

Palm Sunday morning services

St Mary's and St Peter, Tidenham, and St Luke, Tutshill. 2024

Mark 11:1-11; Is 50:4-9a; Passion according to St Mark.

UA Fanthorpe's Christmas poem, 'What the donkey saw' always pops into my mind on Palm Sunday. And so, as unlikely as it sounds, if you'll indulge me, I'm going to read it:

No room in the inn, of course,
And not that much in the stable,
What with the shepherds, Magi, Mary,
Joseph, the heavenly host —
Not to mention the baby
Using our manger as a cot.
You couldn't have squeezed another cherub in
For love nor money.

Still, in spite of the overcrowding,
I did my best to make them feel wanted.
I could see the baby and I
Would be going places together.

'I could see that the baby and I would be going places together.'

And so, thirty-three years later, it was so.

There are an awful lot of un-named figures in the story of Holy Week. The donkey of course, and in today's account of the entry into Jerusalem, the crowd - that crowd that so quickly turns from 'Hosanna' to 'Crucify' - and those bystanders, (we have no details about them), who ask the disciples, 'what are you doing untying the colt'? And who hear those words of the disciples: 'the Lord has need of it'. *Ad lib considering Passion narrative as appropriate.*

I encourage you to watch out for those anonymous figures as Holy Week unfolds. The crowd. The bystanders.

Find yourself in them. Where are you inquisitive about what is happening? Where are you interested, wanting to know more?

Where are you faithful? Faithless? Quick to condemn? Where, in your own life, can you identify the moments when your songs of praise turn to condemnation? Where, if we are really honest, do we betray Christ? All of that needs to be carried this coming week, refined in the events of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, so that it can be redeemed in the light of Easter.

And when someone says to us, 'the Lord has need of it', may we have the faith to hear that call. 'The Lord has need of it'.

The Lord has need of you. Walk with him. Follow him. Toward the Cross.

Amen.