



Western Fells Methodist Circuit

**28<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

**Worship in the Wilderness**

***A Surprising Journey***

**Using resources from  
'Worship in the wilderness'  
By Engage Worship**

**Service for Palm Sunday**

by

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## Introduction

During Lent we have been thinking of Jesus in the Wilderness. Each week we have been invited to share the journey through the wilderness both for Jesus and ourselves. Over the last few weeks we have explored different aspects of that journey and the ways that it is a: *Secret, Spirit-led, Simple, Sorrowful, Sacrificial, and Truth-speaking Journey.*

Today, as our Lenten journey through the wilderness comes to an end, we worship together on this Palm Sunday and experience *A Surprising Journey.* Preparing us for Holy Week and especially Good Friday. If you have a Palm Cross you might like to have it with you.



## Call to Worship

"The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom"  
(Isaiah 35 : 1)

## Hymn 262

Music [here](#)

*All glory, laud, and honour to thee, Redeemer, King  
To whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring!*

Thou art the King of Israel, thou David's royal Son  
Who in the Lord's name comest, the King and Blessed One.

The company of angels are praising thee on high.  
And mortal men and all things created make reply

The people of the Hebrews with palms before thee went;  
Our praise and prayer and anthems before thee we present.

To thee before thy Passion they sang their hymns of praise;  
To thee now high exalted our melody we raise.

Thou didst accept their praises; accept the prayers we bring,  
Who in all good delightest, thou good and gracious King.

*St Theodulph of Orleans  
Trans. John Mason Neale*

## Prayers

*If you have a palm cross you may like to hold it now as we bless these symbols of God's love for us in Jesus.*

Lord God, we hold these palm crosses as signs of Jesus our King riding into Jerusalem as the Messiah and his suffering and dying on the cross.

Bless these palms that they may be to us a sign of his victory and your eternal love. May we who hold them always accept him as our King until we rejoice in the kingdom where he reigns with you and the Holy Spirit now and for ever. Amen

*David Adam*

But as we praise you, we remember that a crowd shouted 'Hosanna' and a crowd shouted 'Crucify', one friend betrayed you, another denied knowing you.

We remember by thought, word or deed, or by our inactivity how we let you down or hurt you. We are truly sorry. Help us to remember how courageously you faced death to be brave in living for you.

We praise you that you are always just, loving and merciful. Your opinion does not change like that of the crowd. If we are ready to say sorry, you are ready to forgive.

Hosanna! Lord Jesus we claim you as Saviour. Lord, accept our worship and thanksgiving as we praise God. Amen.

## Reading

Matthew 21 : 1-11

### *Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem*

**21** When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. <sup>3</sup> If anyone says anything to you, just say this, "The Lord needs them." And he will send them immediately. <sup>4</sup> This took place to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

<sup>5</sup> *'Tell the daughter of Zion,  
Look, your king is coming to you,  
humble, and mounted on a donkey,  
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'*

<sup>6</sup> The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; <sup>7</sup> they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. <sup>8</sup> A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup> The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

*'Hosanna to the Son of David!  
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Hosanna in the highest heaven!'*

<sup>10</sup> When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?' <sup>11</sup> The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'



## Hymn 264

Music [here](#)

Make way, make way, for Christ the King in splendour arrives  
Fling wide the gates and welcome him into your lives

*Make way, Make way, for the King of kings  
Make way, Make way, and let his kingdom in.*

He comes the broken hearts to heal, the prisoners to free.  
The deaf shall hear, the lame shall dance, the blind shall see.

And those who mourn with heavy hearts, who weep and sigh;  
With laughter, joy and royal crown he'll beautify.

We call you now to worship him as Lord of all.  
To have no gods before him, their thrones must fall.

*Graham Kendrick*

## ***A Surprising Journey***

*(taken from this week's resources by Engage Worship)*

We are now reaching the end of our journey through the wilderness. We've been preparing ourselves to journey with Jesus into his most difficult and barren period yet – his betrayal, trial, crucifixion and death.

We, of course, know the end of the story – that the horror of Good Friday and the numb waiting of Easter Saturday will explode with joy into the glorious resurrection of Sunday morning. But for those who lived through that first Easter weekend, the struggle of this week was all too real. They had no way to be sure it would all turn out okay.

