

St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

www.stmagnus.org

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation



Minister: Rev Fraser Macnaughton

Tel: 873312

FMacnaughton@churchofscotland.org.uk

Pastoral Minister: Rev. June Freeth

Tel: 721449

JFreeth@churchofscotland.org.uk

Welcome to St Magnus Cathedral this morning. It was founded in 1137 by St Rognvald, in honour of Magnus, his uncle. The Cathedral belongs to the people of Orkney and its doors are open to all. If you are a visitor, we hope this order of service will help you feel part of our worship together.

SUNDAY 28th March

Passion Sunday

You can find our Sunday worship here.

<https://www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation/>

or on YouTube here.

https://youtu.be/p1YahUJ_pBk

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

stmagnuszoom@gmail.com

Welcome

The story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, tells us that after his celebrated arrival.

He went into the Temple and looked around at everything.

As we gather here for worship today may it be with a sense that Jesus has logged on too, and is looking around.

May our eyes be open to see Him,
may our hearts be ready to be seen by Him, may our worship be worthy of His presence, and may we be transformed so that we see the world through His eyes.

Opening meditation

In normal times it would be relatively easy for us to volunteer someone to go and gather palm leaves to spread in the church today.

And we can easily find music and a few good words to help us to remember and re-enact Palm Sunday.

But what if Jesus arrived inviting us to really lay down something important to us to acknowledge his arrival?

What if we knew the imminence of the danger that accompanies him, or sensed that the authorities were watching us as we worship?

How then, would we meet him today. And what would we spread before him? And how would we regard humility from the One we hope will save the world?

May the Jesus of Palm Sunday, help us to see how and where he enters our world today, and what he asks us to lay at his feet, and how we may welcome him in.

AMEN

Reading Mark 11;1-11 Chris Howard

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent off two of the disciples with this instruction: "Go to

the village straight ahead of you, and as soon as you enter it you will find tethered there a colt on which no one has ridden. Untie it and bring it back. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing that?' say, 'The Rabbi needs it, but will send it back very soon.' " So they went off, and finding a colt tethered out on the street near a gate, they untied it. Some of the bystanders said to them, "What do you mean by untying that colt?" They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them take it. They brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks across its back, and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. And everyone around Jesus, in front or in back of him, cried out, "Hosanna! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of our God! Blessed is the coming reign of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest!" Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the Temple precincts. He inspected everything there, but since it was already late in the afternoon, he went out to Bethany accompanied by the Twelve.

This is the Gospel of Christ.

May we hear wisdom

Reflection

It is often questioned why Palm Sunday is also often known as the Sunday of the Passion. What starts off as what is sometimes called the "Triumphal Entry" to Jerusalem at the beginning of Holy Week seems to race all the way forward to Good Friday by the end of the service.

The stock answer, of course, is that it's because so few people make it their business to go to church on Good Friday to hear Saint John's Passion. This way at least a Passion narrative is read and heard by those who only come on Sundays.

It has also been observed that Mark's gospel, can be viewed primarily as a Passion narrative with an extended introduction. The whole narrative in Mark moves us toward the cross.

As much as we would like to have Jesus not go to Gethsemane, as much as we might wish to stop Judas, as much as we would like to get after Peter for his three denials of Jesus, in Mark, the cross is not to be avoided.

Also, on this question of why the Passion seemingly intrudes upon Palm Sunday – "It never did when we were younger!" the people cry – it is the Passion that places the entry into Jerusalem in some sort of understandable context.

We may as well face it, Jesus and his rag-tag parade of the poor, the halt and the lame, sinners and outcasts, and he himself riding into town not on regal horseback but on a pathetic little donkey, does not a particularly triumphal entry make. It is at best, in the midst of Passover, Jerusalem's busiest week of the year, it was an annoying little demonstration that symbolically challenged the occupation of Rome and the authority of the religious professionals, the Pharisees, the priests, and the Herodians.

We are to remember that all the way back in Chapter 3 of Mark, we read, "the Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him." The Herodians were those Jews who were already conspiring with the ruling party of the successive Herods, who in turn were in a political alliance with Rome. They were considered by the people to be collaborators with the occupying enemy, Rome.

That is, we must recognize that the little demonstration we call Palm Sunday was, in at least one dimension, a political demonstration. Taken together with the next event in Mark, which is the episode at the Temple with the animals and money changers, it is easy to see how once word got to Pilate, whose primary responsibility was to maintain public order, something would have to be done to calm things down so that the Passover celebration could come off without any further disruption.

Also, given the fact that people in the streets wanted nothing more than to get rid of the yoke of Rome, Barabbas – a known insurrectionist, becomes a more attractive captive to liberate since he at least was willing to take to the streets and kill as many Romans and collaborators as necessary to inspire some sort of wider scale insurrection or civil war.

The key to this whole story very well may be that Jesus refuses to fight the pain that has been inflicted on him by inflicting pain. He refuses to overcome injustice with an easy, optimistic plan for progress. He refuses to fight back against the shame poured out upon him by a mighty, flashy display of Rome's imperial power: crucifixion.

All those things that we decry as the power of sin in our world and in our lives, even death itself, will not be overcome by force. They will only be overcome by the way of love, as exemplified, even unto death, by Jesus.

Could this have been done any other way? Perhaps it could have, if we could live lives without suffering and sin and death; which, of course, is another way of saying, "No."

What we see in Mark's version of this narrative is a Jesus who does not so much defeat death but rather refuses to avoid it. His forsaken cry from the cross should not be tempered into anything but a true cry of desperation that echoes the truth of the pains we experience in our lives – individually, as well as collectively as the church, as a community, and as a nation.

Make no mistake about it, this entire narrative takes place within the context of an international military and political occupation and conflict. Jesus rises above the petty political, religious, and military background noise. He literally is raised above it all on the cross. He defeats sin through bearing sin. He defeats death by dying on a cross.

In Christ crucified we begin to experience authentic life. Such life is not easy in a world still mad with power and prestige, a world that wants to sell a path of service to others as a commodity to be purchased rather than as a life lived like Jesus lived his. It's a good thing the good news can only be given away!

Prayer

Let us hold lovingly in our thoughts all the people of the earth:
those who are consumed by mutual hatred and bitterness;
those who make bloody war upon their neighbours;
those who oppress their brothers and sisters
with any form of tyranny;
and all who suffer in subjection, cruelty, and injustice.

Let us recognize our solidarity with all those outcast,
with the downtrodden, the abused, the deprived,
and our common humanity with all who bear the
responsibilities of leadership and power.

Let us remember humanity's ancient and universal dream
of peace: that we live together in harmony,
no one exploiting the weak, no one hating the strong,
each of us working out our own destiny,
self-respecting and unafraid.

May we seek to be worthy of freedom,
free from institutional wrong, free from individual oppression and contempt,
pure of heart and hand, despising none, defrauding none,

giving to all people in all encounters of life
the honour due to those who, like us,
are children of the earth's great love.

Blessing

We have entered Jerusalem
and prepare to walk through Holy Week.
We are in Jerusalem with Jesus
and prepare to accompany him on the Via Dolorosa.

We go.
We reflect. We prepare.

May you stay safe in the Way of Christ, and may you be blessed by his Spirit
this day and always.