

Sunday Service – 28th March
Coats, Towel and Thorns

Welcome! - wherever you are and whatever day or time you are joining with us in worship. It is such a privilege to be able to praise God, share his words and worship as his family.

Today's service is based on the penultimate chapter of Lent in Plain Sight – by Jill J Duffield. If anyone would like to borrow a book you may like to contact one of the elders who will be happy to bring one round for you.

The book looks at God's works through ordinary objects – today is Palm Sunday and the selected objects are Coats, Towel and Thorns.

Heather and I think that they are inviting us on a journey – so without further ado we would like you to put on your coats and be ready to travel with us.

Call to Worship

Rejoice greatly, O people of Zion.
Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem.
Look your King is coming to you.
He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey – even a
donkey's colt.

Zachariah 9 v 9

Prayers

Redeeming God, help us to still our minds and clear our thoughts of business and distractions as we prepare to enter into your journey of redeeming love on this Palm Sunday.

A journey viewed through the everyday objects of coats, towels and thorns that will lead us to the point of absolute assurance - where we know we can confess our sins and wrong doings to a Redeemer God - who loves us more than we can ever imagine.

And so, in the stillness of this moment we confess our sins to you

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Who art in heaven
Hallowed be thy name
Thy kingdom come
Thy will be done
On earth, as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive those who trespass against us
And lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil
For thine is the kingdom
The power and the glory
For ever and ever
Amen

We bring our love and gratitude to this morning's worship as we sing

Hymn All Glory Laud and Honour https://youtu.be/_plc0cpQA2k

COATS



We all have coats – some will have more than others and I suspect if we went to our wardrobes and had a good look we would find some coats we have not worn for quite some time.

Let's just stop and think for a while – what is the importance of coats?

- They give us protection.

- They give us a feel-good factor or make us feel special – it might be your favourite coat.
- They prepare you for the job in hand.
- They can even help towards supporting people and protecting the planet when they are fairly traded

But what were coats in Old Testament times and in the time of Jesus viewed as?

- We read of Adam and Eve, in the book of Genesis, being clothed in coats of skins to hide their shame.
- In 2 Kings we hear the account of Elisha picking up the Mantle/coat of Elijah who was taken up to God in a whirlwind.
- The book of Exodus contains the instructions for the elaborate holy garments made for Aaron and his sons.
- And of course, of Joseph's amazing "long coat of many colours" to signify his favoured position in the family – despite him being almost the youngest son.
- **Coats carried significance too in Jesus' time.**
- In the book of Matthew, we read about John the Baptist who wore simple clothing made from camels' hair.
- If you were a Pharisee, a religious leader, your clothing would be much finer.
- Shepherd's clothing was simple but robust.
- And Jesus and his disciples probably wore something like this.
- In all of these examples – what you wore says much about your way of life and your status.

Today is the start of Holy Week – Palm Sunday – and in it we hear about people throwing their coat on the road before Jesus' triumphant entry into

Jerusalem

I'd like you to picture the scene –

The holy city of Jerusalem is crowded with pilgrims, from all over the region, who have gathered for the annual Passover celebrations.

It is a hugely busy time at the temple - for the priests leading worship, for the money changers and those selling animals for sacrifice.

The occupying force - of Roman soldiers need to be on full alert – ready to quash any disturbance that may erupt.

Picture yourself in the scene –



Look around – Whereabouts are you in this picture

Can you feel the atmosphere?

Is it exciting?

Is it tense?

Jesus had spent many months travelling through the towns and villages of Palestine. He preached about the kingdom of God and healed the sick wherever He went. Now the time had come for Him to claim His title as the

Messiah - the Saviour that God had promised to the Jewish people.

We read in John's Gospel - that at this time Jesus came to the village of Bethany, only two miles away from Jerusalem. He was no stranger here as this was where his friend Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary lived.

Word soon spread to Jerusalem that Jesus was back – only weeks before Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead and many Jews who witnessed the event believed that Jesus truly was the Messiah – the chosen King – come to rescue the Jews from oppression.

A few however went back to the Pharisees and told them all that had taken place and how many people were now following Jesus. Perceiving this to be a threat to their authority they began to plot how to kill Jesus.

Can you imagine the scene in Jerusalem as the word of Jesus return spread through the crowds?

Let's hear how James recalls the event.

What a day this has been and just look at the crowds. It all started this morning as we were approaching Jerusalem. Jesus sent John and myself to a nearby village where a donkey would be waiting. So off we went and sure enough there it was. We brought it back and placed a cloak over it before Jesus mounted. Then off we went into Jerusalem. No one ever expected a welcome like this. Listen, they are all shouting Hosanna and blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, and waving palm branches. Some men have started to lay their cloaks on the pathway in reverence to him. I'm not sure about doing that as my Dad gave me my cloak. It used to be his and I always remember him wrapping me close to him keeping me safe and warm. Most of all I felt loved. But hang on that's just what Jesus does, he wraps us up in his love and keeps us safe and cared for. I must get to the front of the procession and lay mine down. Excuse me please.... ..

hey watch what you are doing with that palm, oh dear it's no use, there are just too many people I make my way to the temple but it's just as bad there. It seems the whole of Jerusalem has turned out to greet him. The Pharisees and soldiers won't be pleased about it as they consider Jesus to be a threat. We had better be on our guard!

Imagine the scene back in Jerusalem – the excitement and anticipation of Jesus arrival had reached the crowds who were packing the streets – they could hear the distant sound of what seemed like shouting or chanting – some ran on to see what was happening – people came from their houses to see what all the commotion was about – the Roman soldiers, fearing an invasion, formed into ranks and the Pharisees wondered what would happen next – they couldn't possibly carry out their plan to kill Jesus with all these people about.

