

Dear friends,

Our “songs of praise” service at All Saints was joyful and well received attended by two prospective marriage couples – one couple hearing their Banns read for the first time. I had been quite ill that morning with an upset stomach before the 8am communion service at St. Peter’s but managed to hold it all together to enjoy the “Volunteer’s lunch” in the church hall which was the reason for the change of time and form of the service. Our neighbour Jane made enough soup to feed the 5,000 (Four different kinds and The French onion soup was superb) which together with sandwiches and cake settled me down and put me on the right path!

I have experienced various problems sending this email over the years, with another glitch happening just recently. I have decided to try “Mailchimp” for the first time today but I am nervous about it so you should receive two emails today. One like this and hopefully one using a slightly different format with my picture and the RMC logo at the top. If you don’t receive that new one I may have just another problem but if it arrives it should provide the opportunity for me to relax a bit more every Wednesday!

Saturday 9th April is the day Stacey James and others are doing their ten-mile walk starting and finishing from Otterton church to raise funds for that church. Love and prayers for all walkers taking part.

Sunday 10th April – Palm Sunday

Colin Randall will be presiding at both services at St. Peter’s and I will be presiding at the 9.30am and 11am. services at All Saints and St. Michael’s respectively. I will be back in St. Peter’s though to preside at the 6pm, Choral Evensong service.

Isaiah 50: 4-9. Normally seen as the third of the servant songs of Isaiah, it is the most intensely personal. In the other songs the “Servant” could be Israel but here with mention of the back, cheeks, beard and face we are reminded that God works through individual human beings. And those who seek to teach others must first be lifelong learners from God first. Remaining faithful through physical attack and insult, this has of course been applied to the sufferings of Jesus Christ from the very beginnings of the church.

Philippians 2: 5-11. That very faithfulness (obedience) to God unto death is why God raised him to glory according to Paul in this letter. It affirms Christ's pre-existent nature, his self-abasement to human form and his exultation. His humility in leaving God's side in order to help humankind is given as an example for us to follow and Christ's willingness to do that strengthens his claim on allegiance and worship.

Luke 19: 28-40. Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey (a sign of peace) as a deliberate parody of Pontius Pilates' military entrance with warhorses, armour, weapons and imperial bombast, sets up the last week of Jesus' life deliberately as a contest between the values of human power, injustice and domination and the way of Christ which are love, justice and peace. A contest that goes on undiluted to this very day.

Holy Week services are being held at St. Peter's for the entire RMC. All Welcome

Monday – 7pm. Compline

Tuesday – 7pm. Compline

Wednesday. 9.30. BCP Eucharist. 7pm. Compline (followed by last Lent session)

Thursday – 7pm. Maundy Thursday Eucharist

Friday – 3pm. Good Friday reflections

Please note "The cross of Christ" Good Friday service at East Budleigh at 7pm has had to be cancelled due to Covid absences amongst key participants.

Thought for the day.

The contest between the nature and values of God and the nature and values of human power and domination systems goes on unabated. The current war in Ukraine is just the latest example of what has been going on since time immemorial.

Brute power and vindictiveness always seems to think it can steamroller weaker opponents and just kill them to remove the problem. Pontius Pilate thought that in 1st century Palestine, Hitler thought that in the thirties and

forties of the last century, Vladimir Putin thinks that today and this scenario has been repeated ad infinitum throughout human history.

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a donkey sets the scene for the last week of Jesus' life where this scenario is played out in the life and death of Jesus on the cross when his life was crushed under the boot of imperial aggression and addiction to power and control.

As in human history and life, the strong always appear to have won the day – Jesus' life ended in agony, desolation and apparent defeat. But the message of Easter Sunday is that God will not let hate, murder and oppression have the final word. The resurrection of Jesus is God's emphatic "Yes" to the way of Jesus and an emphatic "No" to the powers that oppose God. This is the source of all Christian hope. No matter how bad things get – the cross – there is always vindication, new life and peace waiting just around the corner. However awful the scenes on our TV screens at the moment, that is the hope of Ukrainian Christians that keeps them going. That is the hope of Christians everywhere.

The Prayer for Today is from the church in India for Palm Sunday.

**Jesus, king of the universe,
Ride on in humble majesty.
Lord, this Palm Sunday may I recognize in you the Lord who comes
To his world, and join with full heart the children's "hosanna".
Ride on though conflict and debate,
ride on through sweaty prayer and betrayal of friends.
Lord, this Palm Sunday, forgive me my evasions of truth, my
Carelessness of your honour, my weakness which sees me sleeping
even
While in others you suffer and are anguished, my cowardice that does
not
Risk the consequences of publicly acknowledging you as Lord.
Ride on to the empty tomb and your rising in triumph,
Ride on to raise up your church, a new body for your service;
Ride on King Jesus, to renew the whole earth in your image,
In compassion come to help us.**

Love and peace,
Martin