

Raise your shouts of Hosanna ...

... for the hope we all have in our Lord Jesus

A reflection given on Palm Sunday, the 5th April 2020, in the Online Communion Service by the Curate, the Revd. Tim Kelly

Matthew 21: 1-11

The city was packed to bursting. There was a sea of tents and makeshift shelters for the thousands camping outside the city walls, joining the thousands who were able to stay inside the city. Here is Jesus descending through the crowds, surrounded on all sides by his followers, those he'd spoken to and those whose lives had already begun to be transformed by his words and actions. A gathering mass, a gathering throng of people who were desperate for change and for the new hope that Jesus offered, the people wrapping themselves around the procession like seaweed are waving their branches and chanting, "Hosanna, O save us!" - their shouts of adoration.

In our current days of social isolation, it may be hard to picture ourselves among that crowd. We can safely assume that there wouldn't have been a 2-metre separation between each person, and at the Minster, we were so looking forward to our Palm Sunday procession; to being that crowd together; to joining in with the Hosanna shout; showing both our adoration of Jesus, and also declaring our need of him. "O save us."

We cannot be together physically this morning, but in many significant ways we are still united and connected with one another. As our eyes are set towards Easter, we are united by our sure and certain hope in Jesus, given to us through his journey to the cross, a journey that takes us through death to new life. And as we stand on the precipice of this holy week, we are united in our waiting together: we know that the cross is coming, but there's a journey to be walked together and to be shared together first.

As I look through the many Facebook posts of friends and colleagues and as we compare notes on how we're all doing and how we're all coping in this current time, it makes it clear to me than ever before how we are all walking together. We journey

together accompanying each other on that journey. This time of separation has strangely made me think more and more about our 'togetherness'.

Earlier this week I was reading Hebrews chapter 10, verse 24, 25: "And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching". This made me thank God for all the ways in which we've been able to meet and support one another at this time: through social media; through Zoom meetings; through kind words of encouragement over the phone.

Although we're physically dispersed, I'm reminded that we continue to be the body of the church united, as we're told by Paul in Colossians chapter 1 verse 18, through the head of the church, Jesus. And as Jesus tells us in John, chapter 15, Verse 5, "I am the vine. You are the branches." That's you, that's me: the branches united through the one we follow and adore; the one that we shout out 'Hosanna' to, this morning.

And what about our common hope? There are many things that we collectively hope and pray for at the moment: the demonstrations of people out on the streets clapping for the NHS and frontline workers are an example; we join together in common prayers of intercession for our doctors, nurses and care workers of all kinds; for those struggling with financial hardship; for those suffering from illness. We are united in our prayers and hopes for all these things. But as we step towards Easter, there is a larger hope that we are reminded we share in common, a hope that is at the very core of our being: our sure and certain hope of never being separated from the one who loved us so much that he gave us his only son.

When I spoke at my mother's funeral last month, I spoke these words,

"There are few guarantees in this life; few eternal and lasting truths; high points and joyous times are interspersed with life's many stumbling blocks and challenges. But, higher than any of the mountains that we may face and stronger even than the power of the grave, one thing remains: Love - God's redeeming, enduring and everlasting love for us."

That, is the hope we look to as we join the Palm procession and journey towards Jerusalem; that in addition to being united with one another, we know that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor

powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

So although we may be in different rooms, different houses, different villages, different towns this morning, join with me, join the procession, raise your shouts of Hosanna, and thank God for our brothers and sisters in Christ and for the hope we all have, set before us

Reading Texts

Matthew 21: 1-11

¹ 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 fulfill 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!” 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.”