

HOON HAY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Welcome to today's service, Palm Sunday, 5 April 2020



Hello Everyone,

This is our second online service and I trust by now everyone is getting familiar with the 'new normal' of the lockdown. Putting a service together with no worship leader or musicians is taking a bit of getting used to. However, it is encouraging to hear we are all keeping in touch by phone and email. A big thank you to members of the Parish Council and others that are ringing around to keep us as connected as we can be. Physical isolation does not have to mean social isolation, so please keep that regular contact going.




Although the present crisis overshadows almost everything else, today is Palm Sunday; the time we reflect on Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem before his arrest and crucifixion. Accordingly, our service today has Palm Sunday as its theme and focus.

As with last week, a suggested approach with the Order of Service is to find a quiet space and work your way through. The songs again each have a YouTube link and you can use your own Bible or the link provided (Bible Gateway) for the readings. I am working from the NIV (unless otherwise cited).

Blessings

Michael

To zoom in on any part of this document, hold down the Control Key and use the mouse roller, or you can use buttons on the toolbar.

Clicking the icon   alongside songs & message will open in YouTube, and  in 'Bible Gateway'. After viewing, click the 'Back' screen to return to this document.

TO PONDER

"We will never know, this side of heaven, what terrible struggles took place in the spiritual world between Palm Sunday and Easter morning."

Rodney Buchanan

MUSICAL COLLECT

'Humble Yourself in the Sight of the Lord'
Based on James 4:10 this is a piano solo of an old hymn beautifully performed by Tom Howard. It is very fitting meditative reflection as we approach Easter.

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty and everlasting God,

We bow before you and ask that your power and presence be with us as we hear and reflect upon the Palm Sunday. May our hearts and minds be stilled to hear what your Spirit is saying to us and our world at this time.

In your tender love for humanity you sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ to take upon himself our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, and also share in his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Focusing Psalm: Psalm 31: 9-16

In te, Domine, speravi (I put my trust in you, Lord)

This is a Psalm of David. Its theme is depending on God in times of distress

⁹ Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am in distress;

my eyes grow weak with sorrow,
my soul and body with grief.

¹⁰ My life is consumed by anguish

and my years by groaning;
my strength fails because of my affliction,
and my bones grow weak.

¹¹ Because of all my enemies,

I am the utter contempt of my neighbours
and an object of dread to my closest friends—
those who see me on the street flee from me.

¹² I am forgotten as though I were dead;

I have become like broken pottery.

¹³ For I hear many whispering,

“Terror on every side!”

They conspire against me
and plot to take my life.

¹⁴ But I trust in you, LORD;

I say, “You are my God.”

¹⁵ My times are in your hands;

deliver me from the hands of my enemies,
from those who pursue me.


¹⁶ Let your face shine on your servant;

save me in your unfailing love.

Points to note:

It is very common for the Psalmists to be in a place of suffering and this is no exception. We read of distress, sorrow, grief, anguish, groaning, and affliction (quite a list!). There is a clear picture of wasting away perhaps through illness or emotional stress. Emotional stress can cause physical illness (and vice versa); either way, he is suffering greatly and his inner turmoil is compounded by social isolation and ostracism (**vs. 11-13**).

Note the change of focus in **v.14**. ‘But I’ contrasts trust in God with his own troubled condition. As the road to Calvary loomed Jesus was able to express that same trust (**Luke 22:42**). How can we do likewise? With difficulty (the short answer) but knowing God loves and cares helps in trying circumstances. It also is an act of will to trust and it requires patience to wait for God’s deliverance and salvation (**v.16**).

 **Listening:** All Glory, Laud and Honour:
*We are very familiar with this stirring hymn
but it is especially fitting for Palm Sunday.*



OUR PRAYER OF CONFESSION & INTERCESSION

Almighty God,

As we come to a time of confession let us picture the Palm Sunday scene as Jesus entered Jerusalem 2,000 years ago: the throng of people, the palm fronds, the donkey, the shouts of 'Hosanna!' We can see ourselves among the crowd, the noise, and anticipation...

We quickly join the excitement as Jesus approaches; but can't fully comprehend the significance of the unfolding drama. We sing 'Hosannas!' as the volume builds and witness the path strewn with fronds. And yet, like many in the crowd long ago we can be fickle and stray from the path of faithful discipleship. Lord, forgive us. We confess in silence our known and unintentional sins, as well as those of neglect - what we knew we should have done, but didn't...

Lord, hear our prayer; cleanse and restore us. Thank you that in Jesus Christ we have a High Priest who identifies with and understands our weakness, and that through faith in him we can confidently approach your throne with our prayers and petitions.

We pray now for our world, our nation, community, and parish. We think today of a world that has quickly become unstable in the wake of the Corona virus pandemic. We pray for the families of those who have died; please comfort them in their grief. We pray too, for those who are have the virus in hospital or are in isolation. We ask for a divine hand of restraint over further spreading of the virus and for wisdom and strength for all who are in the front line: the doctors, nurses, paramedics, and research scientists working on a vaccine. May your Spirit give guidance and minister in and through all those who are working to contain and cure the virus. Lord, have mercy.

We bring before you our own nation, Aotearoa New Zealand. We sing a national anthem petitioning you to defend us - but how can

our God defend us if we will not look to you? We pray for wisdom for our leaders in central and local government; for the Prime Minister and cabinet, for the Director-General of Health, the Head of Police, and for retail staff in supermarkets and other essential services. May these people be guided and strengthened in their work at this time. We also pray for peace and harmony in our homes as many families are closer proximity now than previously.

