

Grace, mercy and peace  
from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all  
**and also with you.**

**Let us confess our sins to God our Father.**

Heavenly Father, we have sinned against you  
and against our neighbour  
in thought and word and deed,  
through negligence, through weakness,  
through our own deliberate fault;  
by what we have done and by what we have failed to do.  
We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ who died for us,  
forgive us all that is past;  
and grant that we may serve you  
in newness of life to the glory of your name. Amen

**Absolution** Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy on you,  
pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all  
goodness, and keep you in eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Mark 11:1-11** [Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem]

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the  
Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, 'Go into the village  
ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that  
has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, "Why are you  
doing this?" just say this, "The Lord needs it and will send it back here  
immediately.'" They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the  
street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, 'What are you  
doing, untying the colt?' They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed  
them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it;  
and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread  
leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and  
those who followed were shouting,  
'Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!  
Hosanna in the highest heaven!' Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the  
temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he  
went out to Bethany with the twelve.

This is the gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

## **Sermon**

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

Today we are invited to participate in a very Jewish event. We are placed in Jerusalem, in about AD30. It's Passover. Rather like the urge of Muslims to make the Hajj – the pilgrimage to Mecca – if any Jew was able, he or she would try to go to Jerusalem for Passover. Thousands and thousands of people came from near and far – it was three days' walk from Galilee for instance, never mind a long boat trip from Greece or Cyprus. This might give you some idea of the scale of Passover in Jerusalem.

But today's story is about just one man. We are told that this itinerant rabbi from a little village in Galilee enters Jerusalem in triumph – the excited hope is that Jesus is the NEXT BIG THING. That he is seen as the next king of the Jews; the oft-expected Messiah. That he would be the promised reformer of a Jewish culture and religion that had become corrupt; in a country that was ruled by foreigners – Romans (and they were only the latest of a long line of conquerors.)

Why does Mark tell us about this festival procession? Think of it this way: his gospel was written for converts from Judaism. He was intent on convincing his hearers that Jesus was the Messiah. So he used images and language which would have been instantly recognized by any of his Jewish audience: images from their Hebrew Bible – our Old Testament. We're told that "People kept spreading their cloaks on the road". We're told that people shouted out "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord". "Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven".

We know this story so well that it doesn't strike us as odd. But it IS odd, isn't it? Why odd? Well, in a few days the scene will change to the darkness of arrest, trial, degradation and crucifixion. Today, we read of celebration; but tomorrow we enter the narrative of what we call the Passion of Jesus. So the question that's always been in my mind, often unexpressed, has been – well - why? Why do the gospel writers give us these two polar opposite narratives? Because there's no doubt that they did it deliberately.

They did it to highlight the tipping point – the change – that is about to come. It's the end of Jesus' ministry. And today is the climax – the tipping point of that journey of Jesus on earth.

Politically, this itinerant preacher – this rabbi – is approaching the seat of power, and his approach threatens the powers that control that pivotal city. His radical approach to justice and to his fellow men, his avoidance of the Jewish purity laws, and the increasingly clear assertion that he is the Messiah, have stirred the authorities, both religious and Roman, into a determination to stop him. But from a religious perspective, the gospel writers are doing something else which is much

more profound. They have set this triumphal entry into Jerusalem in Jewish terms – the story is dripping with prophecies and psalms from the Hebrew Scriptures. It's a very Jewish passage. Let me run it again, using nothing but quotes from the Hebrew Bible. See if you can recognise what the gospel writers wrote:

“On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives, which lies before Jerusalem on the east”. It's from the prophet Zechariah 14:4. It's a prophecy about the Lord's coming. Zechariah again (9:9) “Rejoice greatly O daughter Zion! Shout aloud O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey”.

Spreading garments and palm branches comes from 2 Kings 9:13 - this about the anointing of Jehu as king over Israel: "and hurriedly they all took their cloaks and spread them for him on the bare steps; and they blew the trumpet and proclaimed, 'Jehu is king'."

In 141 BC the Jews entered Jerusalem's citadel with praise and palm branches, and with harps and cymbals and stringed instruments, because a great enemy had been crushed and removed from Israel. That's from 1Maccabees 13:51.

2Maccabees 10:7, where the victorious followers of Maccabeus went in to purify the temple once they had defeated the invader Antiochus Epiphanes: “Carrying ivy-wreathed wands and beautiful branches and also fronds of palm, they offered hymns of thanksgiving to him who had given success to the purifying of his own holy place.”

There is an obvious suggestion of national hope in the harking back to the Maccabean revolution. To Jews, it's obvious that they would have seen the symbolism of Jesus coming to purify Jerusalem.

Matthew adds another shout to his narrative: “Hosanna in the highest heaven!” Hosanna was a plea to God to “Save us”. It was sung each morning during [Sukkot](#), the Jewish *Feast of Booths* or *Tabernacles* at the time of the grape harvest.

Mark is, therefore, shouting out to his Jewish readers that this Jesus is the one who has been promised and foretold by their scriptures. That their Messiah – the Anointed One of the Old Testament – has arrived; that the weight of scripture, prophecy, and his actions, demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah, the promised, anointed one of Israel.

