



Preparation for Worship: STF 277 Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CPlrA1CMwo>

*My song is love unknown—  
my Saviour's love to me;  
love to the loveless shown,  
that they might lovely be.  
Oh, who am I, that for my sake  
my Lord should take frail flesh and die?*

*He came from His blest throne  
salvation to bestow;  
but men made strange, and none  
the longed for Christ would know.  
But oh, my Friend, my Friend indeed,  
who at my need His life did spend!*

*Sometimes they strew His way,  
and His sweet praises sing;  
resounding all the day  
hosannas to their King.  
Then "Crucify!" is all their breath,  
and for His death they thirst and cry.*

*Here might I stay and sing—  
no story so divine!  
Never was love, dear King,  
never was grief like Thine.  
This is my Friend, in whose sweet praise  
I all my days could gladly spend.*

Emu Music, Samuel Crossman, John Ireland © 2022 Philip Percival, CCLI Song No: 7199757

**Reading:** Mark 1 v. 1-11

**Hymn:** STF 262 All Glory, Laud and Honour

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBfJyjDolwA>

*All glory, laud and honour,  
To Thee, Redeemer, King,  
To whom the lips of child-ren  
Made sweet hosannas ring.*

Thou art the King of Israel,  
Thou David's royal Son,  
Who in the Lord's name comest,  
The King and Blessèd One.

The company of angels  
Are praising Thee on high,  
And mortal men and all things  
Created make reply.

The people of the Hebrews  
With palms before Thee went;  
Our prayer and praise and anthems  
Before Thee we present.

To Thee, before Thy passion,  
They sang their hymns of praise;  
To Thee, now high exalted,  
Our melody we raise.

Thou didst accept their praises;  
Accept the prayers we bring,  
Who in all good delightest,  
Thou good and gracious King.

### Prayer

Triumphant Lord, We rejoice in your entry into the world and into our lives! Joining with the crowds, we sing your praises and exalt your reign, but even so, our hearts are far from true worship, our minds are distant from true understanding. We are disappointed with your humility, we are uninspired by your selflessness. Our sin leads us to give you death even though you give us life. Our treachery guides us to war even though you call us to peace.

Help us to reflect in our lives the glory of your Son and to live faithfully here and now. Have mercy on us, Saviour of all, find us in these forsaken places. Forgive what we have done and who we have been.

Bring us home again and impart within us a new song of joy and celebration. **Amen**

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**Reading:** Psalm 118 v. 1-2; 19-29

*Give thanks to the Lord, our God and King  
His love endures forever  
For He is good, He is above all things  
His love endures forever  
Sing praise, sing praise*

*With a mighty hand and outstretched arm  
His love endures forever  
For the life that's been reborn  
His love endures forever  
Sing praise, sing praise  
Sing praise, sing praise*

*Forever, God is faithful  
Forever, God is strong*

*Forever, God is with us, Forever*

*From the rising to the setting sun  
His love endures forever  
And by the grace of God, we will carry on  
His love endures forever  
Sing praise, sing praise  
Sing praise, sing praise, yeah*

*Forever, God is faithful  
Forever, God is strong  
Forever, God is with us  
Forever, forever*

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**Message:**

As we reflect upon Palm Sunday, I want to do so by looking at it from the perspective of four different groups of people. This is the day, as crowds are streaming into Jerusalem for the Passover festival, when Jesus makes his approach from the Mount of Olives riding on a donkey.

First of all, what would it have been like if you'd been one of the crowd. One of the hundreds of thousands of Jewish pilgrims gathering together. This is Jerusalem, God's holy city and it is under Roman occupation. You can imagine the longing for God to send his promised messiah to bring freedom to Israel and a new world order.

So, as one of the crowd, what do you see? A man proclaiming himself to be the Messiah by linking himself to Old Testament prophecy in starting from the Mount of Olives and riding on a donkey. And crowds throwing their cloaks in front of Jesus as they had done for King Joash centuries before. What those last two also have in common, is the total annihilation of God's enemies, as all the bystanders would have known. This is exciting. This feels like the real thing. The crowds are behind him. They are cheering and shouting. Imploring God to come and save his people. Waving their palm branches. And then ...

And then disillusionment sets in. The Romans are not overthrown. The world order remains unchanged. Instead, this would-be messiah is arrested and put on trial. He's another in a long line of imposters. As we know, as disillusionment sets in, those shouts of 'Hosanna' quickly change to cries of 'Crucify'.

Secondly, what about Jesus' disciples? Their expectations probably weren't that different from those of the crowd. Back at Caesarea Philippi, Peter had come back at Jesus when he dared to suggest that he, the Messiah, must suffer and die. He spoke for all the disciples in believing that the Messiah would be the all-action, all-conquering type.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, as Jesus is arrested, Peter whips out his sword and tries to protect Jesus by force. He's still thinking the same way. But the disciples also have a lot of personal investment in Jesus. They are looking forward to each sitting on one of the twelve thrones in God's coming kingdom. They are looking forwards to having leading roles within that kingdom. Remember this is the kind of culture where the top jobs are handed out to the friends and family of those in charge. It's not what you know that's important but who you know.

So, with all their hopes pinned on Jesus, you can image their disillusionment as Jesus' life is ended on the cross. It's a different disillusionment to that of the crowd but no less crushing.

Then, thirdly, there are the religious authorities. They've been looking for an opportunity to stop Jesus by any means necessary ever since he raised Lazarus from the dead. Word has got around. People are talking. Speculation is that this man could be the Messiah.

And that's what worries the Jewish authorities. They don't believe Jesus is the Messiah but that's immaterial. What is dangerous is people thinking he might be. They're worried about what people might say or do. In a city filled to overflowing with excited and fervent pilgrims, that could be a match that sets the powder keg ablaze. Which would mean the Romans exercising brute force to get the situation under control. Which would mean the Romans shutting down the religious freedom that they presently have.

