

SUNDAY 5th April PALM SUNDAY Regent Street Service

Welcome—Good morning & welcome to all of you as we come together to worship God, we may be separated physically but we remain connected as the body of Christ & we are called to bring our praise & glory to the KING of KINGS. Do remember that we in Regent St Methodist want to continue to support each other & others through this difficult time, so please do keep up those phone calls with others, keep those prayer requests coming in to the prayer chain & do also pass on to us any particular needs that you become aware of. So let now take a moment to stop and pray as we come to worship....The psalmist says in Psalm 118 ***Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.***

Prayer— Gracious & generous God we come aside now, each in our own homes but all in your presence, to worship you the One True & living God, King of Kings & the Lord of Lords...We come thankfully into your presence knowing that there is none like you; we proclaim this day... that you are not only the king of majesty but the Lord of perfect love.. & we say ***hosanna blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord ..Hosanna in the highest...*** Yet even as we declare your majesty...we pause in a quiet moment of confession for we know that we do not always allow you to be king in our lives. God of Grace have mercy upon in Jesus name & stir our hearts afresh this morning with true love for you & each other...Let us pray together the prayer that Jesus gave us... **OUR FATHER..**

Isaiah 5:1-7 OT reading

I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: my loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. ² He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit. ³ 'Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. ⁴ What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad?

⁵ Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled. ⁶ I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briars and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it.' ⁷ The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the nation of Israel, and the people of Judah are the vines he delighted in. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.

Praise Time

Gospel Reading **Luke 19 v²⁸** After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹ As he approached Bethphage & Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, ³⁰ 'Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here.' ³¹ If anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" say, "The Lord needs it." ³² Those who were sent ahead went & found it just as he had told them. ³³ As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, 'Why are you untying the colt?' ³⁴ They replied, 'The Lord needs it.' ³⁵ They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt & put Jesus on it. ³⁶ As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. ³⁷ When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: ³⁸ 'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!'

³⁹ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, Teacher, rebuke your disciples!' ⁴⁰ 'I tell you,' he replied, 'if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.'

⁴¹ As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it ⁴² and said, 'If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes.' ⁴³ The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. ⁴⁴ They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognise the time of God's coming to you.'

SERMON /THOUGHT Jesus' tears. Luke 19:41 ***As he approached Jerusalem & saw the city he wept over it....*** Tears are important things...they are not to be ignored & so last week we noted the tears in Jesus' eyes as he approached his friend Lazarus' tomb & this week, on Palm Sunday, amid the joyous shouts & cheers of the crowds as they near the end of the pilgrims journey up to Jerusalem we pause & see once more see that in stark contrast to the crowds celebration there are tears in the eyes of Jesus.....

The book of Ecclesiastes says in Chp 3 verse 4 that ***there is a time to weep and a time to laugh..*** There are times for tears. For instance there can be tears in the eyes of a child when they don't get what they want, when they don't get their own way. Yes there are childish tears , tears that speak of frustrated desire...

Of course as we begin to grow up tears usually become more private & we usually keep tears to ourselves ...except perhaps when we are watching a particularly funny film...or when someone cracks a joke , then we might find ourselves laughing so much that the tears come streaming down our faces...Yes there are tears that speak of fun & laughter.

Then there can also be times when we shed tears of pure excitement & happiness...when something wonderful occurs. When we receive some fabulous news...we have just become a parent or grandparent or we have got that job we never thought we could get....Yes there are tears which speak of joy...

However sadly we know that there are other types of tears ,tears associated with difficult times...occasions when we have hurt ourselves physically ...broken a bone or had a terrible toothache &we cry tears of pain.. & more difficult still, times when our hearts are broken... times when that pain that we feel runs deeper than any broken bone...there are tears that speak of loss.

Yes there are times for tears.... yet at first glance as read of Jesus approaching Jerusalem amid the joyous cheering of the crowds , this does not seem to be a time for them, unless of course they are tears of joy, tears of exhilaration & celebration, but those are not the tears that Jesus' sheds..

