

worship@home resources for 5 April 2020

Palm Sunday

Welcome to some resources offered for worship on Palm Sunday. Again you may like to set up your worship space with a candle, a coloured cloth, a Bible and a reminder of God's creation. On this day a palm (or other) branch would also be appropriate.

This week we offer two spiritual practices for you to try. One is more contemplative (*lectio divina*) involving the Scriptures, prayer and imagination. The second is more practical (journaling) and involves writing and reflection. It could be your response activity.

Introducing *lectio divina* (by Rev Sandy Brodine)

The first practice to consider trying in your worship at home this week is *lectio divina*, an ancient way of engaging with the Scriptures using prayer and imagination, which comes from the Benedictine tradition of the church. The idea is to release yourself from the need to critique or analyse the Scripture (a left brain activity) but rather to allow your feelings to be effected and changed by it (a right brain activity).

The traditional approach is to select a verse or passage of Scripture and follow these four steps:

- **Read** the section slowly, several times, listening with the 'ear of the heart'
- **Reflect** on the words, noting which word or phrase speaks most to your heart
- **Respond** to the word or phrase that spoke to you, turning it over and over in your heart, offering it up in prayer
- **Rest** in God, sit in silence and listen for how God speaks through that word or phrase

Another way to use *lectio divina* is to contemplate a scene from the Gospels where Jesus is interacting with others (e.g. the Palm Sunday reading). Then follow these steps:

- Read through the passage a couple of times until the story is familiar
- Close your eyes and place yourself in the scene ... play it in your mind like a movie
- Use all your imaginative senses to experience the scene ... touch, smell, see, hear and taste the scene
- Close your contemplation with prayer, speaking from your heart to Jesus

When you are ready for this week's worship, quiet yourself, and after a minute or two of silence begin worship.

A CALL TO WORSHIP FOR PALM SUNDAY

We tell your story, we follow in your footsteps

Lead us into Holy Week

We walk towards the city, we wait in the garden

Lead us onto holy ground

We journey towards death, we hope for resurrection

Lead us into holy joy

SONG

Listen (or sing along with) Vineyard Music YouTube clip of TiS 724 Hosanna Hosanna

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dAiBntMtViY>

Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest!

Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest!

Lord, we lift up your name

with hearts full of praise.

Be exalted, O Lord my God!

Hosanna in the highest!

Glory, glory, glory to the King of kings!

Glory, glory, glory to the King of kings!

Lord, we lift up your name

with hearts full of praise.

Be exalted, O Lord my God!

Glory to the King of kings!

PRAYER OF THANKS & CONFESSION

Gracious Lord,

As we consider today the responses of various groups
to your highly political and provocative entry into Jerusalem,
may you help us to reflect on how we might follow you
in our day and place.

As we are bombarded with news and endless statistics about COVID-19,
may we know your presence with us this day
and throughout the next week.

Compassionate God,
We find it relatively easy to follow Jesus when the sun is shining
and all seems right with the world.
But when it grows dark and storms of suffering appear,
as has happened in recent weeks,
then we find the road much harder.

Pause for silent reflection

Give us wisdom, courage and faith to follow Jesus
in every situation and in every type of weather.
We pray in Jesus' name. Amen

Hear the good news: through Christ we are welcomed into God's presence.

BIBLE READING

Today's psalm is Ps 118, one of several psalms in which the early followers of Jesus found patterns that reflected the experience of Jesus in the last week of his life.

Listen for echoes of the Jesus story in this psalm. Practice *lectio divina* if you wish.

Ps 118 (selected verses)

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures for ever!

I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the Lord.

Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the Lord.

I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.

The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the Lord's doing;
it is marvellous in our eyes.

This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Save us (Hosanna), we beseech you, O Lord!

O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
We bless you from the house of the Lord.

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures for ever.

When you are ready, turn to Matthew 21:1-11 and read the passage aloud.

You may like to practice *lectio divina* for this passage, imagining the scene in your mind ... how did it feel to be a disciple or part of the crowd that day? ... Where do you see yourself in this busy day?

REFLECTION

Our popular culture has lots of **heroes** ... whether sporting, political or in movies. Heroes always seem to win through in the end and save the day.

Do you think the followers of Jesus saw him as a hero? Is that why they sing Hosanna (= Save us!) from Psalm 118, a psalm that celebrates a victory that the king has won over the nations, and proclaim him as the Son of David (a royal or kingly title)?

Is Jesus a hero for you? If so, what sort of hero is he?

When the followers of Jesus are asked who he is, their response is a **prophet** from Galilee (v11). Is this a better description for Jesus, given his teaching and healing ministry that his followers were familiar with?

Do you regard Jesus this way, as a person challenging the power and religious structures of the day? Does this help you make the link to Palm Sunday being a protest day for justice issues?

Earlier in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus explains that his presence and his message are **greater** than that of Jonah (a prophet) and greater than that of Solomon (a king) (Matt 12:38-42). During his final week of teaching at the Temple in Jerusalem, Jesus claims to be more than the Messiah (or king), having the authority to sit at God's right hand (Matt 22:41-46, quoting Ps 110:1).

Who is Jesus for you? How will this help you enter the story of Holy Week?

SONG

Listen (or sing along with) the YouTube clip of TiS 279 The King of glory comes, based on an Israeli folk melody <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTl1Q8yudfM>

*The King of glory comes, the nation rejoices,
open the gates before him, lift up your voices.*

Who is the King of glory, how shall we call him?
He is Immanuel, the promised of ages.

Refrain

In all of Galilee, in city or village,
he goes among his people, curing their illness.

Refrain

Sing then of David's son, our Saviour and brother,
in all of Galilee was never another.

Refrain

PRAYING FOR OURSELVES AND FOR OTHERS

Pray for the people God has placed on your heart this week.

... and remember to pray for yourself – both what is troubling you and what you are grateful for this week.

Finish by praying the Lord's Prayer.

A WORD OF MISSION (Christian Aid UK)

Gracious God, as we stand at the gates of the city,
give us grace to recognise the king we proclaim,
and courage to be a part of your kingdom -
even when it goes against our ways and the ways of the world,
even when it leads us where we do not want to go.

Empower us to free ourselves from the tempting alternatives
of power and wealth and status,
and embolden us to live lives of thanksgiving and praise.

A BENEDICTION (by Cheryl Lawrie)

Travel the road ahead with courage,
with love,
and with the uneasy peace that is the gift of faith
into this holiest of weeks.

Writing a spiritual journal

There are as many different ways to journal as there are people. You don't need a fancy book. You don't need to journal every day or even every week. Find a rhythm and way of journaling that suits you.

Be aware that we are currently living through an extraordinary time in history that future generations will read about and wonder what it was like when you were discouraged from going outside your house or from gathering with others and when churches were closed for weeks and months on end.

In your journal you may like to reflect on how the COVID-19 pandemic has changed you.

- How did the world look to you before all this happened?
- How does the world look to you as events are unfolding week by week?
- How will the world look when this pandemic is finally over?
- Describe any times you have felt anxious or afraid of this pandemic.
- Also write down any inspiring acts or kindnesses you have witnessed.

As you read the newspaper, or magazines or explore the internet, cut out articles or photos that touch your heart. Paste these into your journal. Use these clippings to help you pray and join in God's care for the world.

Write down any memorable quotes, poetry or Scripture that has touched you. Reflect on these words and their significance to you.

If you enjoy art, create a collage in your journal. Express your thoughts and feelings to God through pictures, textures and colours.

Use your journal as a place for your unedited thoughts, feelings and reactions. Also keep a record of prayers, requests and answered prayers.

