

A Reflective act of Worship for Churches Worshipping God
Together : Apart

for Sunday 5th April 2020 at 10.30am

Church; Physically Distanced but Spiritually United



Gathering Words

Welcome, Lord Jesus... to my home... to my heart.

I give thanks to you, Lord God, for you are good,

Your love endures forever.

I say, at this time and in this place

'Your love, Lord God, endures for ever'.

So, let all those who love the Lord say:

'His love endures for ever'

(Inspired by Psalm 118: 1-4)

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

We bless you from *this* 'house of the Lord'

(Inspired by Psalm 118: 26)

When being *together* isn't possible, '*togethering*' still is.

So here we are - Together : Apart, '*togethering*'

In 'togethering', we can still *find* each other and *connect* and *hold* each other's hearts in many different ways during this time when we all need to be separate.

So we are 'together' as we sing... or say hymns

Hymn 192: Rejoice and Sing

**Thou didst leave thy throne
and thy kingly crown**

when thou camest to earth for me,
but in Bethlehem's home
there was found no room
for thy holy nativity:

*O come to my heart, Lord Jesus!
There is room in my heart for thee.*

Heaven's arches rang
when the angels sang,
to proclaim thy royal degree;
but of lowly birth
cam'st thou, Lord, on earth,
and in great humility:

*O come to my heart, Lord Jesus!
There is room in my heart for thee.*

The foxes found rest,
and the bird its nest,
in the shade of the forest tree;
but thy rest was found
on the stony ground
in the deserts of Galilee:

*O come to my heart, Lord Jesus!
There is room in my heart for thee.*

Thou earnest, O Lord,
with the living word
that should set thy people free;
but, with mocking scorn,

and with crown of thorn,
they bore thee to Calvary:
O come to my heart, Lord Jesus!
Thy cross is my only plea.

When heav'n's arches ring,
and her glad choirs sing,
at thy coming to victory,
let thy voice call me home,
saying, 'Yet there is room,
there is room at my side for thee!'
And my heart shall rejoice, Lord Jesus,
when thou comest and callest for me.
*Emily E. S. Elliott (1836-97) altd.**

Praising and Thanking God in Prayer

Lord God

your love has drawn us to worship you, and to praise you...

Even as we sit in isolation you draw us together by your Spirit.

Generous God, with our hearts, and prayers,

and voices we give you our thanks,

we celebrate and we welcome you afresh into our lives.

Great God

you are the Lord of all that *has* been

all that is here and now, and all that is next - all that's yet to be.

On this Palm Sunday we give thanks for the generosity

of the owner of the donkey,

for the joy of the crowd as they glimpsed the Kingship of Jesus,

and for the humility and courage of Jesus himself.

May we give the best of all we have in your service,

may we recognise and accept your kingship with joy

and may we, like Jesus,

know when the time is right to take risks, to make sacrifices for the sake of others,

whatever the opposition... and however fickle the support of others may be.

We ask for the courage to serve you in the world *you* fashioned out of love.

We ask our prayer in the name of Jesus who taught us the true nature of authority and service. Amen

Saying Sorry to God in Prayer

Now move on in prayer to say sorry to God, and to ask for forgiveness.

Lord God, for the times we have been silent and not praised you, when we have been distracted and not noticed you... let alone welcomed you,

when we have been complacent, and not acknowledged your presence either in our lives, or in the world,

when we have felt defeated and not trusted you,

when we have not laid our cloaks at *your* feet, but have laid them at the feet of *others* instead,

Forgive us, and bless us, equip us with *your* humility, *your* courage and with the companionship of others - even in these times of Social distancing - as we walk *your* way.

We ask all our prayers in Jesus name, the King who taught us to pray simply and humbly

*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.*

Crowds...

I remember crowds! Do you remember crowds?

The last time I was in anything like a crowd is 3 weeks ago and I'm sure it's the same for you.

But, did you clap the NHS Workers the other Thursday evening at 8pm? What an amazing moment of community solidarity, love and support for our NHS Workers and carers (and all those keeping our food on shelves and ready to buy) that was.

We were a country united - Together : Apart - a crowd!