They must have watched on in horror on that first Palm Sunday as Jesus played the part of the Messiah and the crowds responded. This was their worst nightmare coming true. No wonder they want to shut Jesus down and quickly.

So, what about that fourth group of people? That is us. You and me. We may not have been there to witness Jesus' entry into Jerusalem but the same issues that faced people then face us too.

We can be like the crowds. We pray for God to come and save the world. To bring a new order of things. To end poverty and war and famine etc. etc. etc. And then when God doesn't do that, when God is seemingly powerless or unwilling to intervene in anything other than small things, then we can very quickly become disillusioned.

Or we can be like the disciples when it's not just the big picture but the more intimate surroundings of our own lives and situations that can cause us to become disillusioned. When, perhaps, someone close to us is sick and God doesn't heal them. Or when, in other ways, God doesn't seemingly answer our prayers. Disillusionment sets in.

Or we can be like the religious authorities. Unlikely, you might think but remember what their driving motivation was. They were worried about Jesus' claim to be Messiah. They were concerned about what people might say or do and how the Romans might react and how that might affect their neatly ordered world. Jesus claims our total commitment as the one sent to bring people to God but how many of us stop short of 'totally' committing ourselves because we're concerned about how people around might react if we do. What they might say or do. We're afraid that our ordered world of family, friends and neighbours might come crashing down.

What's the opposite of disillusionment? I'm not sure that illusionment is a word but if we strip away the 'dis-' we're left with something that looks like illusion and we all know that illusion and reality are completely different things. You only need to go to a magic show to see that. After Palm Sunday, people became disillusioned but that was because the image they had of Jesus was an illusion. It wasn't real. What God always intended to do in sending his Messiah was to change the world not from the outside in but from the inside out.

But perhaps I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's walk through the events of Holy Week in these coming days and see for ourselves how the story unfolds. Enjoy the journey.

**Hymn:** StF 52 He is Exalted Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUq4QDrtEjY>

*He is exalted  
The King is exalted on High  
I will praise Him  
He is exalted  
Forever exalted  
And I will praise His name  
He is the Lord  
Forever His truth shall reign  
Heaven and Earth*

*Rejoice in His holy name  
He is exalted  
The King is exalted on high*

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## Prayer

You are probably aware that, this Lent, the Methodist Church has produced worship resources based upon lines from Charles Wesley's hymn 'Love Divine'. The chosen line for Palm Sunday is 'Till we cast our crowns before thee'.

Let's reflect upon that line. What do we understand by our crown? Where do we feel that we need to be in control? What will take us out of our comfort zone?

And what do we mean when we talk about casting our crowns before God? What do we understand by loving God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength? When do we hold back because we're anxious about how others might respond or disruption to our neatly ordered world? Do we trust that if we yield control to God, he will always have our best interests in mind?

Lord God,

As we pray, help us to see you for who you truly are. Take away any illusions we might be holding onto and help us to see only reality and truth. Fill us with your peace and surround us with your love and help us to trust in you and you alone. We cast our crowns before you not just when it is easy – on the Palm Sundays of life – but when it is tough, when we are going through our own Good Friday experiences. May we never become disillusioned.

We thank you that all things in this world are under your sovereign authority and so we pray for all those who are sick and suffering at this time. Bring your healing power into their situations and an assurance that you are with them.

We pray for all those with earthly power and authority – earthly 'crowns'. We pray for our leaders here in the UK and for those around the world. Inspire them, we pray, with vision, discernment, wisdom and courage to face the enormous global challenges before us.

*Name before God those challenges that are particularly close to your heart.*

We pray for our brothers and sisters who face persecution around the world because they refuse to cast their crowns before human authority that is opposed to you. Strengthen them we pray to stand firm in you.

Those pilgrims back then who, like Jesus, came up to Jerusalem for Passover, lived through that final week of his life and carried home with them the story of his crucifixion. May we, too, as we go out into the world carry the story of our crucified and RESURRECTED Lord and Saviour. **Amen**

## The Lord's Prayer

**Hymn:** STF 265 Ride on, ride on, in majesty

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUYCxw0quuQ>

*Ride on, ride on in majesty!  
Hear all the tribes hosanna cry;  
O Savior meek, pursue Your road  
with palms and scattered garments strowed.*

*Ride on, ride on in majesty!  
In lowly pomp ride on to die.  
O Christ, Your triumphs now begin  
o'er captive death and conquered sin.*

*Ride on, ride on in majesty!  
Your last and fiercest strife is nigh.  
The Father on His sapphire throne  
awaits His own anointed Son.*

*Ride on, ride on in majesty!  
In lowly pomp ride on to die,  
bow Your meek head to mortal pain,  
then take, O Christ, Your pow'r and reign.*

**Postscript: Above Everything Else**

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QsTDM-PKicU>

*You rule over distant seas  
Over every part of me  
You raise the day from the night  
And the song inside of me  
You watch all the planets spin  
And my eyelids flickering*

*Beyond everything else You are, You are  
Above everything else You are  
Greater than life itself  
More precious than perfect health  
Finer than friendship or romance  
More needed than oxygen  
More pleasing than thrill or fame  
Stronger than death or gravity*

*You speak and the waves obey  
But You whisper peace to me  
You hold the skies in their place*

*And my past and destiny  
You reign over war-torn lands  
Over famine, fear and kings*

*Beyond everything else You are, You are  
Above everything else You are  
Greater than life itself  
More precious than perfect health  
Finer than friendship or romance  
More needed than oxygen  
More pleasing than thrill or fame  
Stronger than death or gravity*

*King Jesus You are victorious,  
King Jesus You are victorious*

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