



Palms and Pain

There is something really powerful about the idea that God, in Jesus, understands human experience—not abstractly, but through the senses. Sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell all shape how we encounter the world, and in Holy Week, we are invited to step into those same experiences with Christ.

Palm Sunday marks the beginning of that journey.

Celebrating Jesus' arrival into Jerusalem. He, riding humbly on a donkey, is greeted by crowds waving palm branches and laying them at his feet. It is a moment of joy, hope, and expectation. Yet, by Friday, those cries of "*Hosanna*" will turn into "*Crucify him.*" The shift is as dramatic as it is unsettling.

To understand this moment more deeply, it helps to look back even further—to the great story at the heart of the Jewish faith: the Exodus. This story of liberation from slavery in Egypt has been remembered and celebrated for generations through Passover. It is a story of oppression and freedom, of suffering and hope.

Both Exodus and exile remind us of a hard truth: systems that generate wealth and comfort for some often produce suffering for others. Empires, ancient and modern, can elevate a few while crushing many. And in those places of suffering, God is not distant—He is seen as the one who liberates.

Perhaps we would better understand the Bible if we replaced the word "*salvation*" with "*liberation.*"

Psalm 137 captures the raw emotion of exile: people refusing to sing for their captors, refusing to turn their pain into entertainment. Their voice echoes through history, asking us difficult questions:

Where do we see exile today?

Who is suffering now?

And do we dare to truly see them?

As Jesus enters Jerusalem, he carries all of this with him. And throughout Holy Week, we are invited to experience what he experiences.

He touches the untouchable—and restores dignity.

He hears both praise and condemnation.

He tastes bread and wine—symbols of fellowship, betrayal, and sacrifice.

He smells the harsh realities of suffering—blood, sweat, and humiliation.

To walk this road with Jesus requires courage. But it also opens us to transformation—the promise that even our deepest pain can be redeemed.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God as the highest priority. He described it as a treasure so valuable that one would give up everything to possess it. He made it clear that we cannot serve two masters. When God's will conflicts with worldly values, a choice must be made.

Holy Week is filled with those choices.

Jesus chooses obedience, even in anguish, setting his face "like flint" toward Jerusalem. The disciples, despite their intentions, choose self-preservation—leading to betrayal, denial, and desertion.

Judas gives in to resentment and greed.

The crowds are swayed by pressure and manipulation.

Someone has said the crowd is: 'one moment waving palms, the next moment waving fists.'

Even Peter, bold in promise, falters in fear.

Yet, in a striking twist, it is a Roman centurion—a complete foreigner—who recognises Jesus as the Son of God.

These moments are not just history; they are mirrors. They reflect the choices we face every day:

Will we stand firm in what we believe?

Or will fear, pressure, and self-interest lead us away?

Across the world today, many still face persecution for their faith.

Some continue to choose courage, holding fast to their vision of God's Kingdom, no matter the cost.

Palm Sunday and Holy Week invite us into that same reflection.

What shapes our loyalty?

What competes with our commitment to God?

Where are we tempted to compromise?

Perhaps it is fear of judgment.

Perhaps it is the desire to fit in.

Perhaps it is simply the quiet habit of putting ourselves first.

Good Friday offers a place to lay those struggles down—to bring them to the cross.

Easter Sunday offers something even greater: renewal, hope, and the invitation to begin again.

To walk forward with clarity.

To live with purpose.

To love, obey, and serve with wholehearted devotion.

This is the journey that begins on Palm Sunday.

Much love and many blessings

LucyA