

“The Entry”

Prayer

Dear Father,

We remember that on this day in Easter week Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem to carry out the last critical activities of his ministry. Thank you that he never shrank from the work that you gave him to do. We ask for your leading of us as we worship today, as it were, in the shadow of our master, and that you fulfill your purposes in us today.

We ask in our Saviour’s name. Amen.

1st hymn by Philipp Bliss 1838-1876 (T Gethsemane P. Bliss 1838-76)

1. Man of Sorrows!

What a name for the son of God who came ruined sinners to reclaim!
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

2. Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned He stood:
Sealed my pardon with his blood; *Hallelujah! What a Saviour!*

3. Guilty, vile, and helpless we; spotless Lamb of God was He:
Full atonement, can it be? *Hallelujah! What a Saviour!*

4. Lifted up was He to die. It is finished! was His cry;
Now in heaven exalted high: *Hallelujah! What a Saviour!*

5. When He comes our glorious King, all his ransomed home to bring;
Then anew this song we’ll sing: *Hallelujah! What a Saviour!*

Readings:

- Ps 118:21-29
- Matthew 21:1-11

2nd hymn: by John Bowring (T Love divine J. Stainer 1840-1901)

1. In the Cross of Christ I glory; towering o’er the wrecks of time,
All the light of sacred story gathers round its head sublime.

2. When the woes of life o’ertake me, hopes deceive and fears annoy,
Never shall the Cross forsake me; Lo! it glows with peace and joy.

3. Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure, by the Cross are sanctified;
Peace is there that knows no measure, joys that through all time abide.

4. In the Cross of Christ I glory; towering o’er the wrecks of time,
All the light of sacred story gathers round its head sublime.

Intercessions:

Father, we pray for Kings and leaders and all in authority, with supplications and thanksgivings that we might have a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectable in every way; so we do so now in this worship time. We are grateful that we live in a democracy in

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which we have the freedom to change our governments by voting, without deaths or blood in the streets. We pray for our leaders that they might have wisdom and insight in their decision-making on our behalf, and that they may lead well.

We pray for those who preach and teach your Word in other countries, and those who have heard the Christian truth in these countries where governments are often harsh and authoritarian; and yet these new believers have responded at great personal cost, even of their very lives at times, and have yet continued faithful to Christ’s call. We pray for their upholding, and faithful following of, your Word and your Spirit’s leading – grant them strength and perseverance; carry them as they face persecution in a way that is still rare here at this time, and enable them to persist in their faith. Give them a deep assurance and joy in their stand for Him!

We pray for those who preach your word *in our land* and across the lands, that they may do so according to your Word, with integrity and faithful interpretation. Thank you for that Word of truth, that “straight edge” against which we can compare what we hear, and “see that we are in the faith”.

We remember the warning Jesus gave of a coming time toward the end time, of apostasy, of people falling away from the faith, of people betraying even members of their family, of wickedness being multiplied, and of a time of tribulation before the end. Make us faithful to you, and keep us by your powerful hand.

We are always aware of some colleagues or family who are ill, or recovering from illness or just downcast and depressed. May they remember that just as you promised Joshua, you would never leave him nor forsake him, and just as Jesus promised as he left the disciples that he would be with us always to the close of the age, so you will always keep your promises, and we can thoroughly depend on them. For that we are so grateful. So bless and encourage the downcast and bring your healing to those who are ill.

For we ask these our prayers in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, Amen.

3rd hymn by William Cowper 1731-1800 (T Martyrdom H Wilson 1766-1824)

- 1) There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel’s veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.
- 2) The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day;
And there may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away.
- 3) E’er since, by faith I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme and shall be till I die.
- 4) Then in a nobler, sweeter song, I’ll sing the power to save,
When this poor lisping, stammering tongue lies silent in the grave.

Message: “The Entry”.

