

**May I speak in the name of the living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

On Palm Sunday, we began our commemoration of one of the most important weeks in the history of the world. The final week of Christ's earthly life before his crucifixion and resurrection. It truly is a week that changed the whole course of human history and the understanding of our relationship with God.

As we gather together tonight, I would like us to take few moments to think about the events we recall during the course of this Holy Week, and the truths that it reveals about God and his love for us.

On Palm Sunday, we recalled Jesus' entering into the Holy City of Jerusalem, riding on a donkey. Great crowds gathered to see and hear the man who had already transformed so many people's lives through his teaching and miraculous healings. *The blind had been given back their sight, the lame walked again, the deaf heard and the mute were able to sing God's praise.* Not only, that, but in the teaching of Jesus and his relationships with people, many had come to know the love of God in a way that had not been possible before. Little wonder that the crowds waved palm branches and greeted him with joy.

However, the Jewish leaders of the day had been expecting the promised Messiah, the Saviour foretold by the prophets, to come in glory and power – Jesus entering Jerusalem on a donkey did not quite fit the bill.

The truth of the matter was that Jesus, who was indeed the promised Messiah, had come to bring love and peace into peoples lives. He had not come as a great warrior king to overthrow the oppression of Roman rule, he had come to overthrow the oppression of sin, fear and guilt, so that the values of God's kingdom might rule in people's hearts.

The next day, Jesus went into the Temple in Jerusalem and overturned the tables of the money changers. In anger, he declared that they had turned God's house into a den of thieves and robbers, when instead it should have been a house of prayer.

Needless to say, the Jewish leaders were furious. But, the truth of the matter was that they had created so many rules and regulations, and erected so many barriers that prevented ordinary men and women from drawing close to God in his temple.

So much of Jesus' ministry was about breaking down barriers. Barriers between us and God and barriers between us and one another. Pride, prejudice, guilt, shame, anger are all things that can get in the way of our relationships with each other and with God. The overthrowing of the tables in the Temple reminds us, that sometimes we need to clear out the feelings, emotions and memories which we can allow to creep into our lives and block God's love flowing freely in and through us.

Tonight, on this Maundy Thursday, we remember the special Passover Supper that Jesus shared with his disciples, turning bread and wine into eternal tokens of his love and life poured out for us.

Also at that supper, we remember Jesus stooping down to wash the tired and dusty feet of each of his disciples.

Jesus, the promised messiah, the Lord and master, the great teacher – washed his disciples' feet! The world says that this is something that should be done by a servant, but Jesus shows us the truth that if anyone would lead, they must also be prepared to serve. It is in serving one another, that we discover the truth that we are all one in Christ.

The washing of the disciples feet, is also a reminder of the way in which Jesus washes each one of us. If we allow him, through the power of his Spirit, Jesus gently washes away all that is wrong in our lives so that we can have a clean and fresh relationship with him.

Tomorrow, on Good Friday, we will remember the depth of Jesus love. His willingness to lay down his life for us on the cross, paying the price for all the wrong that has and ever will happen in the life of the world.

In the eyes of the world, the death of Jesus on the cross was the ultimate failure.

The truth is that the pain and suffering of Good Friday, means nothing without the joy and new life of Easter Day. They are like opposite sides of the one coin. Through the power of God at work in and through him, the Cross of Christ became the gateway to new and eternal life. Death itself was overcome through the cross and the resurrection of Jesus three days later.

We have the opportunity in our service today to reflect on all of these truths and to know Jesus' presence with us now.

As we gather here today, Jesus comes alongside us as the one who longs to bring us peace – peace in heart and mind. Peace and freedom from all that oppresses us.

Jesus is alongside us today, to help us clear away any barriers that we have erected, any feelings, emotions, attitudes and behaviours that we have allowed to creep into our lives that block his love flowing freely in and through us.

Jesus reaches out to us today in his love, to gently wash away all the wrong things that soil us and cause us to feel ashamed.

We come here today, knowing in heart and mind, the depth of Jesus' love for us shown through his cross and resurrection. A love that is so deep it transforms death to life, doubt to faith, despair to hope, darkness to light, hatred to love, sadness to joy, brokenness to wholeness. And for that, thanks and praise be to God. Amen.