

Nonsense

Sunday 28 March 2021

Call to Worship

Psalm 118

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;

his steadfast love endures forever!

Let Israel say,

“His steadfast love endures forever.”

Open to me the gates of righteousness,

that I may enter through them

and give thanks to the LORD.

This is the gate of the LORD;

the righteous shall enter through it.

This is the day that the LORD has made;

let us rejoice and be glad in it.

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,

for his steadfast love endures forever.

On Eagles Wings (WOV779)

You who dwell in the shelter of the Lord,

who abide in his shadow for life,

say to the Lord: "My refuge, my rock in whom I trust!"

And he will raise you up on eagle's wings,

bear you on the breath of dawn,

make you to shine like the sun,

and hold you in the palm of his hand.

The snare of the fowler will never capture you,

and famine will bring you no fear:

under his wings your refuge,

his faithfulness your shield.

You need not fear the terror of the night,

nor the arrow that flies by day;

though thousands fall about you,

near you it shall not come.

For to his angels he's given a command
to guard you in all of your ways;
upon their hands they will bear you up,
lest you dash your foot against a stone.

[Reading](#) Philippians 2:5-11

⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,

⁷ but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

⁸ he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

[Prayer of Adoration and Confession](#)

The Ugly and Unexpected

Sometimes, God, it seems as if you have created unexpected and even ugly things. Worms with no eyes and gaping mouths, fish that look like they are straight out of a horror story, bugs that look like the monsters we feared under our beds. We see these things and it can seem as though they are accidents and mistakes. How can they possibly come from such a creative God? And yet it is in that very creativity that you envision the place of every one of them, each with a role in ecosystem of our world. So when we look closer we begin to realise that even the ugly and unexpected matter.

We are humbled, God, with the realisation that what looks ugly to us will look beautiful to someone else. Our opinion, our perspective is only one of a vast variety around the world. What we see and hear and experience is only one persons view of the multifaceted creation around us. We pause, in awe of the One who put this all together for us.

In our awe we are reminded that sometimes we allow our opinions to dictate words and actions that are hurtful to others, or cause us to remain silent when we might make a change for the better of another. We are sorry for the multitude of ways we fail to represent you for the loving God you are to us. Help us to be the embodiment of Jesus to the world we live in, to the people we live among.

We bring our private confessions before you.

Thank you, God who sees us, that we rest forgiven before you as we bring our confessions. Amen

[An Interlude](#)

[Notices and Celebrations](#)

[The Peace](#)

[10 000 Reasons](#)

Bless the Lord O my soul, O my soul

Worship His Holy name

Sing like never before, O my soul

I'll worship Your Holy name

The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning

It's time to sing Your song again

Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me

Let me be singing when the evening comes

You're rich in love and You're slow to anger

Your name is great and Your heart is kind

For all Your goodness I will keep on singing

Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find

And on that day when my strength is failing

The end draws near and my time has come

Still my soul will sing Your praise unending

Ten thousand years and then forevermore

Reading John 12:12-19

Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

¹² The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting,

“Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—
the King of Israel!”

¹⁴ Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it; as it is written:

¹⁵ “Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion.

Look, your king is coming,
sitting on a donkey’s colt!”

¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him. ¹⁷ So the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify. ¹⁸ It was also because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to meet him. ¹⁹ The Pharisees then said to one another, “You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!”

Message Nonsense

There is a fine history of nonsense poetry in English literature. Most of us will be familiar with **Hey, diddle, diddle**, the cat and the fiddle.

Here are a couple more you may be less familiar with.

The Great Panjandrum Himself

So she went into the garden
to cut a cabbage-leaf
to make an apple-pie;
and at the same time
a great she-bear, coming down the street,
pops its head into the shop.

What! no soap?

So he died ...

Samuel Foote

One Fine Day

One fine day in the middle of the night
Two dead men got up to fight
Back to back they faced each other
Drew their swords and shot each other

One was blind and the other couldn't see
So they chose a dummy for a referee.

A blind man went to see fair play
A dumb man went to shout "hooray!"

A paralysed donkey passing by
Kicked the blind man in the eye
Knocked him through a nine inch wall
Into a dry ditch and drowned them all

A deaf policeman heard the noise
And came to arrest the two dead boys,

If you don't believe this story's true
Ask the blind man he saw it too!

