

GORING UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

# WELCOME

05 APR 20

'Treat others and the planet as you would  
like to be treated.'

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**[Editor's note: As Andrew mentions below, he has been unwell this week, so there are no Musings from the Manse. Instead, I have transcribed his recorded sermon as best I can. Any errors are most likely mine!]**

Readings:

Esther Ch. 6 verses 1-11

Matthew Ch.21 verses 1-11

Revelation 7 verses 9-15

Greetings, everyone. I hope everyone's keeping well or as well as can be expected in this time. Jill and I have been quite unwell this week. Not sure if it's a mild form of the virus or just some kind of fever. Probably the latter. Who knows? Everyone seems to think they've got the virus at the moment. Hopefully we will be on the mend soon. I really wanted to put out a recording this week, so excuse the sound quality, and the croaky voice. And thanks to everyone for their prayers, and offers of help. Thank you from Jill and myself. Thank you.

So in our text this morning, the three great processions are taking place, hundreds or even thousands of people gathering together. That experience is

becoming a distant memory for us now. No more than two gathering in one place, if that. Not exactly a crowd, but I'm getting ahead of myself.

A reminder of the text today. I know I said last time, I'll be using the lectionary. Well, I am for one reading, and being creative with the other two. So here are the readings. First one is from Esther 6, verses 1–11. Matthew – which is the lectionary reading – 21, verses 1–11, and Revelation 7, verses 9–15.

And just to remind you, as it's easy to lose track of events of the Christian era during these times of isolation, we're rapidly moving towards Easter and Easter is a great celebration for Christians. Because what we're celebrating is the liberation of the whole human race. Great news! We must not let the fact that we're unable to gather together take the edge off Easter. Ultimately, Jesus has won a victory over everything that this world can throw at us, even COVID-19. Through Jesus Christ, we have come into an incredible inheritance. In Christ our Lord, we can achieve great things, because of what Jesus has done, and what he continues to do.

But this morning, I want to talk about three great parades that we see in the scriptures, ones we need to take part in, in order to be effective as Christians.

So the first parade is the parade of Mordecai. A bit obscure this one you might be thinking, but very interesting and relevant today. Even just for the imagery from the reading. Now we pick up the reading from Esther 6, verse 6. When Haman entered, the king asked him, "What should be done for the man the king delights to honour?"

Something remarkable about this man, Mordecai; it's well worth understanding and imitating.

Mordecai was a cousin of Esther, who was the Queen of Xerxes the king of Persia. She was a Jewess and obeyed and respected Mordecai. In the days after she became queen Mordecai overheard a plot against the king by two of his eunuchs. He reported this plot to Esther, she told the king and the king successfully halted their plan.

At that time, no credit was given to Mordecai, except that his deeds were recorded in the official

records of the Persian court. Now, Mordecai would not bow in those days to the king's favourite Prince, Haman. Like Daniel, he would not bow to anyone except God because of his great faith. Haman became angered, and sought to destroy all the Jews because of Mordecai's faithfulness to his God.

When Mordecai learned of his evil plot, he went into a state of mourning. Haman planned to have Mordecai hanged on some gallows he would have made. This time the king was reminded of the great deed that Mordecai had done in saving his life. At precisely the same time, Haman was entering into his presence to seek permission to hang Mordecai, presumably on some trumped-up charge. This is coincidence, perhaps. No, it's a God incident. Before he could ask to have Mordecai killed, the king asked him about honouring someone special. How would he go about it? And Haman, thinking that he was that someone, well he came up with a grand plan.

This is great. The end result was he found himself leading Mordecai, his hated enemy, through the streets, ringing a bell and yelling, "This is what is done

for the man the king delights to honour." That's such sweet irony. Not only that, but Mordecai was wearing the Royal crest on his chest and royal robes, the sign of royal favour and power. Why did he receive all this honour? Because it was ultimately honouring God, not the king. Mordecai's the humble, loyal servant of God, he sought no glory or award for his devotion, but God blessed him richly. Big lesson for Mordecai is to honour God. The next parade is the one that happened in Jerusalem, and it's celebrated on what we call Palm Sunday. Such a familiar account when Jesus came into Jerusalem. He is fulfilling a prophecy that Israel had before it some 520 years. Zachariah 9, verse 9: "Rejoice greatly oh daughter of Zion. Shout, daughter of Jerusalem. See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey – on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

This scripture perfectly describes Jesus' righteousness and having salvation. For 520 years the Jewish leaders had these words to contemplate and ponder, but when the day came, they missed it. But this celebration marked the

fact that for the entire human race an incredible historic moment had come about. What was being celebrated was an incredible, universal change that would affect every man and woman on earth. Every life that has been lived since this time has been defined by their response to what happened shortly after this triumphant entry.

Of course, we live in troubled times now. But I don't have to remind you that. People are blaming each other for the problem, some say governments are making bad decisions, too late in providing resources, too late in recognising need. Our world is choking due to pollution and global warming. It's so easy to blame others and we could just build a great big wall and shut out all our problems, but others will take their place or even trump the original ones.

There is sin and corruption and cruelty gripping civilization. Even look at the recent example of panic buying from our shops, hoarding, depriving others by



selfish actions. In this world, there is enough of everything to go around, if we but share it. When Jesus was crucified these things were dealt with. You may say, "hold on, these things are still going on." Yes, but the kingdom of God is actually knocking down walls leading to eternal salvation. The only way that sin can triumph



in our life now is if we choose to let it. Jesus has given us a way out. Dictatorships and empires can be toppled, even viruses can be beaten.

