



March 2024

Dear Friends,

Well, this month we are traveling through Lent towards Holy Week and Easter. Thinking about this today I remembered my first Holy Week 13 years ago. Some of you might be thinking I've got my numbers wrong, but despite being a Christian all my life and celebrating Easter every year, I really do feel my first Holy Week was 6 years ago. I was at theological collage where we were on an Easter retreat which started on Palm Sunday and finished on Easter Day. During that week we not only followed Easter week, but were introduced to experiences and resources for shaping the worship of God during the season of Lent, Holy Week and Easter. The emphasis was on giving us the tools to enabling our future congregations to walk with Christ, to feel the range of emotions provoked by the twists and turns of his Passion and to discover echoes and emphasise in their own lives: in short to properly experience Easter.

The weeks of Lent to Easter are not only a progression of contemplation from the teaching and miracles of Jesus in the countryside, to his joyous triumphant entry into the city on Palm Sunday, which then culminate in his joyous resurrection on Easter Day. They should also include the seven days of Holy Week.

However, many, somehow seem to miss out on the relevance of Holy Week, they skip over the emotional seesaw. The awe at our Lord being servant and King; the guilt of betrayal by Judas; the fear of his being taken by the Roman soldiers, tried by the high priests and then the people; the courage of Christ in adversity, willing to fulfil his destiny; the pain of watching his suffering and the utter loss, sadness and emptiness at his death; and finally the joy, elation and reverence at his resurrection on Easter Day

And... in all honesty, that had been my experience until 6 years ago. I had always jumped from one joyous moment, Palm Sunday, to the next on Easter Sunday without truly recognising or experiencing the the true meaning and necessity of experiencing Holy Week. I knew the stories and the services that took place through that formidable week, but I had never truly experienced them, despite attending many. I can truly say that, that Holy Week, had a profound effect on not only my experience of the seven day journey we travel every year, but on my faith as a whole. The emotional journey I experienced from awe, to joy, elation and reverence took me through guilt, fear, courage, pain, loss, sadness and emptiness, with lots of tears and laughter on the way. A truly valuable experience.

'Holy Week is the time in Jesus' life about which we are given most detail: of how he and the the disciples and his critics felt, thought and acted. And yet so many Christians pay little regard, or at best, lip service to the most challenging point in Jesus' career. When in reality it is the time which offers his people the greatest possibility of understanding exactly what belonging to his kingdom and being a recipient of his love might really mean. Perhaps, unsurprisingly, it is also the time which offers the greatest possibility of discovering what, we his followers can do and be for him, in our lives, today.' *

I invite you to join us for our Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter services.

Every blessing,