Spike Milligan

What is there to say about nonsense? It has no meaning or makes no sense. I sure we've all accused others of speaking nonsense. Kids coming home from school with the latest silly story, flinging accusations at the talking head on the television. We are all familiar with the idea that sometimes what people have to say makes no sense or has no meaning. Sometimes it's the mix of what they say and do that makes no sense. It is a little like a favourite fairytale of mine called **the three sillies**. I won't tell the whole story, but the story rests on the idea that a young man has dinner with his fiancé's family. The girl gets up to go to the cellar for more wine and doesn't return. So the mother follows and then after a time so does the father. Eventually the young man goes to find out what is going on. All three are sitting on the stairs weeping. When he asks why they point at an axe stuck in a rafter. 'What if you were to come down here and the axe were to fall out and kill you?' He reaches up, takes out the axe, sets it down and then sets out on a quest to find three people sillier than these. Of course, the idea of weeping over a problem readily fixed is nonsense. And yet we can all be inclined to behave in the same way at times. Not

because we are silly, but because from our particular view of the world what can seem simple to others can seem impossible to us.

Of course there are many examples of apparent nonsense that seen in hindsight are signs of genius. The idea of the motorcar was believed to be nonsense. The idea of a personal computer in everyone's pocket was nonsense. We have the saying, 'I could as much do that as fly to the moon.' And yet it may be that in the near future we **could fly to the moon** as easily as flying to Australia. There is a sightseeing mission to the moon and back planned as early as 2022. Now admittedly the journey is going to cost 10s of millions of dollars, but the fact that it is happening is incredible – nonsense we might have said a few years ago.

Let me read you another **nonsense verse**.

⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,

⁷ but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.

Now, say what you like given all you know to be true, but this is a piece of nonsense. It makes no sense. Christ Jesus, in the form of God, emptied himself and took the form of a slave. How ridiculous is that? Even more ridiculous is that he submitted himself to death on a cross, a particularly awful form of ancient torture.

Why would any sane, thoughtful person do something like that? Why would someone who has the power to create light lower themselves to take on the form of something they had created? And this is all in hindsight. None of it makes any sense to the discerning eye. And it was a discerning eye that the Pharisees were casting on Jesus as he entered Jerusalem to the adulation of the adoring crowd.

This nothing Rabbi from nowhere, who had no qualifications to do what he did had seemingly pulled the rug out from under their carefully organised feet. The fickle crowd was flailing after this man of no account and it must have appeared that the radicals were about to take over. For those men, and they were all men, who held the strings of power and control in the Jewish city, what they were seeing made no sense. It was they who were the conduit

between God and the people, not this unqualified upstart. It was they who spent their lives training in the Torah, wrestling with their Holy Scriptures to try to make sense of the world around them. And now this Jesus person was disrupting the natural flow of life.

In fact, the entire Easter story, from beginning to end doesn't make very much sense if you look at it from an outsider's perspective. Bear with me for a moment as we step through the events of Holy Week. First we have the entry into Jerusalem – **Jesus riding on a donkey's foal** – most likely his feet dragging on the ground as he road. His ragtag bunch of disciples in tow looking around at this crowd of people waving palm fronds and throwing their coats on the ground before the donkey. A meal where Jesus takes traditional food and drink and identifies it with his body and his blood. Prayer in a garden with sleeping disciples then betrayal with a kiss, ears cut off and disciples fleeing naked. Church leaders interrogating a lowly and peaceful Rabbi before condemning him as a blasphemer. A Roman Consul in fear of the words of that same Rabbi and a crowd that prefers a condemned murderer over the Rabbi. The Rabbi stripped, tortured and hung on a cross for the sin of inviting people into a personal relationship with God and then forgiving the very people who tortured and eventually killed him. That same Rabbi rising from the dead 3 days later, walking through walls and forgiving and rebuilding the disciples faith before finally ascending into heaven 40 days later. I don't think I've seen a movie or read a book that has such a nonsensical story line (with the exception of the Bible and Passion movies of course). The whole thing would be farcical if we didn't know it to be true.