Imagine if we were back on that first Palm Sunday and we chose to join with the crowd, welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem. If we do that, then we're committing ourselves to following Jesus. "See, your king comes to you righteous and having salvation." Jesus comes in peace. And we know that when a

king came into a city on a donkey, he came in peace and he bought salvation with him. The problem with the crowd is they only worshipped him for a moment and then went on to have him executed. "Kill him!" they shouted.

Jesus did three things when he came into Jerusalem that day. First by his entry into the holy city he made his claims as God's Messiah, God's Anointed One. So now we must wholeheartedly acknowledge him as King, or not receive him at all.

Second, it shows Jesus' courage. Coming into Jerusalem like this could do nothing other than demand people make a choice to accept Him as Lord and King of Israel, or have him crucified as a criminal. History's blood-stained pages showed us the people's decision. In the face of this we too are called to courage, to stand up for what we believe in.

Thirdly, Jesus' appeal. People were initially attracted to him, they came out in droves to express their appreciation of him. Through this triumphal entry, God visually displays his son for

who is, the king who comes in peace.

So, in other words we can either respond in worship with our prayers and our lives or reject him as an impostor.

The third parade or gathering that I want to consider is found in Revelation seven. This spectacle is in stark contrast to the one we've just read about. There are some outstanding differences. Here Jesus is not the coming king who eventually is rejected. Here he is established on the throne. There are the same palm branches waving in the people's hands, but the people are dressed quite differently. We do not find them taking off their clothes and laying them on the road. Why?

Well, as I already said Jesus was not travelling, he is already established on the throne. He had arrived. But more than that, the people are not wearing earthly clothes or cloaks, they are wearing white robes. These are people who have journeyed through their lives in this world and have availed themselves of all Jesus has provided on the cross. In among them are the

former guilty, the angry, the hurtful, the irritable, the sinful. But the one common feature these people have is that they have endured with Jesus until the end. They have not given up on him, or given up hope. They have come out of the tribulations of this world focused on the cross of Jesus Christ, never giving up.

Friends, is that not our task here in this church? The message of the cross of Jesus is as important as the day that you and I first heard it. This parade is gathering the saints together and it beckons us. It is full of hope, full of encouragement to join in on this great party in heaven. It has a serious note of reward and blessings of peace. In its own words, "For the lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd. He will lead them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." This is a great promise and it's already been achieved for us. We, though, need to be sure not to get weary, not to give up and not to stray. We need to persist and never give up pursuing God through whatever tribulations we may face. Young David was like that. The army in Israel thought

Goliath was too big to defeat. David thought he was too big to miss.

The message of this third reading should inspire us with hope never to give up, and we read in Galatians chapter six, verse nine, "Let us not become weary in doing good for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

If we were to sum up the action points of these three great parades we would ensure that we are firstly honouring God like Mordecai. Don't let the world distract you from the way you're meant to honour God. If you're too busy for God then you're too busy. Secondly is to worship God with our whole lives. "See your king comes to you righteous and having salvation." He has been revealed to us in many ways. And thirdly, we need to learn to take hope. Take hope from the future, and to learn endurance and persistence in the things of God. Extremely hard times now, but we have a real promise of better things to come. A hope of heaven in our hearts. Rejoice, rejoice. Christ is in you. Hosanna in the highest. Amen.

Just to end here ... Wherever you're listening to this, give a shout out with me: "Praise the Lord," after 3:

1, 2, 3,

**"Praise the Lord."**

Peace be with you. In Jesus name, Amen.

### **NEWS FROM ELDERS**

**Church Secretary:** Elders would like to inform members that Val Gill has received a call to take on the role of Church Secretary, and this was scheduled to be brought to the March Church Meeting. Unfortunately the coronavirus intervened. Elders exceptionally decided to make her appointment official forthwith and to seek ratification by Church Meeting when next we meet. Val has already assumed the mantle and we ask that you will support her in prayer in this key role.

**Palm Sunday:** We are very sorry that Palm Crosses cannot be distributed this Palm Sunday, but stocks of the Crosses are all ready for next year

## DAILY PRAYERS

### Sunday:

Today is Palm Sunday. Let us remember, amongst the problems we have, caused by the virus, that Jesus is approaching the sacrifice of his life. King one moment, sacrifice the next.

### Monday:

Father God we thank you for another day in your world. We thank you for the safety and comfort of our homes. May we always be aware of your presence.

### Tuesday

Dear Lord, we are so concerned for the well-being of our families and friends, at this time particularly. If any are at work in busy situations may they be kept safe from all danger.

### Wednesday:

O breath of God come sweeping through us. Revive us with your life and power. O breath of life cleanse and renew us, fit us to meet this hour.

### Thursday:

As we approach Easter may we remember again Jesus, as he prepares to enter into his kingdom. That all has been accomplished.

### Friday:

Light of the world, light of all humankind, kindle in us a

mighty flame until every heart rises to praise your holy name.

### Saturday:

As our week closes, O Lord we thank you for our protection in this past week—O God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come. and make us ever grateful that You will be with us.

## CHURCH FAMILY PRAYERS

During the year we remember all in our Church Family. **This week:** Rosemary Terry, and Ryan, Susie, Charlie & Joe Thomas

**Daily Bible Reading:** It is time to resume our daily bible readings. It seems appropriate to restart at the beginning of Mark! As we are not meeting for Sunday worship we will read seven days a week. If ever there was a time for re-focus sing on the Word surely this is it. Please read prayerfully and meditate on what God is saying to you/us day by day.

### Readings for April

Mon	6 <sup>th</sup>	Mark	1–3
Tue	7 <sup>th</sup>	Mark	4–6
Wed	8 <sup>th</sup>	Mark	7–9
Thu	9 <sup>th</sup>	Mark	10–12
Fri	10 <sup>th</sup>	Mark	13–16
Sat	11 <sup>th</sup>	Luke	1–2
Sun	12 <sup>th</sup>	Luke	3–5