

Palm Sunday 2020

Commitment

Joshua 3:1:12

Matthew 21: 11

Palm Sunday reminds us of the time Jesus came to the very gates of Jerusalem riding in a procession on the back of a donkey.

The celebration of Palm Sunday this year is going to be very different to normal,
no walking around the church with the donkey
no service in church
no waving palms in the air

Which is by I have asked for you to make palm crosses so that we can hold them aloft during our prayers and service.

Parallel to Jesus' journey, starting with his baptism by John,
followed by 40 days in the desert
and then travelling through to arrive at the gates of Jerusalem;
we've been tracking the passage of the Israelites flight from Egypt
through the Red Sea,
40 years through the desert
to arrive at the River Jordan.

In both cases it is a journey almost completed
not at the end because the journey is only part of the whole story

What we have seen is the preparation,
the getting ready to claim the prize,
The journey itself is not the purpose
the journey is, if you like, getting to the point where something can happen.

Is rather like a building site,
in Sway, we have a new Co-op being built
it has taken a number of years in planning;
then there was the buying of the property from the then owner;
after which there was the removal of the buildings
the removal of the fuel tanks
any contaminated ground.
Only then were they, the builders, ready to commence the building work.

By this point the builders were committed,
there was no going back
there was no return to the petrol station that was once on the site.

In the same way there was no going back for the Israelites at the River Jordan

The Israelites were committed to action now to move into the Promised Land,
the land promised to Abraham and Isaac by God.

Our reading from Joshua chapter 3 describes how the priests picked up the Ark of the Covenant and walked out into the middle of the Jordan, whereupon the river ceased to flow and the Israelites could cross on dry land. This echoes the escape from Egypt across the red Sea, but instead of escaping they were now entering the land that had been promised to them. and there was no way of going back. They were well prepared and now they could only go forward..

We move forward to Jesus A.D. 30,
He is now moving forward to Jerusalem,
a conqueror but not of land and possessions
but of hearts and minds

The city was preparing for the Feast of the Passover,
Remembering that fateful time when their ancestors fled from Egypt.
Thousands swelled the normal population within the city,
making a special journey of pilgrimage

Just as Jesus and disciples were going to do.
Jesus had effectively burnt his boats by raising Lazarus from the dead in the previous week and making a claim that no authority could allow to go unchallenged that he was the Messiah.

Jesus knew that he was coming into Jerusalem for the final showdown and it would not end in the way people expected.

He was not going to stand triumphant like his ancestor David
Holding aloft the head of the vanquish Romans
He was heading for an ignominious end
Dying on a cross on the city rubbish tip

For now, Jesus was remaining faithful to traditions,
honouring them, but moving on from them.

He was faithful to the remembrance of the Passover meal
which he shared with his disciples on Maundy Thursday
honouring Moses and 1450 years of tradition.

He created a new datum or point of reference, the Last Supper, the Eucharist,
that is now shared by all who follow Christ.

When we celebrate the Eucharist, we do so for a number of reasons,
not least to receive the spiritual food of our Lord Jesus Christ.
To sustain us in our faith and our lives,
and to remind us of the selfless love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So where are we now we have made the commitment to follow Jesus,
there can be no going back.

How can we move forward?

We can do so by keeping alive our faith, even if we are not in church,
We maintain our commitment, and our involvement in our community.

I have reflected that only now can we understand the lives of Christians in countries where an open display of faith would be dangerous. Forced to celebrate in small family groups or singly, maintained by messages of support from others.

I pray for those isolated in their faith with a new understanding.

We are committed whether we like it or not, to reduce the impact of Corvid19. There is no turning back. We have to work through it.

Keep safe, keep well, rely on technology to keep in touch with family and friends.

God Bless and keep you. Amen