

## Palm Sunday

Well today is, of course, Palm Sunday; the day on which we remember how Jesus rode into Jerusalem upon a donkey.

In this deliberate act Jesus fulfils the prophecy of Zechariah; “behold your king comes, humble and riding upon a donkey”; and so begins the events of Holy Week that lead to the death of Jesus.

We might, therefore, have expected the BCP to give us a reading that tells the tale of Jesus’ triumphal entry.

But instead, we have St Matthews account of Jesus’ crucifixion.

Thus starts a cycle of readings, that if we were to follow them, would take us through the crucifixion according to Mark (Monday and Tuesday), Luke (Wednesday and Thursday) and John (Friday).

I would encourage you to read each of these readings over the next week as you prepare for Good Friday and Easter.

As you do, what might you look for in these four accounts of the crucifixion?

Let me make just a very few suggestions.

Firstly, take note of how little attention the gospel writers pay to the physical suffering of Jesus. Crucifixion was the most horrific death the Romans could devise, so cruel that it was not permissible for a Roman citizen to be executed in this way.

You might notice that it is not so much the physical suffering of Jesus that the writers focus on, as the spiritual.

Each show us how Jesus dies alone, not just cut off from his fellow human beings, but from God, his Father; the One with whom he himself had said, “I and the Father are one.”

The purpose of this spiritual suffering is also made clear; as Barabbas (whose name means son of the father) is set free and Jesus dies in his place; and let us understand, ours also.

As Jesus dies the temple in the curtain is torn in two; and the barrier between God and man is removed.

Perhaps you might too, ponder upon the two people who betray Jesus: Judas and Peter.

Both deny Jesus, letting him down. Both realise that they have made the most terrible of mistakes.

But Judas, even in his remorse, will not turn to Christ in repentance; preferring instead to pay the price of his sin himself;

Whilst Peter allows his remorse to drive him to repentance and to being in the place where Jesus can ask him, "Peter do you love me" and restore Peter once again.

The Gospel writers no doubt expect us to conclude, in the words of the Negro spiritual, that we were there when they crucified my Lord.

By our sins, we are every bit as much responsible for the death of Jesus as Judas, and the priests and Pilate.

But will we respond like Judas, and even in our sorrow remain a stranger to Jesus,

Or will we like Peter, turn to Christ in sorrow for our part in his death, declare our love for Jesus, and find in him a new and everlasting life?