

Reflection 2 from Lock Down
Palm Sunday 2020
Matthew 21: 1-11; Philippians 2: 5-11

Holy Spirit, welcome, you are welcome here. Guide us Holy Spirit, speak to us again. Amen.

Starting out was our focus last week. In the gritty reality of our current situation the readings encouraged us to trust God who loves us, who knows us, who invites us to be honest and who gives us life in place of fear and death.

I wonder what stood out to you today?
Where did God settle your attention?

Let's start with our Gospel reading, wasn't it lovely to hear Charlotte read?

Jesus enters Jerusalem. The Passover Feast is a few days away – it's the biggest annual boost to the economy, there's no social distancing here!
Jesus throws aside his strategy of being inconspicuous, you may remember when he healed the person with leprosy and says- don't tell anyone.

Now the time is short, there's no time for nuance.

Jesus grabs the moment.

He's made arrangements for this 'in your face' entrance.

He conscripts the donkey; joins the stream of pilgrims heading to the Temple singing songs they sang every year, songs that long for the Messiah.

As the people sing : 'Hosanna to the Son of David!'

As they SEE this man riding on a donkey –
the cogs turn.

One looks to the other, hang on, there's a faint memory of the old words –

'Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey,

This **is him**, the **one** we are waiting for. He's the ONE.

From a portion of crowd, news moves fast, that one there, over there, he's the ONE.

The people grab anything - garments, palm branches and lay them in front of him.

For a short moment – Jesus is recognized, acclaimed and revered.

There is turmoil, confusion, the whole city is in uproar. Who is this man?

The stage is set for the show down between Jesus, the people's person, the hero of a new kingdom and the elite who want to hang onto the old ways. Temperatures are on the UP; patience is on the DOWN. Like a script emerging – Jesus' execution is inevitable.

Paul's lyrical hymn speaks like a commentary on the Gospel reading. The crowds wanted Jesus to make Israel great again. But God's way of doing this was different, when the climax came the crowds turned on Jesus and bayed for his life.

Paul takes us deep into the heart of God. Jesus, who shows us the truth of God and the fulfilment of humanity, didn't snap when things got tough grabbing back his power. He emptied himself. As we have seen through Lent, Jesus kept himself in check to bring

humanity back to God. Paul says to the early followers, have this same mind among you, as was in Christ Jesus.

What caught your attention? Here are some of my ideas.

1. In these days of yellow and black notices, daily addresses by Jacinda Ardern and Ashley Bloomfield we trust there is a plan and we are taking our part.

In the Gospel reading the anonymous person (aka Kate in the photo) was ready and waiting for Jesus' call. There was a plan, she was ready to do what was asked of her. This hazy story of back street donkey dealing questions me –
What gifts do I have that God could use?
What do I need to do to have them ready?

2. We are in the middle of a journey – the end is not clear.
A friend who works with people on home detention says week 3 is the grittiest week.

These passages remind me that Jesus' journey took him into darkness and through death to resurrected life. God offers us peace whatever lies ahead. The psalmist's experience of separation ends with a statement of God's faithful love. This counters our natural fear and brings us comfort.

Looking back over the past three weeks we have dwelt together in the Lord's Prayer, Psalm 23, and Jesus – the way, the truth and the life. We are secure in Christ.
Let us stay honest, keep talking and keep praying.

To conclude

As we experience the narratives today from this new normal -
Let us walk through Holy Week with our eyes open to see Jesus in different ways.
Let us be ready to respond afresh to the question: Who is this man?