

This weeks reading is from Luke Chapter 9 vs 29 to 46. Have a read through this so you remember the details.

This Sunday we celebrate Palm Sunday as we remember Jesus' triumphant ride into Jerusalem. Was it triumphant? Lots of people shouting and waving palms, casting their coats on the road as a carpet for their king. Yes, many were celebrating. But the pharisees were fearful, and pleaded with Jesus "Keep your followers quiet!" They were terrified that the Romans would hear of this riotous crowd and come with force, with sword and spear to put down this act of rebellion – remember for the Roman occupiers, there is no king but Caesar!

But Jesus rides on, with the crowds increasing in volume and in excitement, they anticipate Jesus will lead them into a new life of freedom from the oppression of Rome.

Only one person was not celebrating. He was crying, Jesus was weeping! Jesus was looking beyond the day, He was looking to the day to come, of rejection, of misunderstanding. He was looking out over Jerusalem and knew that they would reject Him and his message – they would look to violence to defeat their enemies and be destroyed as a result. They would reject his message of a kingdom of God, of justice and peace, of forgiveness and love. Jesus was weeping as He longed for the people to turn to his way, but knew they wouldn't.

Jesus knew that it was going to take more than a parade on a donkey to bring in God's kingdom. He knew that it would take the tortured revolution of an unchallenged death, the death of innocence, death with forgiveness, unresisted death, His death, to bring the change needed to let God's Kingdom come, His will be done on earth. Jesus wept over Jerusalem, and the world, as He rode into that town.

Where are we in that crowd as we watch Jesus. Are we ready for the God of the unexpected to turn everything upside down, are we ready to embrace the apparent failure of our leader in order to move into an altogether more amazing relationship with Him, as Saviour, as Lord, as the ultimate King of kings in our life. Do we abandon Him when He does not do as we expect? As soon as we think we know what Jesus is going to do – be wary, be fearful, what He will do will be so much more than we can imagine or contemplate, but if we follow Him, He will take us with Him, and that is a journey worth travelling.

Session meeting 19.3.2021

The main points covered at the session meeting were:

Youth Pilgrimage:

The planned Youth pilgrimage from Tarbert to Iona is now likely to take place at the end of August. The church will provide an evening meal for them in Achnamara Hall as they pass through North Knapdale. Nearer the time we will invite people to take part and join them for the meal.

Presbytery Planning:

There will be a meeting with Rev David Mitchell, convenor of the Presbytery Planning Group, to discuss the Presbytery Ministry Plan for Mid argyll on the 7th April and representatives from the Session will attend along with others from the five Mid argyll parishes.

Church Buildings:

With the intimation from government that places of worship can open from the 26th March 2021 the Session had extensive discussion on the logistics and feasibility of reopening our church buildings for Sunday Worship services.

Following extensive discussion on the risks presented by reopening and the management of the procedures which would be required, it was agreed that the Session Clerk and Property Convenor should complete the "Church of Scotland Covid 19 Reopening of church Buildings checklist" and the "Church of Scotland , Church Buildings Covid 19 Risk assessment (V2)", both of which are required to be completed prior to approval being given by Presbytery to reopen. Completion of the forms will provide Session with information on when and how reopening is practicable and manageable in our buildings.

Easter:

Easter Eggs: Following an initiative by a church member, Easter eggs have been purchased by donations received and these will be distributed prior to Easter Sunday to children throughout the parish.

Easter Cross: The Easter Daffodil Cross will be put up in Tayvallich Church grounds on Easter Sunday and filled with daffodils as a silent celebration of Easter Morning. Unfortunately there can be no gathering of people at the cross. Volunteers will gather daffodils and bring them to the church on Easter Saturday.

Easter Card: An Easter card with messages from the Session will be printed and delivered to those connected with the church.

Christian Aid Week. 10th to 16th May 2021

Plans are in place for gathering donations during Christian Aid Week.

Also, Chris Tabraham and David Logue plan to do a Kilt Walk along the Crinan Canal at the end of April to also raise funds for Christian aid.

More information on ways to make donations will follow later.

The full draft minute of the meeting will be posted on the church website in due course.

The weekly letter and prayer from Rev Owain Jones

Hello, everyone

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Palm Sunday is causing me problems, this year!.

Oddly enough, I think that that's to do with what I sense is its increased, indeed almost overwhelming relevance to where we all are in this surrealistic experience. I find myself comparing my own feelings at the moment to that of a parched traveller in a desert suddenly seeing a mirage, the reflection of an oasis, say, which is far, far away. Emergence from this is coming – but it seems somehow to recede from us even as we think we are approaching it.

This isn't journey's end **yet....**

I suppose I've tended, over the years, to rotate the three big themes of Palm Sunday year by year; the fact that it stands at the beginning of Holy Week, and the sudden engaging of the gears of the process which will take Jesus to Golgotha, and then bring us to Easter Day; the eerie fact that, as Matthew explicitly tells it, the city of Jerusalem is deeply divided about this Jesus, and as all the Gospels imply, some at least of the people who are shouting "Hosanna!" on the Sunday will be shouting "Crucify!" through Thursday night; and the further, barely stated but perfectly credible, implication of the joy of the disciples as they contemplate Jerusalem greeting its gentle king, and imagine that Jesus had been too pessimistic, and that maybe, just maybe, everything was going to be all right... .