Listening to people clapping and cheering for streets around was emotional, I was trying to hold back tears but sobbing from the inside out. Seeing all my neighbours out in their doorways all at the same time was just beautiful. A shared moment to say 'thank you' and to appreciate all that those people putting themselves at risk are doing for us.

It's being brought home to us with great clarity that the health of all of us depends on the health and well being of each and every person, and that we are all inextricably, inseparably linked to each other.

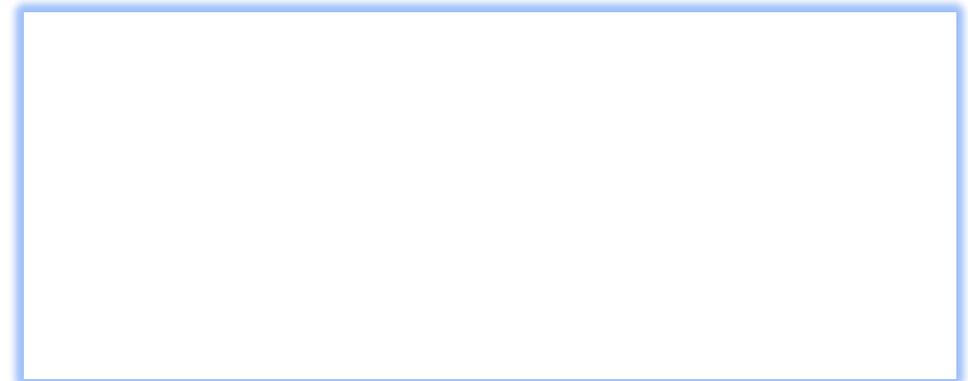
I wrote this down a few weeks ago from a video clip that I watched of John Bell (the Scottish hymn writer) speaking at a conference 'For the healthy to be whole, they have to be 'touched' by those who are sick'. I think we are finding truth in that. How can we be 'whole' when so many are 'broken' by sickness, and loss, and grief that can't even be handled in the ways we normally cope with such things - hugs and gatherings and social activity.

Last Thursday evening we all came together as a community with a shared purpose, to say 'thank you' and to praise all those who work in the NHS, all those who care for us and our loved ones, those who make us 'whole' when we are 'broken'.

Lord God,

help us never to forget the debt we owe to those who care.

Think of a time when you were grateful for someone who is paid to care, perhaps someone who made you feel whole, even though you were broken, and write about it here...



The Bible tells us about an occasion when Jesus was praised and thanked by a crowd. The writer Matthew wrote about it, so *listen* out for God's word as you read about Jesus arriving in the City of Jerusalem.

Matthew 21: 1-11 - *New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised (NRSVA)*

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, ² 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. ³ If anyone says anything to you, just say this, "The Lord needs them." And he will send them immediately.' ⁴ This took place to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

⁵ '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.'

⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷ they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them.

⁸ A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

⁹ 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!'



image: clipartmag

¹⁰ When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?'

¹¹ The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'

Keep a Silence.....

Now, you can sing the story, a song written more than a thousand years ago.

Hymn 208: Rejoice and Sing

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 flesh 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.

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

*Theodulph of Orleans (d. 821) tr. J. M. Neale (1818-66)**

Reflection

The story goes that Sir Walter Raleigh placed his cloak over a puddle for Queen Elizabeth 1st, as an act of chivalry so that she wouldn't get her royal feet wet.

The Galilean crowd threw their cloaks in front of Jesus' riding a colt. Imagine the hoof prints, not to mention what the colt's hooves would be squishing the cloaks into! Their cloaks might be ruined or lost, and they wouldn't have had spare ones.



Why do you think they would do that?

This crowd of people were as good as sacrificing their precious cloaks in celebration of the long-awaited Messiah.

This practice has everything to do with '*kingship*'. In the Old Testament - the Book of Kings (2 Kings: 9) Elisha is sent by the Lord to anoint Jehu as King. When Jehu's officers hear this, they quickly take off their cloaks and spread them under Jehu on the bare steps.

So, the crowd's gesture is about acknowledging a King. To sacrifice a precious cloak to a king, to leave yourself with nothing to cover you at night for *his* sake was seen as a privilege, the cost of which was not to be counted.

