

Dear friends,

Mowing a lawn as big as ours when the “self-propel” function on the mower is broken is no mean task I assure you but there are benefits not just to the garden but for my health and fitness. A two-and-a-half-hour heavy workout is what every vicar needs on a Sunday afternoon I think!

**Next Sunday** is Palm Sunday and I wrote in my last email about books that had had a profound influence on me and one of the most profound I had left off the list. It is called “The last week” by Marcus Borg. I rarely travel to listen to any theologians to be honest, but I did travel to listen to Marcus in Edinburgh many years ago. He revolutionised my thinking about the last week of Jesus’ life and presented it as a very political Jesus engineering a final confrontation between the Kingdoms of this world and the Kingdom of Heaven. On Good Friday, the earthly temporal kingdom of Rome appeared to have the final word but on the third day, the final victory was won by the Kingdom of God. That fateful last week was introduced by the events of Palm Sunday so here are the readings for the day!

## **Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> March – Palm Sunday**

As I’ve said before, I am not a fan of reading very long renditions of scripture about the wider passion of Christ but prefer to keep this day as “Palm Sunday” specifically so will use and comment on these readings.

**Isaiah 50: 4-9a.** A reading that has always been applied to the sufferings of Christ as part of the “servant songs” in Isaiah. It is very human and speaks of his face, cheeks, beard and face being abused. But the servant is content to know that God is on his side and he bids us “Let us stand up together”. Does he mean himself with God or does that invite us to solidarity with Christ in his suffering? I prefer to think it is the latter.

**Philippians 2: 5-11.** It is thought that this piece of Paul’s letter may be a pre-existing early Christian Hymn. Whatever the truth of that, this is the basis of much theologising about the “self-emptying” of God called the apophatic tradition or the way of negation where God cannot be described positively but only by saying what God is not!

**Mark 11: 1-11.** According to the aforementioned Marcus Borg, what we have here is a carefully planned counter demonstration to the other procession of Pontius Pilate that would have entered from the other side of the city. That theme of careful planning is supported by the fact that he then went to the Temple and looked around but it was late and few people were around. The “cleansing of the Temple” could wait until a time when there would be more of an impact the next day. The tone of Jesus’ triumphal entry is one of a man of peace, who would save people (Hosannah means “save us”) not by violence but by peaceful sacrificial means.

## The Lighter side!

### STANDING AND SITTING



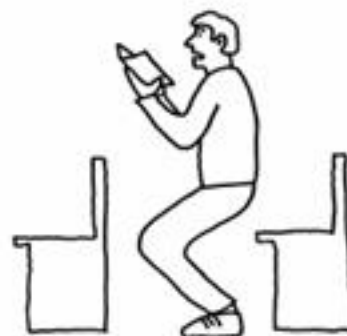
SEE WHETHER IT SAYS ANYTHING  
IN THE SERVICE BOOK



WATCH TO SEE WHAT  
OTHER PEOPLE ARE DOING



LOOK OUT FOR SUBTLE HINTS  
GIVEN BY THE CLERGY



IF IN DOUBT ADOPT  
A 'MID WAY' POSITION

## Thought for the day

Just a reminder that the clocks go forward on Saturday night so hopefully we'll have no-one turning up an hour late (or do I mean early -it confuses me!) It's a sure sign that Spring is sprung and as I write this I'm looking at a lovely (well mown) garden bathed in sunshine. Everything looks and feels better in the sunshine doesn't it? That is most of the reason that the recent lockdown was so much harder than the others, simply because it was so dark, wet and miserable. It is no coincidence that light is a perpetual metaphor for God and Jesus said that not only "I am the light of the world" but also and more remarkably, that we are too are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14).

On a simple level this must mean just making people feel better, about life, the universe and everything. Being positive, kind, generous and polite costs nothing as I'm sure all our mothers once told us. Be like the sunshine appearing from behind a cloud and change the atmosphere in a room. This positivity doesn't just appear out from nowhere but out of our faith in God's light, love and grace in and through all things. We can shine with the light of Christ.

**The Prayer for Today** is from the Anglican church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia and is just so simple and positive.

**God our creator, our centre, our friend,  
We thank you for our good life,  
For those who are dear to us,  
For our dead,  
And for all that have helped and influenced us.  
We thank you for the measure of freedom we have,  
And the extent to which we control our lives.  
Most of all, we thank you for the faith that is in us,  
For our awareness of you and our hope in you.  
Keep us, we pray you, thankful and hopeful  
And useful until our lives shall end.**

Love and peace,  
Martin

Please note my new email address is [vicar@rmcommunity.co.uk](mailto:vicar@rmcommunity.co.uk)