

Gospel Reflections 5 April 2020 (Palm Sunday)

[Matthew 21:1-9](#) (see also Mark 11: 1-10, Luke 19: 29-28 & John 12:12-15)

"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!"

"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

Luke 19: 38-40

During Holy Week we tend to be a bit of a nerdy church-going family. With Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday (dawn is the best) there are usually 4-5 services that we attend. Add on top of that a school chapel and a Verena-Johnson-'Our Saviour'-Easter-drama-production, we are fully loaded by the time Easter Monday rolls around.

But this year...? It's going to be so different. I am not alone in saying I am going to miss it this year. If CV-19 was around on that first Palm Sunday, I wonder if Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem would've been cancelled. It would seem the Pharisees would've been there to squeal to the closest centurion that a 'mass gathering' was forming. As it was the Pharisees weren't happy about what was going on and told Jesus to silence the crowd. In response you can almost hear Jesus laughing atop that little donkey, saying, *'that even if CV-19 keeps everyone locked down at home the stones themselves would cry out!'* (at least that's how my 'Long Bow' translation reads).

Holy Week is a special time for Christians all around the world and this year churches will be empty. But will worship stop because of it? I figure that the stones are already crying out;

- Today I saw that the Pope was praying in an empty St Peters square
- I see choirs using Zoom to produce beautiful songs of worship from the safety of everyone's home. See; <https://youtu.be/Ry4CW5pte98>
- There are podcasts, live streaming and messages shared by pastors and others via social media, websites and email.



I have parents in their 90s and they are facing a very different Easter. Their lives centre around their church and visiting others. They do not have access to the internet, cannot visit or have others visit them. Perhaps this Easter we are called to think about serving our elderly, shut ins, homeless and those who are uniquely challenged by the times we are in. This too is worship.

For many of you, your schools are now pupil free or about to be. As you prepare for online learning there are opportunities for new expressions of worship too. We may not be able to recreate the Palm Sunday parade in our chapels or churches, but let us encourage our students, staff and families to be #stayhome stones. Stones that cry out in joy and triumph as we again follow Jesus to the cross; albeit from our lounges, dining tables, laptops, gardens or streets.

All of this reminds me that, despite our physical isolation from each other, we remain a *Communion of Saints*, praising God through history and into eternity. Luther in the Small Catechism says, *"In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus in the one true faith."* This is always true whether we are gathered in a church or on our own.

A nasty little virus will not prevail over his church, as sin will not prevail. This sickness has already been defeated on that first Good Friday and Easter Sunday. At the beginning of a Holy Week the like we have not experienced, let us sing our *Hosannas* and *Hallelujahs* anew with knowledge that the whole church on earth is doing the same. Again, we celebrate the triumphant Jesus who humbly enters our world to come to save and free us from anything and everything the world can throw at us. Shouts of praise could not be silenced on that first Palm Sunday and will not be silenced now!

Peace and blessings to you all in the challenges being faced at your schools and in your own families,

Mark