Let’s look again at the events of Scripture readings. For some time Jesus had “set his face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51) Note this is not even halfway through Luke’s gospel – the rest is all about what happened after that!

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In today’s narrative he had reached the small village of Bethphage near Bethany where the family of Lazarus lived. It was not far from the Mount of Olives. From there he sent two of his disciples to pick up a foal of a donkey according to a likely pre-arrangement! (On being questioned they replied in a sort of code “The Lord has need of it”, and then, in all the gospels, no further questions were ever asked!)

Did the disciples maybe imagine that Jesus would “steal into Jerusalem” secretly? They might have wished that. They were terrified that he would even think of approaching the city. They knew... everyone knew, that the priests, scribes and Pharisees were gunning for him, to kill him. But no! He had no intention of stealing in. He knew – as they didn’t – exactly what lay ahead of him. Nothing would divert him from that. Had he not said “My food is to do the will of my Father and finish His work”? (Jn 4:34) He had also said “...I do nothing on my own authority but speak as the Father taught me” and “He who sent me is with me; He has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to Him” (John 8:26–29).

So he rode the young donkey which had never been “broken in” in accord with the prophecy of Zechariah –“rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion. Lo your King comes to you – humble is he, riding on a colt, the foal of an ass!” (not, of course, on a war horse which was how a warrior king would enter) – this One was totally on a mission of peace!

And the further he went, the greater grew the crowds. Why? Because it was the build up to the Feast of the Passover! So there were lots of visitors in Jerusalem. But also, according to John’s gospel, the miracle of the raising of Lazarus had everyone talking. If the miracle of the giving of sight to a man born blind had not been enough, this latest sign was moving them to fever pitch! And why not? (Lazarus had been dead 4 days – his body had actually been “autolysing” as we called it in pathology – his body had been digesting itself as it was breaking down, rotting! This was no “resuscitation” – it was more like a re-creation, a true resurrection! No wonder everyone was talking about it.) So there was a tumultuous welcome. Nothing could dampen the jubilation as this “conqueror over death” entered the city like a conquering hero. People were waving branches, shouting phrases from Ps 118 “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Save us, we beseech thee!” This was the Messianic welcome. They were also laying down garments on the road, part of the royal welcome. And as if there could be any doubts, John adds “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” (Jn 12:13)

But Jesus was doing something even more significant that day –

- The Saviour was riding into the Holy City to save His people.
- The Prince of peace was riding into the “city of peace” to bring true peace – the city had never been peaceful before.
- The Son of David (great David’s greater Son) was riding into the City of David to fulfill His forefather’s prophecy “I have set my King on Zion my holy hill” (Ps 2:6) a pre-figuring of what will be when the Son comes to reign, when every eye shall see and confess Him as Lord!
- The Stronger Man was riding into the city to bind the “strong man”. His satanic foe was planning his “last ditch” attack on God the Son but this foe really had no idea what God was planning!

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So this entry was majestic and triumphal, with the true glory of God the Son on full show.

The crowd was totally out of control – as far as the Pharisees were concerned! They were angry, and said to Jesus “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” He answered “I tell you, if these were silent, even the very stones would cry out!” Some time later the children were still crying out in the temple “Hosanna to the son of David!” (a truly kingly title – David had been their greatest King.) And the Chief Priests and scribes were very indignant, and said to him, “Do you hear what these children are saying?” Jesus had heard it very well, and asked them “Have you not read ‘out of the mouths of babes and infants have you brought perfect praise’?” Ps 8:2 Jesus is saying “The children have got it. The chief priests have missed it!”

There was a supernatural element in all this. It was an occasion when those in control were completely ineffective, even ignored. Almost as if God, his Father, was insisting “Today, you will truly recognize my Son for what he is!” I think this was a true act of revelation – for a short time, the only time during his ministry, apart from the “transfiguration” of Jesus, that humanity was seeing something of his true glory. This was like a pre-figuring, a practice run, of that day when he would be seen in his full glory – which every living creature will see, at his second coming. But it wasn’t to last (past that special day).