Of course we know from the gospel writers that Jesus was well aware of what awaited him in Jerusalem...as he says in Lke 18:31-32 *"We are going up to Jerusalem, & everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. ³²He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him & kill him.* With this knowledge firm in his heart perhaps you might expect Jesus to shed some tears about the painful trial that awaited him. But no; those were not the tears that Jesus sheds...

In fact as Luke points out Jesus' tears were not for himself at all, they were for the people of Jerusalem...the same people who would shortly turn on him...reject him...& cast him over to the Romans to be crucified...& yet Jesus wept for them... Wept because they could not see...did not want.... the gift that He was bringing them...the gift of peace....peace with God and peace with others..

NO sadly they did not want a king of peace, they wanted a Warlord, One who would lead them against the Romans... one who would triumph by the sword.. one who would have the streets run with enemy blood... But the only blood that Jesus was prepared to shed was His own & so the king of peace, God's chosen Messiah would be rejected & the people of Jerusalem would choose another Barabbas, a rebel, a murderer. Yes they would choose not peace but the long road to war.

Jesus tears were for those who rejected him... They speak of His love...of God's love for all, yes even for those who stand opposed to him.... for as it is says in 1 Timothy 2:4God **wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.** Yes Jesus tears speak of his love but sadly they also warn us that it is possible to miss or reject God's coming to us in love ...it is possible to say NO to the King who comes in peace & choose another way... our way.... a way that ends in terrible tears....

Today on a very different Palm Sunday let us remember our world Let us bring before God the tears of pain & loss that are sadly occurring daily among too many grieving families all across our globe. BUT let us also pause in prayer remembering the deadly effects of another Virus ... The one that every human being is infected with... One that leads each of us to seek our own way, to put ourselves first....to perhaps give a nod to God BUT then out of fear or lack of Trust or just plain selfishness....Go our own way ...a way without Christ , a way that ends in destruction...Ask God for mercy & for revival.

Prayers for Others

SO Let us pray..Heavenly Father we ask that you would impress upon us today your great love for us....we ask that you would help us realise how much you care for everyone in our world.

We pray also that you would help us be aware of any tears that you are shedding for us...tears because we are going our own way ,tears because we are missing what you have for us...tears because we refusing to crown you king...God forgive us and break us mould us

Loving Father we also pray that you would grant us real tears, for our world...a world which is reeling from this virus, a world where many are anxious & fearful... Lord help us & all your people share your hope and good news of the gospel ...so that many will see Jesus. And we pray now for our world...using some prayers written by 24/7 prayer movement ,

Lord Jesus Christ, we cry out to you for mercy. Have mercy on us Lord! We cry out to you to protect this land from the spread of the coronavirus. Shield us from this outbreak. Guard our loved ones. Stretch your hedge of protection around our neighbours. Jesus, we turn to you in faith and hope, you are the God who is able.

Father, you are a Holy and righteous God. Today we turn from our sin, our self-worship our self centeredness, and our sense of entitlement. Lord let us consider how our sin grieves you. Father we repent and turn back to doing the things that please you; loving you and loving our neighbours. Forgive us where we have put ourselves first, relied on our own strength, wandered from our ways, and forgotten who you really are.

Lord, we bring to You all FRONTLINE workers- especially our NHS staff... LORD we give you great thanks for each of them and for all that they are doing to care for others at this time... we ask for you to protect them & keep them & their families safe & well....

We pray too for those who are ill, whether it be from the Cronovrus or another illness... LORD may they know your constant care ...your loving presence & your hand of healing...

We now take some time to remember those we know who need our prayers....for Jeanetta, for Esther, for Hayley, for Pastor Jones, for Elsbeth, for Alison, for Nicky, for Julie, for those we know....

We hear the words of PSALM 57 which says...Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy! I look to you for protection. I will hide beneath the shadow of your wings until the danger passes by. (Psalm 57:1)

LORD HIDE US ALL UNDER YOUR WINGS & MAY THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST & THE LOVE OF GOD AND FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT BE WITH US ALL FOREVER MORE. amen