

Palm Sunday 5.4.2020

Hi again everyone,

We are approaching our Easter celebrations - celebrations and reflection, for the joy of Easter resurrection is always shadowed by the pain of Jesus' suffering and crucifixion.

here are some thoughts on Palm Sunday:

We can gather in the streets (unfortunately not really) to join the crowds in Jerusalem 1990 years ago or thereabouts shouting their joy and celebration as Jesus rode into the city - on a donkey:

"Ride on! Ride on in majesty!  
Hark all the tribes Hosanna cry;  
O Saviour meek, pursue thy road  
With palms and scattered garments strewn."

Have a read through Matthew Chapter 21 -

We see the streets of Jerusalem thronged with people welcoming their Messiah, their exalted king. They expected Him to restore the glory of Israel and Judah, to save them from the shame of centuries of oppression by foreign countries, and particularly to rid their country of the hated Roman occupation. This is what they expected of Jesus - the restoration of the Hebrew nation and the reclaiming of their place as "God's chosen people".

For them, Jesus entry into Jerusalem was the beginning of this revolution, the start of a great uprising against Rome - the restoration of the great days of David and of Solomon.

Let's get back to the glory days they cried!

A week later, this expectation had died, Jesus did not behave as they expected - where was the challenge to Rome, where

was the call to arms, where was the rousing to action?

Nowhere, - they see a man standing in silence before a Roman governor, threatening no-one. And now the crowds clamour for his execution.

Now, looking back on this, we can rejoice at His silence, we can give thanks for His execution. Jesus plan was never to overthrow Rome, it was never to reinstate the glory of Israel.

Jesus plan was far more revolutionary, far more radical, and absolutely far more successful. His plan was to restore the Kingdom of God, to bring God's grace within reach of the whole world, to allow us, and millions across the globe, to know God's love, to bring us within touching distance of the Son of God.

As God says in Isaiah 49 v 6:

"It is too small a thing that you should be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be my salvation to the ends of the earth."

Today, we face this pandemic of Covid 19, we struggle daily with anxiety about our friends and loved ones, we suffer in our minds and in our bodies from isolation and uncertainty. And we should quite rightly be crying out to God for safety, for protection, for release from this threat to ourselves and millions across the globe. Please pray for all these, but also with some joy, consider that our prayers will be answered in ways far beyond our expectations, and in ways which we cannot yet conceive of in our minds and hearts.

The people in Jerusalem cried out to Jesus for revolution - and the revolution they received was far greater than they could envisage. A revolution which still restores and brings salvation to countless people daily. A revolution which brings peace and security, transformation and dignity to all who will receive Him.

So, let's join the people of Jerusalem on the streets on Palm Sunday - and let's give thanks that Jesus plans are always far more, far higher, and infinitely further reaching than anything we can imagine.

As we read the Gospels, we see that Jesus is not only a man who sets out His life in big gestures, in world changing events, in overcoming the scourge of evil and the deception of Satan, He is the man who cares so deeply for suffering individuals.

He heals the paralysed man, He sets the madman free, He lets the blind man see, He restores Lazarus to his grieving family. Jesus cares deeply for each one of us, and longs to respond to our prayers. So pray. Pray for the sick nearby, pray for protection for the delivery driver and the shop worker. Pray for the mental health of the young mother, and of the teenagers in their bedrooms. Pray and listen. Pray and serve with acts of neighbourly love.

We live in an area steeped in the history of Christianity in Scotland. All around us is evidence of Columba and his followers.

I asked Chris Tabraham to bring us something from our Christian heritage as we go into Easter week and he put this fascinating report together for us:

"From winter, plague and pestilence, Good Lord, deliver us!"  
(From Thomas Nash's 'Summer's last will and testament'  
1600)

Today the world is beset by a pestilence that beleaguers us all. It was aye thus. Here is an

Argyll man's record of two plagues that visited Britain 1300 years ago. About 700 AD Abbot

Adomnan of Iona wrote his life of St Columba (Vitae Columbae) a collection of deeds and miracles

said to have been performed by the holy man during, and after his life. Chapter XLV<sup>1</sup> of Book

II tells "OF THE PLAGUE"

Here is my abridged version:

"And this also I think, appears to be something not to be reckoned among the smaller miracles of power, namely, concerning the plague which in our times has twice laid waste the world in its greater part - Ireland and Britain for instance, have on two occasions been wasted by dreadful pestilence; except two races, that is to say, the people of the Picts, and that of the Scots (Irish colonists) of Britain, between whom Drum-Alban forms a boundary. And although there are not wanting great sins of both tribes, sins by which the eternal judge is generally provoked to anger, yet he has spared both this far, bearing patiently with them.

Now to what other person is this grace granted them by God, attributed, but to St Columba, whose monasteries, founded within the bounds of both peoples, have been held in very great honour, by both, up to the present time? Yet this which are now about to say not to be heard, we think, without a sigh, that there are many in both races very senseless who, not knowing that they are defended from diseases by the prayers of the saints, are being unthankful, wickedly abuse the patience of God. But we render frequent thanks to God, who defends us from the assaults of pestilences in these our islands, while our venerable patron prays for us.

In Saxonia (England) when we visited my friend King Aldrid while the plague had not yet ceased, and was wasting many villages here and there - the Lord so delivered us while walking in such danger in the midst of mortality, that not even one of our companions died, nor was any one of them troubled by any disease"

"Where have we today gone wrong?"

There are many people praying today, and we can certainly pray for the safety and protection of those who are working in essential services "walking in the midst of mortality". And as this article makes clear, the safekeeping of the Picts and Scots was not a result of their saintly lives. They, like us, are often "unthankful and abuse the patience of God."

We can ponder on the limitless grace of God as we come into next week, as we contemplate what Easter means for each one of us.....

"Ride on! Ride on in Majesty!  
In lowly pomp ride on to die  
O Christ, thy triumphs now begin  
O'er captive death and conquered sin"  
(Henry Hart Milman CH4 hymn 365)

You may like to join with Rev Scott Burton of West Kintyre and Gigha in their Palm Sunday worship this weekend(you can watch anytime):

<http://www.westkintyreandgighachurchofscotland.org/contact/>

There is also lots of other information on our website