But Mark's tipping point, as I call today's triumphal procession, is that this is not Jesus' destiny. No. Instead of taking on this mantle of a conquering Messiah-king, Jesus rails against the corruption of the Jewish hierarchy – the chief priests, the Sanhedrin and the Temple police. He cleanses the Temple. He tries one last time to convince the Jews to change their ways.

And they finally snap, and arrest him. Mark's thesis in his Gospel is to show that Jesus' whole purpose, his whole ministry on earth, has been to fulfil his destiny as the Son of God, who ushers in a new covenant for – not just the Jews – but for all

mankind. For us. He is not to be king of the Jews; he is not the new Maccabeus who will kick the invaders out of the sacred capital of the Jews. Jesus re-defines what he means by "Messiah". And this is at the heart of the excitement, the tension, and the unfolding horror of Holy Week. The world of God's ways collides with the world of the ways of human beings. That a man who had the power to change the course of history in Jewish and Roman politics had a different destiny. But of course he was a man - who is also the Son of God. And he changed the entire world.

It's good to spend time reflecting on the often-contradictory messages coming from the Bible during this season, before the darkness of the Passion is dispelled by the incredible brilliance of the Easter message. As we journey this coming week, we can come to a deeper understanding of the different way that we Christians look at the world, at each other, and at our God. I invite all of you during the week to pull out your Bible; read and meditate on the narrative of the Passion. If you don't have a Bible, download one - there's a free iPhone or Android app. Or Google it. I suggest using Mark's account in chapters 14 and 15. And on Sunday we will all celebrate the startling message of Easter Day - that "Christ is risen!". The confirmation that this man Jesus is God. This is the foremost festival of the Christian year. Find out why.

And now to the one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be ascribed, as is most justly due, all might, majesty, dominion, power and glory. Amen.

### **The Apostles' Creed**

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church,  
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. **Amen.**

### **Intercessions, beginning with the Collect of Palm Sunday**

Almighty and everlasting God,  
who in your tender love towards the human race,

sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ to take upon him our flesh and to suffer death on the Cross:  
Grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility, and also be made partakers of his resurrection; through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

Holy Father, as Christ entered Jerusalem, let him enter our lives, let the king of glory come in, that he may rule in our hearts, and that we may offer our love and lives to him; through the same Christ our Lord, who offered his life for us, and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit. *Lord, in your mercy ... hear our prayer*

Christ, we come to you with broken promises and broken dreams, we come as a church divided and not at unity in itself. Yet we seek through you to share in salvation, and to bring others to your saving love. Lord, as you give yourself to us, may we give ourselves for others. *... hear our prayer*

We pray for nation divided against nation, for peoples that are not at peace with their neighbours; for all places of discord and dissatisfaction. Bless, O Lord, the work of the United Nations; guide all who give themselves in the cause of peace. We pray for communities torn apart by hatred. *... hear our prayer*

Be with all who have a difficult week ahead, the scorned and the rejected, those who face insult or degradation, those whose spirits will be tested this week by illness, or affected by COVID-19; those for whom medical tests were left too late; those restricted by PPE who have cared for patients in hospital. Lord, we are, for a few moments, here with you, for them, as we ask for your intercession. *... hear our prayer*

We give thanks for the holy martyrs of God, for all who have suffered for others and for truth, for those who sacrificed for us and are now at rest. We remember with love our parishioner Stuart Hamilton, his wife Judy, their children Jilly, Robbie, Amy and Katie and their families. As we prepare to lay Stuart to rest, we welcome new life as we baptize his granddaughter Florence White into our community *... hear our prayer*

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever, Amen.

And now we welcome Christen Florence, who has come to be baptized.

Parents and godparents, will you accept the responsibilities placed upon you in bringing her for baptism and answer on her behalf?

**With the help of God, we will.**

In baptism this child begins her journey in faith. You speak for her today.

Will you care for her, and help her to take her place within the life and worship of Christ's Church?

**With the help of God, we will.**

Baptismal promises and credal declarations by the godparents.

Response: **We will support them.**

Priest: Christ claims you for his own. Receive the sign of the cross.

### **The Baptismal Liturgy ...**

Christen Florence, God has called you into his church.

We therefore receive and welcome you as a member with us of the body of Christ, as a child of the one heavenly Father, and as an inheritor of the kingdom of God.

### **The Peace**

We are the body of Christ.

By one spirit we were all baptized into one body.

Let us then pursue all that makes for peace and builds up our common life together.

The peace of the Lord be always with you;

**and also with you.**

### **The Blessing**

The God of all grace,

who called you to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus,

establish, strengthen and settle you in the faith;

and the blessing of God almighty,

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,

be upon you and remain with you always.

**Amen**

## **The Dismissal**

God has delivered us from the dominion of darkness  
and has given us a place with the saints in light.

You have received the light of Christ;  
walk in this light all the days of your life.

Shine as a light in the world,  
to the glory of God the Father.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord:  
**in the name of Christ. Amen.**

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