And yet, in the midst of all this nonsense God has a plan to open a path between the creation and God. It is a path that perhaps couldn't happen any other way. It couldn't happen any other way because if salvation was dependent on ability of any kind then it is no longer a gift. If I can enter God's presence through my mathematical talent, or my gardening talent (I have little), or my housekeeping talent (I have none at all), then in a way I don't need God. If I can enter God's presence with money or power or influence, then I don't need God. And what about all those people who don't have those particular talents or abilities. Are they shut out of God's presence for that lack? No, God chose a nonsense poem of a story because it gives freedom for anyone at all to approach. It could be a brilliant astrophysicist, or a streetkid, or a housewife, or a farmer, or a meth addict, or politician, absolutely anyone

can approach God because it is not on the basis of what they have to offer, it is on the basis of what God has to offer. God's free gift to us all. **While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

So on this Palm Sunday, as we remember a part of the nonsense story, may we be reminded that the proof of God's love for us is that it is all gift. None of it makes sense and yet all of it combines to gift life to anyone who will receive it. Of course for us here today there is something else to take with the nonsense story of Easter. And that is the question, 'How do we share it with others?' Let's take a moment to ponder that question now.

We Pray

Loving God, it is probable true to say that not much in this life makes sense. We do our best with it and still find ourselves wondering what on earth is going on. And so it is with the Easter story. We Christians like to say that we know what is going on, but if we're honest, most of it makes little sense. Why did you choose to save us this way? And so, on this Palm Sunday, we would ask that you would help us to receive your gift of love and compassion in just the way you meant it. Not to seek to analyse and understand the how, simply to accept and love in return. Then as we love in return, help us to share that love with those around us who have yet to receive your gift. Through the wonderful love of your Son, Jesus. Amen.

Jesus, we enthrone you/Shout to the Lord

Jesus, we enthrone You
We proclaim You are king
Standing here, in the midst of us
We raise You up with our praise

And as we worship build Your throne
And as we worship build Your throne
And as we worship build Your throne
Come Lord Jesus and take Your place

Shout to the Lord, all the earth, let us sing
Power and majesty, praise to the King
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
At the sound of Your name.

I sing for joy at the work of Your hands,
Forever I'll love You, forever I'll stand,
Nothing compares to the promise I have in You.

My Jesus, my Saviour,
Lord, there is none like You;
All of my days, I want to praise
The wonders of Your mighty love.

My comfort, my shelter,
Tower of refuge and strength;
Let every breath, all that I am
Never cease to worship You.

Offering

Almighty and everlasting God, as we bring our gifts and lay them at your altar, we remember the crowds in Jerusalem who laid their cloaks on the road, shouting “Hosanna” as Jesus passed. We know they were looking for a Messiah who was different from who you sent Jesus to be – not one of political power and military might, but one who came in compassion and mercy to heal, love, and save. Search our hearts that we might be confident that the Messiah for whom we long is the one you know we need – Jesus Christ, your anointed one, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Prayer for Ourselves and Others – Hazel

Vaccinations – when do you get yours? The people doing the vaccinations. The people afraid of the vaccinations and misinformation surrounding vaccinations. People coming to the end of the hope that their businesses or livelihoods might recover from the lockdowns and shutdowns.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayers**

People at the bottom of the K-shaped recovery. Those who had little who have even less than they did before the pandemic.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayers**

Victims of war in Syria, Yemen, Sudan-Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Somalia, and all other conflicts around the world.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayers**

Friends and family, those with chronic illnesses, those grieving over the loss of loved ones, those grieving for the loss of jobs or homes.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayers**

As we pray in the wonderful name of our Lord Jesus who taught us how to pray...

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in Heaven, holy be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever.
Amen

Not on a war horse

David M. Miller © 2010 The Millery, tune "Finlandia"

Not on a war horse, but a humble donkey,
the Son of Man came to Jerusalem;
great city full of faithful Hebrew pilgrims
received one more as she had often done.
And yet this time, Christ journeyed into danger;
to be betrayed, to suffer and to die.

They paved his way with scattered cloaks and branches
- a prelude to the coming victory.
Crowds of disciples shouting out their praises;
"Glory to God! Hosanna to the King!
Bless'd is the one, Jesus has come to save us."
The very stones would cry out if they could.

His friends knew not the horrors that awaited,
imagining an end to Roman rule.
Instead God's plan was moving to fruition;
his Son would gain a greater vict'ry still.
Not by the might of gathered rebel armies,
but strength of purpose and submissive will.

So let us pause, as we this day remember
our humble King who gathers up the lost;
how great his trial, how strong the love he shows us;
how weak a faith that does not count the cost.
We walk with him, come through into the city;
one final meal, a symbol for God's grace.

Out into darkness, Jesus' time is coming;
a kiss to greet, a sign - "this is the one"
The soldiers mock, yet still our Lord is silent;
the sentence passed and all our crimes his own.
Christ hoisted high, humanity is ransomed;
through Jesus' death, we all are given life!

Benediction and Grace

May the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the Love of God,
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.