The powers of evil re-grouped and it was not long later that the fickle hearts of humanity were revealed in their true fallen nature, when those very same vocal cords would shout just as loudly for the death of this Holy One.

But Jesus was never deceived. “He knew what was in man” – he loved them, but he didn’t trust himself to them. (Jn 3:25) And he knew what had to happen for their cure.

Luke exposes this truth late in the story of this triumphal entry. He tells how when Jesus saw the city he wept over it – this was the city he loved. And he said “would that even today you knew the things that make for peace. But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days shall come upon you when your enemies shall cast up a bank about you and surround you, and hem you in on every side [that refers to a siege-mounds, to starve it and eventually capture the city], and dash you to the ground and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another” Why? “because you did not know the time of your visitation!” (Lk 19:44)

Their Messiah had come and they did not receive him.

They did not recognize him because they were looking for a different type of Messiah. It was, and still is, a sad fact – the “people of God”, the Jews in Jesus’ day, missed him. Time and again he had said to them “You have heard it said.... But I say unto you...!”

Thus he would give his new emphasis. The authorities had perverted the truth. For instance he said “You have heard it said you should love your neighbour and hate your enemy...” But the Torah did not say that! You won’t read that in Leviticus. The true spirit of his Father’s heart was “Love your enemy. Do good to those who hate you.” Why? Because your heavenly Father is like that.

“He makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good. He sends his rain on the just and the unjust.” Be like Him!

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So Jesus, towards the end of a wonderful day, raises an inevitable phenomenon which usually accompanies the gracious gift of God. That is, what of those who do not see his glory...who do not accept his gift on their behalf? Jesus polarized people. What of those who reject the goodness and kindness of God? They either loved him and worshipped him, or hated and rejected him. There were only voices raised in praise for him that day. But there were those whose voices were not raised – but they were powerless to do anything about it. And they were angry at their helplessness. According to the scriptural record, Jesus himself introduces the subject of what happens to those who reject the glory of his true status. How could the Pharisees see a man born blind then healed by Jesus, and NOT see how staggering a healing this was – but in fact see only a Sabbath-law breaker? How could they know that a rotting corpse had been restored to life, yet see only a management problem? Surely there was an evil will acting here!

Apparently Jesus was a threat to their power base – their humanly-constructed realm of authority. Their solution was that both the Healer and the healed had to die.... So an agenda of power and self-justification is very dangerous!

“It blinds you” said Jesus.

And Jerusalem returned to its long established pattern of killing the prophets – within a few days it would kill this one too, not really knowing who He was!

But as hinted at the time of his triumphal entry, on this occasion his most inveterate enemy would be completely out-manoeuvred. The worst action ever planned and executed in history by human and evil powers, God turned into the greatest act of salvation in history! Surely that is proof that God is truly sovereign! Amen.

4th hymn: by Henry H Milman (T St. Drostan J.B.Dykes)

- 1) Ride on, ride on in majesty! Hark, all the tribes Hosanna cry;
O Saviour meek, pursue Thy road with palms and scattered garments strowed.
- 2) Ride on, ride on in majesty! In lowly pom ride on to die;
O Christ, Thy triumphs now begin o'er captive death and conquered sin.
- 3) Ride on, ride on in majesty! The winged squadrons of the skiy
Look down with sad and wondering eyes to see the approaching sacrifice.
- 4) Ride on, ride on in majesty! Thy last and fiercest strife is nigh;
The Father on His sapphire throne expects His own anointed son.
- 5) Ride on, ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die;
Bow Thy meek head to mortal pain, then take, O God, Thy power and reign.

Benediction:

The Lord bless you and keep you:

The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you:

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. Amen.

[This service was prepared by Neil McIntosh \(M.B.B.S. F.R.A.C.S.\) for HopeNet SA](#)