Our own wilderness experiences can be very much like that. Looking back, we can see how God has used dry, barren and difficult times to shape us. But when we are in the middle of them it is almost impossible to get that kind of perspective. And when good things come along they can take us completely by surprise, as God works in mysterious and unpredictable ways.

In Hebrews 11 we are reminded of the heroes of faith in the Old Testament and the hope that they expressed in God for the future. The fulfilment that these fathers and mothers in the faith were looking for was only going to come in Jesus. The hopes of the people of God were pinned on this Messiah.

However, he comes, not as a military superpower but, surprisingly, as a helpless baby. He lives, not as a rich politician but as a homeless wanderer. He preaches, not vengeance to Israel's oppressors, but grace and love for enemies. And his triumphant entry into Jerusalem is not on a chariot of war, but fulfils the prophecy of Zechariah from hundreds of years before.

The surprising answer to all Israel's hopes is a humble man on a donkey. A humble man, who would further humble himself to die on a cross. The crowd who welcomed him with palm branches and shouts of Hosanna would quickly turn on him. The cross, that appeared to be his final defeat, would turn out to be his final victory over death, sin and evil. His resurrection would become the first fruits of the resurrection of all things. It is the guarantee of the promise of Isaiah:

*“The desert and the parched land will be glad;  
the wilderness will rejoice and bloom...  
Water will gush forth in the wilderness  
and streams in the desert.  
The burning sand will become a pool,  
the thirsty ground springs...  
Gladness and joy will overtake them,  
and sorrow and sighing will flee away.”*

Isaiah 35

And what about us now? We live in the in-between times. Jesus is risen. Death is defeated. We have the salvation of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. And yet, God hasn't quite finished with this “wilderness world” and so we continue to experience both desert struggles and resurrection surprises.

The promised land is before us, so the writer of the Hebrews encourages us to take heart from the Old Testament heroes and from Jesus, to finish this journey together:

*“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great crowd of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.*

*And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.*

*For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame,*

*and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

*Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”*

(Hebrews 12: 1-3)

Journeying with Jesus means drawing strength from him during hard times, such as now. We can know that he has walked this wilderness road before us, and that he is walking with us now. He is using even our struggles to transform us, and to prepare us for the day when all sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Amen

## Prayers

### A prayer for medical workers everywhere

*From Christian Aid*

Restoring and healing God,  
thank you for medical workers everywhere,  
embodying sacrificial love in these challenging times  
putting the welfare of others before their own  
staying away from their family and loved ones

comforting the concerned and bereaved  
reassuring the anxious and vulnerable  
working to heal and restore people who are ill.  
Be their guide, strength, wisdom and hope.

We pray for those in authority to do right by them  
for proper protective equipment to be provided  
and for their dedication to be met with much gratitude  
and appreciation when they return home, exhausted.

And we pray for medical workers around the world,  
where resources and protective equipment  
are always in short supply, not only now but always.

May these extraordinary times  
lead to deep and necessary changes in how our world works,  
resulting in a genuine effort to address the profound injustice  
of life expectancy being determined by geography,  
to awaken us all to the reality of how connected we all are  
and to work together to create the community and world  
we all want to be part of. So help us, God, Amen

## Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever. Amen.

As today we have seen Jesus on a final *Journey of Surprise* with adulation and praise, we see Jesus tragically move on in Holy Week to his crucifixion and death on Good Friday. And so we close with our final hymn as Jesus completes his journey.

## Hymn 265

Music [here](#)

Ride on, ride on in majesty! Hark, all the tribes 'Hosanna!' cry;  
Your humble beast pursues the road with palms and scattered  
garments strowed.

Ride on, ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die:  
O Christ, your triumphs now begin o'er captive death  
and conquered sin.

Ride on, ride on in majesty! The winged squadrons of the sky  
look down with sad and wondering eyes to see  
the approaching sacrifice.

Ride on, ride on in majesty! Your last and fiercest strife is nigh;  
the Father on his sapphire throne, expects his own anointed Son.

Ride on, ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to died; bow your  
meek head to mortal pain, then take, O God, your power, and reign.

*Henry Hart Milman.*

## Prayer and Blessing

Gracious God, your Son, our Saviour entered Jerusalem and gave his life for the world.

With grateful hearts we dedicate ourselves to you. Help us to take up our cross and follow Jesus, that, sharing in his sufferings, we may know the power of his resurrection.

We ask it for his sake. Amen

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now and for evermore. Amen

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