



## **Sermon for Palm Sunday 5 April 2020. David Smith**

Good morning everyone.

I would like to speak first to our younger members. So are you all sitting comfortably?

Today is a very special day in the year. It is the day when we remember that Jesus rode on a donkey into Jerusalem. Have you ever ridden on a donkey? I did many years ago at the sea-side, when I was very small. All the best friends who Jesus knew, gathered round him, and they applauded him. In fact they tore down palm branches and waved them in the air, and they threw their cloaks in the road in front of him, rather like a flower girl who scatters rose petals in front of the bride at her wedding. They shouted 'Hosanna to the son of David'. They did this because they had seen Him heal people who were sick and because He had told them good news. So here is what I thought that you could do. Ask Mummy or Daddy to read the story to you from the Bible. It is in Matthew, chapter 21. Then get dressing up clothes, and get Daddy or an older brother or sister to pretend to be Jesus. People wore long robes, and cloaks. A cloak was a bit like a blanket with a pin which held the garment around your neck. Then perhaps you could find some green branches from the garden and get Daddy to sit on a bicycle and ride slowly down your garden waving your branch and shouting 'Hosanna—Hosanna to the son of David'. Alternatively you could perhaps use Lego to model the scene, and cut pieces of paper for cloaks. Don't forget to model a temple for Jesus to ride to. Have Fun. Please note, palm branches are green when they are first cut. Perhaps Mummy or Daddy will explain that Jesus, by riding on a donkey, the most ordinary and lowly animal, was telling everyone that He came in peace, not like a general in the army who rode a great war-horse.

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### **FOR THE ADULTS**

Let us read Mathew 21 from verse 1.

Lord God, help us to understand today, what happened that day in Jerusalem so long ago.  
Amen.

I have been amazed at the speed in which the vast new hospital in London's East End has been planned and equipped in such a short space of time. We should all applaud the plumbers, electricians, gas engineers, and medical advisors who have created such complex facility, The Nightingale Hospital. Perhaps it might remain a hospital even when the pressing need for its existence has passed. Perhaps out of this challenging period a new focus of caring, and love for each other will emerge.

The triumphant procession into Jerusalem was just the same - a carefully planned event. It was planned with regard to its timing and it was planned with regard to its symbolism, even to the use of palms. Particularly significant was the donkey which had never been ridden before.

Let's look at the timing first. Jesus chose this moment to enter Jerusalem because it was Passover time. All Jews from within a 20 mile radius of Jerusalem were expected to assemble there, particularly to visit the Temple, and to slaughter and share lamb with their family. Passover was a time to celebrate the deliverance of the nation out of slavery in Egypt, and the subsequent resettlement in the "promised land". Periodically all Jews were expected to travel to Jerusalem, from wherever in the known world they lived. Jerusalem was thronging with Jews. Some were able to get to Jerusalem more easily because of the roads which the Romans had built. Jesus, in an age when mass communication did not exist, ensured that the greatest audience possible witnessed his symbolic demonstration. We might imagine something like the crowds forming round the open-topped bus when a football team parades the FA cup through the streets of their home town.

Then there is the donkey - it had never been ridden before. We all like to receive something new. There is pleasure in unwrapping a present which perhaps a wife or husband has extravagantly bought, knowing that it has never been touched before. In Jewish history there had been an artefact known as the Ark of the Covenant, which was a sacred box containing The Law and other symbols of the relationship between God and His people.

It had to be carried on a cart which had never been used before, and thereafter used for no other purpose. So Jesus rode on a new and unused beast.

No doubt there were many of the followers of Jesus, who would have preferred that he would have ridden on a war horse, having the intention to raise a rebellion and to drive out the hated Romans who had subjugated the nation and who had inflicted monstrous taxes upon them. Jesus came in peace. The donkey was a sign of humility.

Jesus was in a battle all right.

He was in a battle to capture and win the souls of all men and women. He wanted to change us. He wanted us to love each other more. He was determined to expose corruption, and the hypocritical ruling group who hated Him. He was like what today we call a whistle blower.

It was however a passive battle, without conventional weapons, which Jesus fought. The donkey indicated a very different type of Kingship.

Palms in the ancient east were a sign of victory, of triumph and of eternal life. In Christianity, because of Christ's triumph over death, they have come also to symbolise peace which follows victory.

The shouts of Hosanna meant "SAVE NOW".

Jesus demonstrated exactly who He was, but what did it tell us about Him in the context of his earthly life time?

Firstly, it shows his **courage**. He was knowingly riding to his death. He was challenging the authorities, who were corrupt, even allowing cheating money changers to operate in the Temple itself.

Secondly, it shows his **claim**. He was coming as a King not just a prophet.

Thirdly, it shows his **appeal**. He was coming to win hearts and minds, not to kill, not to win land, or to rule in the manner of a dictator.

The Nightingale hospitals which are springing up all around our nation will be a hope to many, but our hope is in Jesus who claims our hearts and minds.

Never more do we need to beg. Hosanna, Lord Jesus – 'Save Now'.

Let me end with those words from the prophet, Zechariah :-

"rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout daughter of Jerusalem, See your King comes to you righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

Amen.