



PALM SUNDAY

THE NEW SHOFAR

Crown Him Lord of all! Crown Him!

Take our fears and worries to the cross of Christ

Thou art the King of Israel

O what a strange Easter it is going to be. We live in a world living in fear of the dreaded Corona virus and our country is locked down. Our towns and cities are places of confusion and uncertainty, both laced with an element of fear. It is hard to believe it is the same world that just over three months ago celebrated the birth of our Saviour Jesus the Christ. What joy we had. A whole new world was opened up for us by the birth of our Messiah. But it was not the world we had imagined, the world for which we had hoped. What went wrong?

What went wrong happened in our minds and hearts. So excited have we become over the last few decades of science, medial advancements and the buoyancy of our financial markets we lost sight of a fundamental truth - *you are dust, and to dust you shall return*. A tiny virus that looks quite beautiful under a microscope has brought the nation, the world to its knees. Rich and poor alike have become sick and tens of thousands have died. It respects neither rank nor title.

All hail the pow'r of Jesus' name!... Let angels prostrate fall...

And into the darkness of our dark world, riding on a donkey, comes the ray of God-given light for our embattled world. What we are unable to do for ourselves, God does for us in the death of his Son. This is the heavenly message in this wonderfully holy week into which we venture today. ***Crown Him! Crown Him! Crown Him Lord of all.*** How could that be? Crown the Lord Jesus as he rides a donkey to the city where he is to be tortured and brutally crucified? Therein lies our hope for the present time. In his horrendous death came life for us, the forgiveness of sins and the promise of rising with Christ beyond the grave. Out of suffering came life. Beyond the grave there is life. When all the terrible things of this world have done their worst, when we are batted and worn our Christ rides on in triumph – alongside us.

Palm Sunday is a liturgical invitation to ride on to victory with our Christ. We bring to the cross all of that darkness and fear that holds us down and limits our freedom. We drag along with us our sins, our failings and all of the vanities that have made us proud and feeling invincible. No darkness – not even the darkness of the grave is resistant to the King of Glory.

The Corona virus

How appropriate it is then, that we are brought to a halt by a virus called the ***crowned virus*** (corona is the word for *crown* in Latin). We are brought low by the ***crowned virus*** and we are brought into a new life of freedom by the ***Crowned King of glory***. Two crowns, before which one do we bow? When we join with the crowds rushing to join Jesus and wave our palms of victory we are like that first welcoming mob. They brought with them all kinds of fears, sins, frustrations, hopes and sorrows. They believed in this prophet from Nazareth, had hope that

Produced by Bishop Michael Hough for the Disciples of Christ -

anathoth.hough@gmail.com - www.houghgod.com

he would carry all of their woes with him to his death. They did not know they were bringing them to the foot of the cross for them to be transformed but Jesus gave them hope.

And mortal men and all things, Created make reply

With our churches closed and liturgical services banned by the government, the normal places for people to gather in times of national darkness were declared to be out of bounds. They are left with no reassurances that whatever happens over the coming months they will come through it all in victory. But then we have the Easter message. Christ Jesus reigned from the *cross*. He was crowned king at *Golgotha*. What the crowds saw as a terrible defeat was in reality the time when the earth was filled with light. All of those burdens the people had taken to the cross of Christ had been transformed by that Easter Light.

Of course, we will not see any physical transformation of our lives but we believe it is happening, that the darkness is already being *enlightened*. This is why we are the people of the cross. In bringing our worldly woes to the foot of the cross of Christ, he takes them on his broad shoulders and makes them his own. This is the promise he made... *Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Our burdens are his burdens and while they do not disappear, we find rest while we carry them.*

Hosanna to the Son of David, the King of Israel.

There are no doubts about the real threats all around us from the Corona virus. It has killed thousands and will kill tens of thousands more. Anyone of us reading this *Shofar* is a potential victim of the virus. But we have something the "world" does not have. We have hope. We walk with Christ into Holy Week and we bring those fears and burdens to the Cross with Jesus on Good Friday. In doing that, those fears are overwhelmed through hope. We do not bear them alone if we trust in the *King of Israel*. We know this because reassured us so... *Take my yoke on you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

We are enfolded in the arms of the crucified Christ

What is demanded of us as we begin Holy Week is to make use of that gift of hope. Each day we need to find time to pause in what we are doing and "bring to the cross of Christ" all of the burdens of our lives, including that dreaded virus, praying to Christ that as he shares in the carrying, we may live out the current crisis filled with hope. This hope cannot be taken from us and it is a hope the world cannot give to us. Living or dying we live and die in the Lord. That is the joy of Easter. It is also a hope we are called upon to share with the world: with our family, friends, workmates and people we met in the streets. Hope is on offer now, today, as we begin our journey to our own Jerusalem.

How can we do this in Holy Week? There are a number of things we can do, and indeed are being called to undertake as followers of Christ, missionaries to the world in His name:

- Put a time aside each morning *and* each evening for all those living in our house to pause and take the needs of friends and family to the Cross of Christ in prayer.
- Pray for members of our faith community – for our parish, our parish leadership.
- In our daily prayers, make a recommitment to support and encourage the ministry of our parish, even we cannot gather for worship, as we need it there when the crisis ends.

Produced by Bishop Michael Hough for the Disciples of Christ -

anathoth.hough@gmail.com - www.houghgod.com

Produced by Bishop Michael Hough for the Disciples of Christ -
anathoth.hough@gmail.com - www.houghongod.com