

Sixth Sunday in Lent Liturgy of the Palms – Choose to rejoice

Readings: Psalm 118: 1-2, 19-29; Luke 19: 28-40

Gospel: Luke 19:28-40

Focus

The image most of us have of Vanuatu is of a sun-drenched playground surrounded by pristine sea and glorious beaches. The reality is not too different, but this is paradise with an Achilles heel. While foreign tourists and property developers enjoy or exploit Vanuatu, many of the local people have little access to one of life's necessities – water. The Anglican Church of Melanesia has enlisted the help of ABM to develop a simple system of water delivery to many poor communities who call these islands home.

Sentence

Jesus answered: "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

Reflection

Sometimes referred to as the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, it is probably fair to say that Jesus had things on his mind other than of a celebratory walk into town across strewn garments. Two thousand years on what do we think of this story? The image is indeed one of triumph – people – lots of people, shout Jesus' name and sing praises to God. Here comes the man of peace riding on a donkey. He is treated as if a great king has come home – a pop star, a celebrity. And in our own re-enactment year by year, we too joyfully wave our branches, (even the donkey sometimes makes an appearance in our celebration of Palm Sunday), and we too announce the coming of the King into Jerusalem – it is a glorious time, a time of great joy.

But we know too that the joy will be short lived. Jesus doesn't do this simply for self-aggrandisement. Does he call us to see the possibilities of not accepting the easy way out? He could have walked away and gone home but instead chose to make a stand for what, in the end, is a far bigger challenge – the challenge to empower others.



Leo hopes for clean water in his village in Vanuatu. He is an old man and at present has to walk for a kilometre to get drinking water. Funded by the ABM Auxiliary, the Anglican Church of Melanesia is helping to build tanks and wells which will provide his village with clean water.

We give thanks for our partners in churches overseas. We give thanks for their prayers and love. We give thanks for what they can teach us – prayerfulness, faithfulness and cheerfulness in the face of many adversities.

LENT 6

He could have gone home – he well knows what awaits him when he reaches Jerusalem – but in the midst of all the joy and the happy celebration, Jesus remains true to his calling. He knows, he has always known, that he is still called to save humanity from itself and so he makes that choice.

Jesus gives us the same opportunity – the opportunity to think for ourselves, believe for ourselves and act for ourselves. In the end of course that very thinking, believing and choosing, will affect all that we do and how we do it.

Affirmation

We believe in God who IS omnipresent,
Who loves us unequivocally,
Who walks the journey with us each and every day,
Who gives us strength to love more than we thought we could love.
We believe in Jesus Christ who IS the Son of God,
Who walks a perilous journey out of love for us,
Who stands alongside those who are lonely, frightened and fearful,
Who gives us strength to be more than we could hope.
We believe in the Holy Spirit who IS the universality of God,
Who breathes within us the voice of those who have no voice,
Who gives us the courage to think and choose a life for ourselves,
Who gives us the strength to give more than we thought we could give.

Intercessions

Leader: God of hope we sing your praises.

Congregation: You fill our hearts with joy.

Loving God you called your Son to walk to his death that we might live in the fullness of your grace. He chose to act obediently even though he knew the end of the journey would be the end his life. Help us to follow you more obediently.

Leader: God of hope we sing your praises.

Congregation: You fill our hearts with joy.

Lord Jesus you walked many roads in your lifetime and you shared your life with those whom you loved and those whom society didn't love. Help us to walk our own roads mindful of others, welcoming of every stranger and willing to open our hearts to all whom we meet. **L.C.**

Loving God you encourage us always to be mindful of others. Give us the liberty of choice but help us to make choices that empower others and bring justice to all. **L.C.**

Lord Jesus you are never silent on the matters that affect those who face injustice or do not have a voice. Give us the courage to speak out for the rights of others and to be a voice for the littlest and the most vulnerable. **L.C.**

Response/Action

ABM speaks out for the downtrodden and the outcast so that they are not forgotten. It speaks in solidarity with the church, in places where the love of God may be the only solid thing people have to hold onto. And it empowers people to take their place in the community and the wider society. As Lent draws to a close what will you choose to do to speak for those whose voice is often not heard and whose lives go unnoticed?

How can you help ABM support those who have few choices in life to have hope for the future and joy in living?

LENT 6 STUDY GROUP QUESTIONS – PALM SUNDAY

Watch the DVD 'Water, Water everywhere – but not a drop to drink'. Water Projects in Vanuatu.

1. Why do you think this story of Jesus entering into Jerusalem exists? Wouldn't it be simpler just to go straight to the passion story and Jesus death?
2. When Jesus comes down from the Mount of Olives on a donkey – the animal of peace – is Jesus making a point about his entry into Jerusalem or is this simply a chosen mode of transport? i.e. What has the donkey got to do with it?
3. One of the Five Marks of Mission as designated by the Anglican Consultative Council (the International body of the Anglican Communion) says: "Stand in solidarity with the poor and oppressed". What do you understand by this phrase?
4. We are all called to make choices in life. Lent calls on us to give things up or take things on, if you haven't done so yet it's not too late – what could you do to help those you have met through the DVD stories?
5. Complete the picture. Read the Passion story out loud to each other (perhaps take turns to read a section) Luke 22:14 – 23:56. At the end sit in silence and reflect on the images that Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday give us.