

Palm Sunday

Read Luke 19: 28-40

I'm reliably informed that the road from Jericho to Jerusalem, still today, is a long dusty road, uphill all the way to the Mount of Olives. This passage opens painting a picture of Jesus striding out ahead of his disciples, who approach this walk to Jerusalem with some hesitancy. Jesus knows what forces of evil are massing ahead of him; the disciples are expecting trouble for sure but they haven't understood the consequences of what Jesus is needing to do, so they were probably 'dragging their feet'.

1. Let's think about Jesus striding out ahead – walking before us - preparing a way, not only to bring his plan to fulfilment, but also for the important actions and roles the disciples must play in the coming week.

1a. We Christians often talk about Jesus 'going before us'. What does this mean to you? Do you have any examples you have experienced or perhaps witnessed you could share with the group?

1b. The Christian life could be viewed as a series of preparations; being prepared for service, gaining wisdom from experience, learning from mistakes, learning to trust Jesus. What role does the church have in these preparations? Which parts of church life are more helpful in this respect?

2. Having reached the top of the Mount of Olives, the road goes down into the Jordan valley before rising again to ascend into Jerusalem. As the road slopes downhill (verse 37) the going becomes easier and the disciples and the crowd start to praise and celebrate.

2a. Can this concept of 'dragging your feet' when the going is tough, and rejoicing when times are easy have any parallels with our relationship with Jesus? If so, then how might it be possible to smooth out these fluctuations?

2b. 'If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out' (verse 40). Let us join the praise and celebrations. Which bible verses or hymn/song words do you carry in your head to help you sing praise God?

Read Psalm 118

3. As we enter Holy Week with its emotional ups and downs and we remember all that Christ achieved through what he endured for us, let us keep this Psalm in mind.

"The long and dusty pilgrim way of our lives gives most of us plenty of time to sort out our motives for following Jesus in the first place. Are we ready not only to spread our cloaks on the road in front of him, to do the showy and flamboyant thing, but also now to follow him into trouble, controversy, trial and death?" Tom Wright.