We pray for the work and witness of the Christian church in our nation. May its leaders be people steeped in your Word and passionate to share the gospel with all people. May believers everywhere, of whatever denomination or stream, know with increasing joy and assurance, that your plans are good and that with you there is always hope. May we also be good stewards of the resources your creation provides; people of less clutter, waste and love of possessions, and more sensitive of and generous towards those in need.


Finally, Lord, we pray for our parish here in Hoon Hay. May you lead us confidently forward into a new era; that we will seek and hear your Spirit's leading and shape a vision that is effective in winning souls and equipping them to serve. Hear our prayer, Lord, and have mercy on us.


We ask all these things, giving glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever.



Amen



Listening: 'In Christ Alone': *This is an instrumental version of the well-known song. The violin is moving as is the spectacular scenery and the jig at the end is a treat! 'It is good to praise the LORD, and make music to your name' (Psalm 92:1)*


Readings: Psalm 118 :1-2, 19-29 

Matthew 21: 1-11 

Message: 'A Week's a Long Time'
A Palm Sunday Reflection 
with Teaching Notes 

A Time of quiet reflection

Song: 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord' 
A Palm Sunday song from the Maranatha Singers.

Hymn: 'Guide me O, Thou Great Jehovah' 
A lovely rendition of this favourite hymn, sung here by a Cardiff congregation. The last verse is in Welsh.

Benediction (2 Corinthians 13:14):

Kia tau ki a tātou katoa
Te atawhai o tō tātou Ariki, a Ihu Karaiti
Me te aroha o te Atua
Me te whiwhingatahitanga
Ki te wairua tapu
Ake, ake, ake

Amine

And now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all.

Amen

CHURCH NOTICES

All services and other activities and gatherings on our site are cancelled until further notice. Please keep yourself informed by checking the church website and Facebook. New notices will be posted there regularly.

Continue to share celebrations and milestones (an email to the church office). These will then be mentioned in the following week's notices.

Congratulations to Doug Gall who recently celebrated his 60th birthday - well done, Doug, a significant milestone!

Belated Celebrations for the safe arrival of Freya, born March 19th; a new cousin for Keegan and Joshua

Please maintain regular giving during this time. If you need help with banking contact the Church Office by email.

OTHER RESOURCES

Moderator's
Online Devotions
each Sunday

Right Rev Fakaofu Kaio is currently leading weekly devotions each Sunday during the period that public worship is suspended. The devotion will be available on the [Moderator's Facebook page](#) by 9am each Sunday. The devotions will last for approximately 20 mins.

Steady As You Go
Exercises

Age Concern Canterbury has published some [exercises](#) to try at home, these are gentle exercises but please take care when practicing them.



PASTOR'S REFLECTION

Some years ago, I read a book by Radio New Zealand journalist Wallace Chapman. It was titled *Don't Just Do Something, Sit There: A Manifesto for Living the Slow Life* (2013). It was a challenging read for anyone wrapped-up in the busyness of contemporary life. But it was profoundly true. It's not an in-depth analysis of how we have become such a frenetic society; nor is it strictly a self-help book. Rather, he explores the benefits of simply slowing down in ways we can control and exercise influence over. Slow living, he contends, takes time, but its benefits are manifest. Chapman had a wake-up call when, as a university student in his twenties and addicted to intense fitness and exercise, was struck with a rare and debilitating illness. It literally stopped him in his tracks and forced a re-think of everything. His reflections were the content for the book.

As a teacher for over 30 years I witnessed the increasing busyness in education. The changes in assessment alone created a bureaucracy which had a momentum and virtual life of its own. Other developments in technology, health and safety, compliance law, appraisal, curriculum developments, and reporting (to name a few), collectively resulted in enormous change. But it wasn't just in education of course. All workplaces and home life have been revolutionised by digital technology and social media. We have lost patience because a 10-second wait for a computer file to load seems 'ages' and makes us fidgety. This is an example of what Wallace wants us to reconsider. His response: think, reassess priorities, recalibrate – breathe. In the grand scheme of everything happening in the world, our wait and frustration is trivial and needs a bigger and more objective perspective.

In light of this, the present crisis has some silver linings for our wellbeing (apart from the obvious of benefit of keeping us safe by shutting-down any potential for contact/contagious spread of the virus). An extended walk on the first day of the lockdown (a beautiful autumn day) was almost surreal. There were no planes in the sky and little or no traffic. People were even walking on the streets – and not only because of social distancing requirements – but *because we could, because there were no cars*. Stillness, quiet, and a sense of solitude. It's a wonderful antidote to urban madness.

I tend to be a homebody anyway and can happily fuss away on all sorts of projects, big and small. I find no hardship in everything slowing down, being in one place, and enjoying the quiet. Moreover, I have time to be with my family in our 'bubble'. The conversations have flowed and there is *no rush to be elsewhere*. Restless spirits have been stilled.

Someone has said 'stillness is God's language' which I'm sure is true. Psalm 46 speaks of God's care and provision in times of trouble and later verse 10 it says, "Be still, and know that I am God." No wonder in our incessant busyness we can't even make sense of the voices in our mind, let alone sense anything divine or transcendent. But just maybe the lockdown will give us a rare opportunity to *be* rather than *having to be* or *do*. The pandemic and the changes it will bring to our world will create a 'new normal', and the forced reordering of our private world might kickstart a new appreciation of the slower, more contemplative life. I hope so. Blessings for a good week – keep in touch and stay safe!

Michael