

Sunday 29th March 2026; Palm Sunday. Benefice Holy Communion, Ampleforth.

Next Sunday, once again, we celebrate Jesus' victory over death. We will rejoice in the resurrection - His resurrection, and ours.

But starting today, and throughout this week, we devote our time to remembering what came first, what *had* to come first, and this is crucial for us to do, because there is no promise of Paradise without Jesus dying for us. There is no resurrection without his crucifixion. There is no joy without first His agony.

Perhaps, we would like to think otherwise, to celebrate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and his triumph over the grave, without having to acknowledge the cross. No one *wants* the Son of God to have to die for them. Why would we? But all of us *need* the Son of God to die for us. That is the truth that is at the heart of this day, and this week we call "Holy.", and why we call Friday, "Good". But why it is so necessary for the Son of God to die and why he had to die in such a horrible way. Why was the cross necessary? The answer to that comes best in a single word, is 'salvation'.

What does that word mean to you today? Is it something you think is necessary in your life, the world, the church? Or does it just mean to you something nice that happens after we die and go to Heaven? If that is what you think salvation is, then I am afraid you are misled.

Nowhere in the Bible are we told that salvation happens after we die. Yes, we believe in the Resurrection of the dead but that is not the same as salvation.

Salvation is something that happened in a moment in time, when Jesus died on the Cross. With the words, "It is finished", everything from that moment changed. It is not

something we did - it was something God did through His Son who He gave for our salvation. God came to us in the person of Jesus who gave His life to save us and give us new life. Salvation continues to happen because once a person realises they are saved, their life will change and they will be called to participate in the salvation of the universe, working to contribute to the arrival of the Kingdom of God, the coming together of Heaven and Earth. This continuing process of salvation will then be concluded at some point in the future, when Jesus returns to judge the living and the dead.

It is something we are meant to claim when we are alive, not when we are dead.

The first step to salvation is realising that something is wrong and must be put right in this world, and in us. But still, we might ask: Why the cross? Why did the Son of God have to be crucified? Not just die, but die in the most painful, gruesome, horrifying way imaginable? Why was this necessary? Because God so loved us that He gave His only Son to die upon the cross for us. It was that saving act of grace which put things right. There was no other way.

Because of that gift, we have been freed and given new life. What will you do with this precious gift, that cost so very much? Firstly, to repent, change direction from us to God and appreciate that every moment of our life is a moment we have not earned, and do not deserve. The cross teaches us that. So, what are we going to do?

Firstly, we must remember what happened on the first Palm Sunday, then through the week and then on that cross outside Jerusalem. We are here, not just to wave our palms in acclamation, but to remember Jesus' passion, suffering, and death. We must remind ourselves that it was necessary for Jesus to die in this way, for each and

every one of us. We are here to see ourselves in the crowd, the soldiers, in Peter, in Mary and John and even in Judas, also to see ourselves in the repentant sinner on the cross next to Jesus who asked for mercy and was promised salvation.

That salvation is here for us today to receive with the grace and passion in which it was given to us.

Thanks be to God. Amen.