

Dear Friends,

This Sunday is Palm Sunday when we remember Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. The crowds cheer him. It was like 8pm on a Thursday when we briefly break out of our isolation to clap for NHS and other frontline workers. Jesus comes with authority. He is Lord and everything he needs is placed at his disposal. His friends carry out his instructions. They find a donkey and when asked say "The Lord needs it." People lay their cloaks before him. They did not have much, their cloaks were precious. They would be their clothing by day and their blanket to sleep under by night. Nevertheless, the people use them as a path for Jesus' trampling donkey. It's their way of offering their lives to him. They are saying "As we lay our cloaks before you, so we lay our lives before you. All we have and all we are we give to you." It's like the prayer from our Covenant Service, "I am no longer my own but yours ... I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal."

Jesus comes with authority, but also with his customary gentleness and humility. He lives out the words of the prophet Zechariah, "Behold, your King comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey." He comes also as a peace maker, again Zechariah points the way. "He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war-horse from Jerusalem; and the battle-bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations."

Once Jesus has entered Jerusalem he goes into the Temple. He drives out those who were buying and selling and overturns the tables of the money changers. The Temple has become, he says, a den of thieves when God said that it should be a house of prayer for all the nations.

The week continues with a woman anointing the head of Jesus with some very expensive ointment; with the last supper that Jesus shares with his friends when he gives them bread and wine and says, "This is my body. This is my blood. This is me, what I am, my life. Take and eat, take and drink so that what I am, may come to life in you." Then Jesus washes the feet of his friends and gives them the new commandment that they love one another. He then goes out to Gethsemane where he feels anguish at what lies ahead. Then Judas comes with a kiss and the authorities with swords and clubs and he is arrested.

We'll pick up some of these stories next week as we travel with Jesus to the suffering of Good Friday and on to the glory of Easter Day.

God bless you,

Tony