

## **SERMON: Sunday – 10 April 2022 – Rev Alistair Cowper**

### **Love is non violent**

Psalm 118:1-2,19-29

Luke 19:28-40

Palm Sunday is both a reason for celebration and one for solemn contemplation. Celebration because it sees the arrival of the Messiah, the One born to Save, coming into the midst of all that needs to be saved.

God, in Jesus of Nazareth, is not shrinking back from his *raison d'être*, his calling, to be the anointed, beloved, Light and Saviour of the World.

(SLIDE)

He comes in non violence, as the prophet Zechariah foretold, a king on a colt, the foal of a donkey (9:9).

The Gospel account makes it sound like everything is following a preset pattern. That, One is in control of events, however joyful and horrible they become.

Luke tells us that “those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them.” (32).

And yes it was right for the crowd of disciples to joyfully praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they'd seen. Those voices would not be silenced. And even if they were, Jesus assures the Pharisees that even the very stones under their feet and all around them would cry out. Because all of creation was waiting for this moment of transition.

Even the stones would cry out. There were those in Jerusalem who were so proud of the massive stones used in the rebuilding of the Temple, many of which stand there even today; witnesses to the coming of Christ; proud stones and also lowly stones; stones tramples under foot; there too to pave the way. Even the stones would shout out, hosanna, save us!

And as well as celebration, that first Palm Sunday is a reminder that it is the first day of a week that would be the mid point of all history, and that difficult days were ahead for Jesus.

But Jesus had already set his face towards Jerusalem. And now he was here. On the precipice of salvation and with all that would mean.

Not to be served but to serve  
And give his life that we might live.

The writers of Spill the Beans have this to say about this week's Scriptures:

Large crowds can be scary, even the friendliest of crowds. Banter and jostling for position can sometimes become something a little more threatening. Throw in a cause, some passion, a protest, and the mix can become stressful for those whose responsibility it is to keep order: to protect the crowd, the venue, the bystanders and sometimes those who the crowd are there to see (either to cheer them on or to 'call out' over some issue).

Those in authority at the time of Jesus would always be on watch for gatherings that could become problematic—movements that could become uprisings—causes that could become revolutions. Jesus was a potential problem to many. Both in terms of general law and order, and in relation to the power politics and hierarchical position within the Jewish Temple structure. Jesus, and his movement, was a risk. Into this mix of different types of sensitivities, power plays and fears, Jesus and his group nonetheless enter Jerusalem.

For Jesus, it could not possibly have been all about joyous procession and celebration. We can only imagine the type of mixed emotions he must have known.

There would be some excitement about taking his cause to the heartland of where change for a cause such as his might be possible. The excitement of followers calling out your name and showing their support to you.

Yet, for Jesus there must also have been the terrible fear of knowing he was risking everything in coming to the place where he had the most to lose. It was a place where different factions would seek to protect themselves, and their authority, from anything that would upset the equilibrium. It was a situation where no action was out of bounds for those who had too much to lose should the momentum of a new movement garner too much new interest, passion, and public support.

What would have been going through Jesus' heart and mind in this moment of exhilaration and excitement knowing where it would lead to at the end of the week? How did he keep himself together?

I suppose it's absolute trust, something we are all called to.

None of us knows what lies ahead but we're called to trust that the One who formed us and sent us here, has good things ahead.

(SLIDE)

Even though I walk  
through the darkest valley,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.  
You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies.  
You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.  
Surely your goodness and love will follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord  
forever.  
Psalm 23:4-6

Do we trust God that God has goodness and love for us in the future but also in the here and now? Because that is the good news, the Gospel, that Jesus lived and died and was raised into.

Our journey, no matter where that takes us, is one in which we can embody that very same faith, the Jesus faith, and make it ours.

We in him and he in us.

How then can we be afraid?

May we walk in life with the same trust in God and in God's goodness that Jesus had.

May we, as Richard Rohr put it recently, "trust the down, and God will take care of the up". In other words, keep going with our everyday, human, earthly lives and let God lift us up as Jesus was lifted up in resurrection and ascension power.

May we be free to be who we are here and now and free to enable others to realise such freedom too.

(SLIDE)

'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!'

'Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!'

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
his love endures for ever.

Amen