



Waterrow Worship 28th March 2010 – Talk

"I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

So therefore it didn't matter if the people were being quiet or were stopped Jesus had established himself so much that his message was now ingrained within the stones, the very fabric of the earth. His message will live on even if he, his disciples and his followers were silenced. He will live on.....

And so it does 2000 years later we are still here celebrating this day when Jesus marched on Jerusalem. Why do we do it because it is there ingrained within the stones and within our hearts?

So today is Palm Sunday but a few years ago I personally didn't really know what Palm Sunday was and what it meant to me.

Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a Donkey with the people waving palm frond was engrained into us as Children but what does it all mean and why?

To me as a Christian it is the start of the road to Easter and nearing the end of Lent hardship period. Just as December is the long road to Christmas with the usual Christmas shopping and parties mixed in with various church services. Everybody enjoys and embraces Christmas knowing what is it all about how many people do or are allowed to be so involved at Easter. At Christmas the Christingle service is one of the best attended services in church with people who do not normally go to church they are celebrating a great event the birth of Christ but at Easter we are celebrating him being proclaimed as the Messiah it is a far greater time of celebration.

So what was Palm Sunday before Christ? It was of course the Passover festival which was a holy day and a festival commemorating the Hebrews' escape from enslavement in Egypt. Whilst that meant a lot in those days as it was fresh in the memories it probably means less to us at Christians today.



Instead we celebrate Palm Sunday as the proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah as he arrives into the Jerusalem on a Donkey.

But do the un-churched know what Palm Sunday is. I think I have mentioned before that a friend of Judith's had to ask what Easter was all about. How is she going to cope with Palm Sunday? I was very disappointed to see in my new work diary that every other religious festival had been included apart from the key Christian ones. That is political (and religious) correctives gone mad.

I have used Nathan my son as an example in my talks and he isn't here today so I will again. I don't think that we preach to our children but children take things in through books music and their own service of parents and tiddlers. Children then spout out the most fantastic lines which really can hit you for their relevance and impress you with the level in which they think of things. I remembered very clearly last year on from the back of the car on the way to St Andrews for Easter Sunday Service Nathan calls out "Jesus is Alive!". Which of course is the message - he has got it why is it lost on so many others?

The Donkey reference was also lost on me even though it was a key way mark put there to stand out and hit you. Jesus was insistent he had to ride into Jerusalem on a Colt the foal of a Donkey. In that he fulfilled the Old Testament Prophecy from Zechariah "See your king come to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a Donkey, on a Colt, the son of a Donkey". And this prophecy also points out humbleness - he doesn't ride in a chariot carried by his followers walking on their backs he rides in on a workman's animal

Jesus was also very clever; he rode into Jerusalem and declared that indeed he was the Messiah when the city would be full. He chose a time when he knew all Israel would be gathered at Jerusalem a place where huge crowds could see him and chose that way of proclaiming himself to the people. He didn't really care about the priests and the leaders he was focusing on the people.



Jesus was King of the Jews but he wasn't born a kings son; he was a poor man, a carpenter, a man of the people. He wasn't establishing a powerful political kingdom he was establishing God's eternal Kingdom, the stones will shout out if the people are quiet as the message has been established so deeply. The stones may only be whispering now but creation still shouts the message and one day all of humanity will too.

Can you image being part of that crowd as a person of Israel. You have obviously heard of Jesus a good man travelling around doing good things but it wasn't until he rode into Jerusalem when everybody was there that he truly declared himself to the people not loudly or blatantly but just by sitting on a Donkey and thus for filling the prophesy.

So the party that you were attending suddenly ups in tempo a prophesy that you have believed in your entire life comes true He is the Messiah the Sun of God - of course you are going to be happy and celebrate.

It was only upon reading this reading that I realised that I had read another series of books many years ago which whilst not overly religious told the big fat Easter story in the same way. The books by William Horwood "The Tales of Duncton Wood" are a Trilogy following the story of a world of Moles! But not just simple moles a whole political establishment and religion.

These moles travel all across England and Wales experience the world and worshipping the Stone! But they were taken over by a new political and religious force "the word" who were a new violent tribe exercising a new doctrine and forcing onto the rest of the race their new practices.

But their savior, for whom they were waiting for two long books and was going to return the rest of the nation to the worshipping the stone which had been forgotten the "Stone Mole" didn't come from the establishments or even a rich family.



He was born in the worst community, a leper with birth deformities and he established himself amongst those communities and spread his message that way. He was martyred but his message lived on and spread and re-conquered the race for the stone.

I read that series of books twice in my teens and missed that message both times probably because I hadn't read or understood that bit of the bible and its connotations and its relevance. There are so many books and films that are written that way that we miss and whilst in some way irrelevant will help us understand the message in a different way

Perhaps this is one of the whispering stone perhaps this is the subtleness of the message today. There are so many spiritual elements and hidden messages that we miss them if we do not look for them.

So that is it - Palm Sunday. But I don't want to end there though I want to cover the whole Easter story as a special treat. That is the main problem of a monthly service as we have in Waterrow, you miss the rest of the story. Not to bore you though I won't be covering it in such depth I have put together some very simple images and music which I hope you will enjoy in just a few moments.

The stones may only be whispering in our country but for the whole of the Easter weekend there are places where they shout a little louder.

In Wivey the Easter weekend is a fantastically spiritual event capturing the essence of what happened. Today two donkeys are walking to St. Andrews in Wiveliscombe with people walking along with them welcoming them to church, they have advertised it widely in the town to try and get people to wave as they come past. On Good Friday they have a very simple and brief service in the church with absolutely no bells or whistles before going on a walk of witness around the town joining with all the other church communities in Wivey for a kind of post funeral meal. This sad solemn event is then followed by a Celebration service at St Andrews on Easter Day where the church is lit up with light and flowers celebrating the fact that Jesus has risen.



As a family we will also be taking this one step further and are spending a week at Spring Harvest a large Christian Camp at Minehead to learn more to develop us and to further explore the faith. The stones are quite loud there!

So please enjoy the music and the images to the words of "oh to see the dawn"

This the power of the cross
Christ became sin for us
Took the blame bore the wrath
We stand forgiven at the cross

Amen

Alan Swan 28/03/2010