It's that last one that has mesmerized me, this year, and especially over the last few weeks. I know why that is; it's a mindset that I've detected in myself, all of a sudden. We're nearly there! We're about to emerge! Simplification, premature celebration, and ultimately, denial – they're all potentially in me, because they're all potentially in all of us. They were in the disciples. .

We are all about to cross the palm-strewn threshold of Holy Week together. We are each of us part of a congregation somewhere in Argyll, charged to minister realistic hope to hurting communities, and we are all part of this Presbytery, charged with the mutual support of each other and of those congregations as they seek to do this. Palm Sunday, it seems to me, is on one level about the conflict between distraction and realism. Distraction, escapism – they may be a temporary analgesic, but (if I can express it in inelegant, repetitious language of which my old English teacher at school would thoroughly have disapproved) realistic faith, engaging with reality, is what's real. That's where peace and joy are to be found, because that's where God is – because that's where Jesus was..

That's where we must be, too.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Owain', with a stylized, cursive script.

Owain

Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" And when he entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, "Who is this?" *Matthew 21:8-10*

Let us pray:

1) For an understanding of Palm Sunday

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You rode, lowly, on a gentle, unkingly beast,
into Jerusalem, Lord Jesus.
There was joy, and the hailing of salvation
In the rapturous hosannas of the crowd.
Were your disciples relieved?
Did they, after the trauma of Caesarea Philippi,
the devastation, the sullen anger,
the breathtaking denial –
arguing over the best seats in the kingdom –
and finally, finally, the acceptance
of the certainty that lay ahead –
begin to think that reality might yet be staved off,
that things might go differently to expectations -
to **your** expectations?

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Do we, Lord Jesus Christ, seek and find distraction from reality, as they did?

2) For faithfulness to truth, in reality.

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Did ever a human eye survey the truth more unsparingly, Father God,
as that of the incarnate Son?
Was there ever a gaze less evasive of reality
than that cast by Jesus Christ
over all that was unfolding around them
as they came to Jerusalem?
His disciples shied away from complexity,
sought the feelgood simplicity of the moment –
how *could* they stand with him
when the shadows of the week deepened,
and Thursday came, and Friday?
.You call us, God of hope, and of new things,
to be your community of resurrection hope.
You call us to live out the joy of Easter
for a shadowed, sad and hurting world –
the world embraced in all its complexity
by the wide-spread arms of the Crucified.
We live on the other side of Easter
from the timid men so desperate to be cheered
by the passing mood of a crowd.
Yet we know the transformation wrought in them
by the trauma of Good Friday, and the healing of Easter Day,
The Spirit's empowering of the new-born Church
to go out into all the world,
and face, and face down, the world's reality,
in the deeper reality of God.

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Work that transformation in us, transforming God.
Bring us from the fragile, fickle, passing cheer of Palm Sunday
through the contemplation of the depths of hard reality
that Jesus Christ plumbs on that dark Friday,
to the living of that joyous transformation that fills the world
that can only be expressed as "Christ is risen!"
Then send us out renewed, to serve you in the world's reality.

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3) For the needs of those around us, and for the world.
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We pray in, and for, a complicated society in a complicated world,
and now, in complicated pain.

What lies ahead will be neither simple nor straightforward.

We pray for those on whom this insight has dawned,
And for those, while sensing it, desperately deny it.

We pray for those who fear
that contemplating things as they are
would extinguish faith and banish hope.

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You call us to witness to them
the hope that emerges
where wishing and dreaming dissolve and end.
You call us to live before all the world
the life that begins here and now
in reality faced, in crosses taken up, today and daily,
in the following of Jesus wherever his road takes us:
the life, yes, that begins here and now,
and opens out onto eternity.

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We pray for those who are now harder pressed
than ever before in this pandemic.
We recognize a pattern of thinking all around us -
and sometimes within us -
the pattern of exultation and premature relief;
the denial of the complexity and challenge ahead;
the assumption that "this is it", and all will be straightforward now.
We recognize the pattern of Palm Sunday.

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We pray

- for the frustrated and the fearful;
- for those whose optimistic timetables have not been met;
- for those who are close to the end of their tether.

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Yet we know that there is hope,
wrought by you, through the loving labours of those who continue to research,

- continue to treat, to doctor and nurse,
- continue to care,
- continue the work that cannot be done from home
- continue to teach – back now in classrooms;

those who simply continue, in faithful living, through the whole of this strange and stressful reality.

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In each of our communities, in all our parishes, through all our congregations,
Help us to witness to the truth that Jesus taught us,
Through which Holy Week takes us, year by year,
And with such special new relevance in the strangeness of this year,
that the reality we face
is the reality through which he walked,
and the reality through which he brings us;
that beyond the passing relief of Palm Sunday lies Good Friday,
and beyond Good Friday lies the overcoming of all things,
and Easter Day.

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We pray for those who struggle, especially now..

We pray that by living our discipleship where we are, we may make real for others the hope we have in God,.

We pray for the needs we see, and know, and for sensitivity to see what needs we have yet to notice around us.

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And as Jesus taught us, so we pray: Our Father...

You can find news on our church website: www.northknapdale.org

And our Face Book page – North Knapdale Church.

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