

Palm Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup> April 2025

*Readings* The Palm Gospel [Luke 19.28–40](#)

The Passion Gospel [Luke 23.1–49](#)

We each have a piece of palm tree in our hand, just as they did that day Jesus rode into Jerusalem. But ours are different: their palms were just leaves torn off the trees; ours are twisted into crosses. That piece of palm in your hand sums up the whole of Holy Week: a symbol of celebration and hope twisted into an instrument of execution.

Holy Week begins today, as a happy, hopeful procession brings Jesus into the city. It ends on Friday with a brutal procession as Jesus goes out of the city again, carrying a cross to his death. Our job this Holy Week is to follow what happens, ask why it happens, and see how it touches our lives.

The story of the death of Jesus is like a million other stories – an innocent person crushed by a harsh and unjust system. But this story draws into itself every story like that.

Look at the face of Jesus on the cross, and see there the faces of countless men and women and children, from every age and any place, from the family under the air strikes in Gaza – and the hostage, held perhaps just a few metres away – to the banished and dispossessed of Ukraine and Myanmar. You can add to the catalogue: this one story draws into itself every story of hurting and being hurt.

Or it can do. It depends on whether you and I are willing to let ourselves be drawn into it. But where do you find yourself in this story?

Here in church, hearing the Passion Gospel, it is easier to be with Jesus than to be with the crowd that condemns him. Easier to do what many Christians have done down the ages and blame ‘them’, the mob – even (horribly and ludicrously) the whole Jewish people – for the death of Jesus.

In life, however, it is easier to be with the crowd than to be with Jesus; and Easter will work best for us if we can each spend some time in these coming days of Holy Week, asking whether that is true of us. So, whether you are at home or away this week, please, please try to ‘do’ Holy Week, wherever you are. You will not regret it.

Here [*for Holy Week & Easter services click this [link](#)*] there are short, simple services on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evening.

On Thursday evening, we shall remember how Jesus has a last supper with his friends, then goes out to a garden to pray, where Judas hands him over to the authorities, and the disciples run away.

And that prompts questions.

Is there a bit of me that runs from the love of God, like the disciples do?

Or a bit of me like Judas, that is (if I am honest) disappointed with Jesus? That believes that – in the real world – the answers lie (alas) not with him but somewhere else?

Then on Friday, just five days after a crowd cheered him into Jerusalem, we shall hear St John’s Passion Gospel, and the crowd calling for him to be crucified.

Again, questions.

What might there be in me that rejects the people God puts in my path, like the crowd rejects Jesus?

Is there a point I reach where the purposes of Jesus – relying on God, making space for people who in the world's terms do not matter – where these purposes are no longer mine?

These are things to ponder in these days of Holy Week, each one with its public times of worship, and its quiet private moments. Let's each allow God to use those times and those moments, to draw our many stories into the one story of Jesus and his death.

And then, on Easter Day – just seven days from now – we can hear the glorious news of what God did with the death of Jesus, in raising him to new life, and what God will do by raising up new life in us.