

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2025; Palm Sunday. Benefice Holy Communion, Gilling

Today on Palm Sunday we are on the cusp of Holy Week led by our king who is humble and rides on a donkey. In the readings today we hear many voices beginning with the Palm Gospel when we hear the voices of the joyous crowd greeting Jesus., “Blessed is He Who Comes in the Name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest heaven!” This cry from the crowd had overtones of victory. The words ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord’ come from Psalm 118, which was a royal song of thanksgiving for a victory. The cry of Hosanna! was also an acclamation that originally was a cry for deliverance, or a cry of victory. The crowd are welcoming a triumphant king with cries of victory, and Jesus, despite knowing their fickleness and what was to come, graciously accepts their praises, as he does ours. But then, in our service, we have the Passion Gospel where we hear very different voices; Pilate, the accusers and chief priests, the weeping women, the criminals on the crosses, the centurion, and finally the voice of Jesus giving up his spirit. In both accounts two voices however stand out – those uttered by Jesus; victory and humility.

Our reading from Philippians encourages to use Jesus’ character as a model for our own lives. In that reading St Paul says, “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus” who did not grasp at his high status as one equal with God, but rather humbled himself all the way to the cross.” And because of this, St Paul adds, “God has also highly exalted Him”.

That is the kind of mind God seeks to give each of us, with Jesus as our model. Humility amid great triumph. Great joy and praise, but with a lowly nature, not avoiding the

call to rejoice always, but nor shirking the humility. “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you” (James 4:10). Notice that in Philipians Jesus is the one humbling himself, but then God is the one exalting him. So too that’s how God speaks to us in James. That we can humble ourselves, confident that God will exalt us. For really, the two go together. Jesus shows us that, as Christians, joyful confidence and humility need each other. We are not told to tone down the joy a bit, tone down the humility a bit, and then you can find the perfect balance. Instead, Christ shows us that full joy needs full humility lest it turn into pride and that full humility needs to be fully confident in Christ’s victory lest it turn into despair. Blessed are the poor in spirit, our Lord declares. Joyous are the humble, and humble are the joyous.

So, as we enter Holy Week may we be the voice of humility, for we are in desperate need of saving, but may we also be the voice of joyful victory. For our King has come, with his victory, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins and so we should give voice to the words, “Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Every time we celebrate Holy Communion, we repeat the words of the crowd. The Holy, Holy, Holy which we say comes from two sources in the Bible. The words Holy, Holy, Holy is the song of the angels, found in both Isaiah and Revelation. But then our song continues with the words of the crowd on Palm Sunday: “Hosanna in the Highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest.” From the very earliest times, the church has made the crowd’s acclamation our own. Therefore, it is Palm Sunday every Sunday. For in Holy Communion, we remember and welcome the coming of Jesus Christ as our victorious Messiah and we proclaim His

victory with our voices. We become the voices of victory that sing to him as the one who comes in the power of God's name, as the victor over all evil powers and darkness. Hosanna in the highest means our praises join with the highest heaven, that Christ's victory extends to every part of Heaven and earth - the victory through humility.

As we go through Holy Week let our voices be raised again to the victory already won, knowing we are free.

Thanks be to God. Amen.