Whereabouts are you in the crowd?

Are you one running ahead to see Jesus?

Are you one pushing your way to the front to get a better view?

Are you standing just a little further back – just in case – or being pushed out of the way?

Are you on a roof top?

Or are you one of the Pharisees or soldiers?

Can you feel the atmosphere?

As Jesus approaches do you throw your coat on the road in respect and shout?

Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord –

the King of Israel!

For those who did throw their coats on the road what do you think it meant?

They would be rich and poor alike

They were throwing off their identity before Jesus

Some were giving all they had.

Some were just caught up in the excitement of the moment and followed the crowd.

But at the time – I think all were giving willingly and were full of HOPE

Hymn

Praise is rising

<https://youtu.be/ioL62cqH3iM>

TOWELS



It's Thursday now and we go to join Jesus and his disciples in a room in a nearby house as [James tells the story](#)

Well, it has been a bit of a week. Very exciting but also quite scary at times as the crowds were overwhelming. Some of them believed that Jesus had come to save them from the Romans but were puzzled when he didn't have an army of soldiers with him.

But at last, we are together, a chance to share our experiences and eat a meal together.

Hang on what is happening now, Jesus has taken his robe off and has wrapped a towel around him. He is preparing a bowl of water and it looks like he is going to wash our feet. No Lord we should be washing your feet we protest. But he has already started and suddenly it is my turn. I really feel embarrassed as my feet are very grubby and smelly, but he didn't seem to mind, there he was tenderly showing us all how much he loved us. When he had finished, he explained

“Since I, the Lord and Teacher have washed your feet you ought to wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example to follow”.

Towels are only featured five times in the Bible.

When storing something precious and, on two occasions, towels were used to wrap a deceased persons head. The other two occasions were at the last supper. The towel used here represents service and Maundy Thursday means that followers of Jesus are to serve. The bible and the towel go hand in hand. God's word and God's caring actions shown through us and our towels. No person or tasks are too lowly. We are God's servants, servants of the Lord of all who willingly ate with sinners, touched lepers, welcomed children and washed feet. Let us pray that we can follow his example and show his love to everyone through his word and our actions.

PRAYER

Servant Lord, on this day we remember your meal with your friends, your words of teaching, and your act of tender love.

You, Lord of all, humbled yourself and washed the feet of your friends and betrayer alike. You hold back nothing for our sake and we are awed by your grace. We seek only to be more and more like you each day, taking up our towels and sharing your Word, so that through our love the world will know that we follow you.

Amen.

Hymn

Servant King

<https://youtu.be/cuQmfTrISYY>

Thorns



Have you ever been walking along a bridle path, taking in the beauty of the walk, only to be snagged by a brier across your path? They often catch you

unawares, pull you back and cause damage to your trousers or skin!

Or perhaps in the garden when an unforgiving rose thorn hooks into your skin leaving behind a painful reminder for days.

These are the types of thorns and worse, that the soldiers would have woven into a crown and thrust it onto the head of Jesus, along with a purple robe designed to mock and humiliate him.

We know the pain that one thorn brings and the pain and anger of humiliation. Let us carry the thoughts of that pain as we meditate on the words of this song:

Hymn When I survey the wondrous cross https://youtu.be/iK8kYlBn_qI

James and the disciples are together again in the upper room

We are a very sombre group today. How could a joyous week end like this? We've had to lock ourselves away as there will probably be soldiers looking for us. The whole reason for our existence has gone, crucified on a cross, and all the time Jesus knew it was going to happen – it had all been prophesied. He was so brave in his suffering and humiliation. The soldiers placed a crown of thorns on his head and dressed him in a purple robe continuously mocking him.

The world is a dark place now, how do we carry on?

We are overrun with thorns, choked with grief.

Prayers of intercession

Dear God, on Good Friday and Holy Saturday we look for hope, but find none. We feel the suffering of those who sit in deep darkness afraid and not knowing what to do next.

The suffering of countries where military rule oppresses –

The suffering of the people caught up in war – not of their making –

Those choked by grief and loss – especially in these Covid times –

Those who are overrun by thorns of depression and doubt, addiction, discrimination and disability.

The people facing challenges and life changing conditions and the people in our

prayerbook and in our hearts this day.

All this makes us feel bereft and wondering what will come next but, like the disciples, we hold on to one another, we whisper in faith that hope is coming, despite all the evidence that death has triumphed.

But thank to Jesus, we are your Easter People, and like the disciples are lifted from the dark days of Good Friday and Easter Saturday into the glorious light of HOPE.

Help us to pick up your towel of service and compassion and, in so doing, bring your hope to whoever or wherever you may lead us.

Amen

Well, what a journey!

A journey that started with such HOPE, excitement and expectation.

Now – in the darkest of places - HOPELESS – full of despondency and disbelief.

Our prayers of intercession encompassed many of these dark places across the world and in people's lives – places of HOPELESSNESS. Many of us will have experienced such times - but for me, personally, it is in these times that I have found Jesus to be the closest and to have brought that glimmer of HOPE that could grow – far more than worshipping with hundreds of people at a festival.

Mark told us last week, that as Christians, we have been anointed with the oil of the Holy Spirit – an oil that would keep our hearts alight with the desire to bring the Good News of Jesus - to those without hope.

So, let us put on our coats of grace, pick up our towels of service and step out, despite the thorns, knowing who is the foundation of our hope.

As we sing our closing hymn.....

Cornerstone

<https://youtu.be/hbdKHlc11ik>

If you have read this service would you help us in our research and email urchornsea@gmail.com please, to let us know?

THANK YOU