So the crowd acknowledges Jesus as King!

But Jesus is no ordinary king!

And the difference between a King's or a Roman Emperor's 'triumphal march', following victory in battle, with manacled prisoners paraded in his wake, and this 'alternative', *contrasting* version with donkey, cloaks, and palm branches, cannot be underestimated.

Jesus seems to have planned his entry into Jerusalem very carefully.

He could have just walked in like all the other pilgrims. To ride in as he did was a self-conscious symbol of his purpose. Jesus is deliberately drawing on the story of King David's return to Jerusalem after the death of Absalom, when he rode on a humble donkey as a gesture of peace. Jesus is deliberate and determined... and aware of fulfilling prophecy.

Although Jesus comes in peace... his peace is not only of this world but of God's kingdom. And God's peace surpasses all other peace. It's *God's* peace that we need - not the peace that is an absence of violence or the quiet of 'social distancing'.

Unless you saved one from last year, you won't have a Palm Cross this year. So why not get one of your coats, and spread it out in front of you and imagine Jesus making his way towards you...

Welcome Christ as King of your heart, and welcome his peace.

Keep a Silence.....

The crowd put their coats out before Jesus. What can you put at Jesus' disposal, what can you offer in sacrificial love to Jesus? To bring His Kingdom in. What can you do to pave the way to honour Jesus and welcome Jesus into your heart? *Write it here if you like....*

Hosanna!

Hosanna! in Hebrew means 'Come and save us'. You may, or may not have known that. The Galilean crowd welcomed Jesus, they needed saving and they believed that Jesus was the one who could save them (from Roman occupation! - Hmmm!)

What would you like to ask Jesus to save you from?

Write it here if you like...

We know that the world is hurting and needs saving, so lift before God in prayer a hurting and grieving world.

Holding the World in Prayer

Lord God,
we are all on a journey, a journey we have not taken before,
a journey into the unknown
isolated from the people who normally travel with us when things get tough.

Hosanna! Lord, save us!

So Lord God, we pray for and say thank you for all who give of themselves sacrificially.

We pray for those whose lives are dedicated to serving others:
parents, carers, foster carers, doctors, nurses

those caring for children or elderly relatives.

Help us to travel together : apart to lighten the load.....

We pray for those serving in war-torn countries around the world:
medics, those who work in missions, the media,
NGOs and charities...

those who bring food, shelter and healing to those in need,
sometimes putting their own lives on the line... and even moreso
now, with the risk of a worldwide spread disease we cannot cure.

Help us to travel together : apart to lighten the load.....

We pray for those in our communities who need our unconditional love:

those hurting from broken relationships, abuse, bullying, domestic violence, and cooped up with their fear
children and adults whose lives are bereft of love and hope.

Help us to travel together : apart to lighten the load.....

We pray that we might be Easter people,
laying down our lives to serve others,
bringing hope to hopeless situations –
the hope of the cross and resurrection.

Help us to travel together : apart to lighten the load.....

In faith, we lift our prayer to you, Lord God.

These are the prayers of your faithful people, together, yet apart.

Amen

Hymn 141: Rejoice and Sing

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!)
Make way! (Make way!)
for the King of kings.
(For the King of kings.)
Make way! (Make way!)
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. Copyright © 1986 Thankyou Music.

To whom else shall I go?
You, Lord, have the words of eternal life. And I have believed and
come to know that you are indeed Holy and to be praised (*John 6*)

Closing

As I welcome you and walk with you this week...

Christ be a light to illuminate and guide me

Christ be a shield to protect me

Christ under me; Christ over me;

Christ beside me, on my left and my right.

This day be within me and surround me,

lowly and meek, yet all powerful.

Be in my mouth as I speak

Be in my heart as I care

Christ as my light, Christ as my shield

Christ beside me, on my left and my right. Amen.

Blessing

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ

the love of God

and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

be with us all, evermore Amen



Now, why not make
yourself a nice mug
of tea, or coffee,
grab a biscuit and
phone someone you



would have talked to if you had been at Church

images: clipart.email

*Worship prepared by Revd. Janine Atkinson - 1st April 2020
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