcome him with joy and gratitude. And we will see his journey to the cross not as a great tragedy; but as a glorious triumph over the power of evil and the sting of death in our world. It is with this knowledge that we sing out this day, "Hosanna. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord". Amen

## Prayers of the Faithful

Gracious God, you gather our prayers together as we lift them to you in our solitary spaces. Bring your healing to touch to all who are ill, comfort those who are afraid, and strengthen all who struggle, that they may not lose hope. Help us trust always in your grace and mercy which leads us past the cross to life in you. We will sing of your love forever. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for Arnold's family, as they mourn for him, even as we thank you for the gift he was in our lives, a sign of your grace among us. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Comfort Eddie and Robbie as they mourn for Ellen, and bring them peace in this difficult time. Even in our grief, we are thankful for her gentle and loving life among us. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all whose work endangers them. Watch over all who care for the sick, feed the hungry, and shelter the poor. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray the prayer our Lord taught us: Our Father...

May almighty God bless and keep us in the Risen Life of Christ our Lord, now, and forever. Amen.