

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY – LENT 6 – PALM SUNDAY

¹ *Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.*

² *Let [all who believe] say: "His love endures forever."* What a comfort for us today hearing these words from Psalm 118, that God's love is for everyone and His love lasts forever. In troubling times many Christians over the years as they have faced trials and tribulations a plenty, it is this knowledge that God loves us and is with us always that has given them the strength to keep going, and in today's world and today's climate we need to hear these words and believe them, for in them is comfort and peace.

Today is Palm Sunday the day of celebration when Christians would gather in churches and each other's houses throughout the world and celebrate the coming of the Messiah, God's anointed one, Jesus of Nazareth, The Christ. For many of us reading this today we will have joyous memories of singing favourite hymns such as ride on in majesty and waving palm branches or holding dearly to palm crosses given to us by our church. But the Psalm goes on to tell us: ¹⁹ *Open for me the gates of the righteous; I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.* We must give thanks to God today for everything He has given us in our lives, and in this time of lockdown and uncertainty sitting at home and reflecting on our blessings is a comfort. We realise that God indeed has blessed us by giving us loving family members and dear friends in which to share our lives, and we sit and wonder and pray for their health and wellbeing knowing that God has opened the way for all to enter into His care. Let us be like the righteous, the men and women of faith, who have trust in God, let us come to Him and bring all our worries to Him in our prayers, for He listens, and He cares. That is why the Psalmist foretells of Christ when he says: ²⁰ *This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter.* ²¹ *I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.* ²² *The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;* ²³ *the LORD has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes.* ²⁴ *The LORD has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad.* ²⁵ *LORD, save us! LORD, grant us success!* ²⁶ *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.* These words bring comfort further especially when we have our ministers, pastors, elders or just fellow Christians contacting us to see if we are ok and helping us to get our shopping delivered to our door. This further allows us to say: ²⁷ *The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine on us...* ²⁸ *You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, and I will exalt you.* ²⁹ *Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.*

In another part of the Psalms we find the psalmist saying: ⁹ *Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and body with grief.* ¹⁰ *My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak.* How many today as they read these words find the echoing their own fears and worries? No doubt plenty, but let us take hope from God's word because this Psalm gives us hope: ¹⁴ *But I trust in you, LORD; I say, "You are my God."* ¹⁵ *My times are in your hands; deliver me [from my worries and fears].* ¹⁶ *Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love.*

God heard His people's cries and sent us Jesus and so we find His triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem with the crowds cheering and praising God. **21** *As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."* ⁴ *This took place to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet: ⁵ "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'*" At that time the people believed that the coming Messiah or King would be a warrior king who would kick the occupying Roman army out of Israel, but God's Messiah was a man of peace that is why he rode in on a donkey, which was a sign of peace with the people waving palm branches to celebrate and to acknowledge God's triumph by shouting: *"Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!"* ¹⁰ *When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"* ¹¹ *The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."*

In this time of worry and anxiety let us celebrate the coming of Christ into our hearts and lives today, open your hearts and let the King come in so that you will know His peace. For as Paul teaches us in his letter to the early church at Philippi: ⁵ *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* Let us serve and let us pray for the healing of our nation, for

the healing and peace of God to come into the peoples hearts so that their worries will be cast aside as they learn to lean on and trust in God as Christ did on His entry into Jerusalem knowing what lay ahead of him the following Friday. If He and all the men and women of faith since can do the same so can we, after all we are at home in comfort, unlike many who do not have homes in Africa and the Middle East, but they celebrate, they have the peace of Christ in their hearts and they face a lot more hardship than us, so let us have the mind of Christ and let us celebrate His triumph in our lives. May the peace of the Lord be with you always.

PRAYER

Father we are blessed in many ways, today in our prayers we thank you for sending us Jesus, we thank you for the peoples recognition of Him when He entered Jerusalem as King, the Messiah the Christ. We thank you today for blessing us with Him for through His love for us we have been saved from the power of sin and death. They no longer have a hold over our lives, but where we have your peace in our hearts because we believe in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour there are many around us who do not and who are scared and worried today. We pray Lord Jesus in your Holy name to go to those we know around us who are worried today and bring them your peace.

Father people throughout our country have stood out in their streets and have clapped and cheered for the NHS workers who are caring for the people who are sick, they daily go to work and many are worried about the Covid 19 virus and being exposed to it on a daily basis adding to their fears is are they taking it home to their families. Bless them all Lord we pray, keep every one of them safe and their families. We ask you to bless our emergency services workers, the police, fire, paramedics. We also ask you to bless the delivery drivers, the manufacturers, the shop workers throughout the land for without them we would struggle, again bless them and grant them your peace.

Help us Lord to always have the mind of Christ so that we can pray for everyone around us, grant us your peace also, protect us from harm always, and help us to be a good example for others to follow, let us be the rock and the guiding light, so that we through our faith and witness can bring others to Christ.

Amen