

Palm Sunday Devotion



Jerusalem Today including the church of the Holy Sepulchre.

“My Song Is Love Unknown”

words by Samuel Crossman Vs. 3

Sometimes they threw down palms and sweetest praises sang. Hosannas and glad psalms through streets and markets rang. Then “Crucify!” is all their breath, for blood and death they thirst and cry; for blood and death they thirst and cry.

Matthew 21:1-10

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives.....the disciples brought the donkey and he sat on it. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them

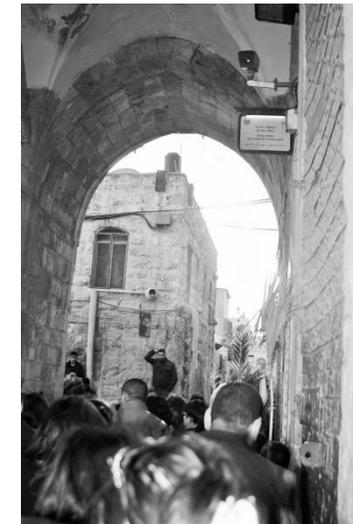
on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting.

"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"
When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "who is this?"

To people living in the Holy Land today these verses speak of very familiar places. Bethphage today is called Bethany (in Jesus' time the two names seem to have been used interchangeably). Bethany is however on the opposite side of the separation barrier to Jerusalem and so you can't walk from Bethany onto the Mount of Olives any more. Each Palm Sunday though crowds process down the Mount of Olives following the path that Jesus trod. It is a walk filled with contradictory emotions. Jesus walks across the Kidron Valley into the city that will soon condemn him and have him crucified. The crowds who cry his praises today will call for his death in just five days' time.



The crowds today have to start on the Jerusalem side of the Wall, and many Palestinian Christians who would like to join the procession are prevented from doing so as the Israeli authorities do not give out enough permits for Christians from the West Bank to come to Jerusalem for this festival. Contradictory emotions play once again today.



Jerusalem in the time of Jesus - as much as today - was a city of passion and tragedy. Jesus enters a city occupied by the Romans who were determined that even with the crowds of pilgrims - that the festival would pass off without disorder.

Jesus attracted controversy and was condemned by the religious and the political powers of the day. The followers of Jesus today are called not just to walk the path into the city, in their imaginations or in reality, but to follow their Lord, who faithfully went the way God called him.

While the crowd vacillated between commendation and condemnation we are called to steady, consistent service, following Jesus every day. Not for us the "hosannas" one day and the "crucify" the next, the challenge of Christian living is faithfulness, day by day.

May we learn that lesson again this Easter.

Let us pray, Lord Jesus Christ, teach us to follow you even when you are leading us into passion, danger and conflict. Help us to be faithful through good times and bad. Help us to know at all times that you walk with us, always by our side. Amen.

Devotion written by Rev. John Howard, Methodist Liaison in Palestine and Israel, from the Methodist Church in Britain.

Picture credits:

1st Jerusalem today taken by Rev. John Howard.

2nd Palm Sunday crowds of people walking down the Mount of Olives taken by Rev. Kristen L. Brown

3rd Palm Sunday walking into the Old City of Jerusalem taken by Rev. Kristen L. Brown