

Sunday 24th March – Palm Sunday – Saved from and saved for

Psalm 118 :24-29

Mark 11:1-11 and 15-17

Part 1 – Saved from

Its hard to imagine sometimes that the Psalms – like the one we said just now – were not written to be said but to be sung. They don't look like songs to us; maybe they don't feel like songs either. But for the ancient Jewish people the book of Psalms was like their hymnbook.

Songs of praise

Songs of thanksgiving

Songs of sorrow

Songs that ask the big questions like – where are you God? Why can't you do somethings?

Songs that expressed everything about life and God

And the one we have just said was one the people sang as they went up to the temple to worship. Not the kind of thing we do today perhaps – or maybe you do sing as you walk along the Stratford Road on your way to church

But imagine a football crowd approaching Wembley Stadium for the cup final – up Wembley Way from the tube station. Singing as they go. (probably quite hard for Blues fans to imagine)

Its that kind of feeling of joy and expectation that leads to song - and this psalm was one of the songs that was sung in that way

So we can pick out some lines that we might want to sing

This is the day that the Lord has made

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good

Save us we beseech thee O lord – Hosanna – (which means save us) –
Hosanna Hosanna!

And we all (I'm sure) know that songs stick in the mind – I can remember countless songs from church and from popular music way back in the 1970s, even though I can't remember what I have gone upstairs to get!

And so we can imagine people knowing those words from the psalm and slipping into song as the occasion arises

Now picture the scene

Jesus entering the city

You've heard about him

You want to see him

You're interested to find out more

Is he the long promised one – the Messiah

Who would "save" his people from all that is wrong in the world

The one who would be the rescuer

You might be wondering – is he going to drive out the Romans,

Is he going to make things good again

What is he going to do

You are excited to see him

You see him coming – on a donkey ..

A donkey – not for war but for peace

You wonder ... who is this Jesus?

you see the crowd, you are excited, and, almost involuntarily, you turn to song as others do and you grab the nearest thing – a palm branch – to wave

And those familiar words from the Psalm – the temple hymn- come to mind

Hosanna Hosanna Save us!

Be the Messiah.

Be the one who can take us from this mess

Be the one who can help us

Be the one who saves us from all that is wrong with the world

Hosanna Hosanna!

Part 2 Saved for

Hosanna

Save us

Save us from all of this mess
From our own mistakes and foolishness
From the worlds mess and mire

Words that apply as much today as then
Jesus – the donkey riding king – is the one who because of his self sacrificial death
saves us from all that mess as well

Mess of our own doing
Mess of others' doing
Mess which seems to underpin the way the world goes round, its structure, its
politics, everything

But theres another side too

The message of Jesus is not just about being saved from all the mess
Its also about being saved for

But being saved for what ...

We can begin to get an answer when we think about what happened to Jesus as the
week progressed.

Jesus goes into the temple
Drives out those sellers of animals, and the money changer

These were people who were making money;
who were exploiting;
who were putting barriers in the way of people worshipping

Jesus said that the temple is a house of prayer for all nations but you have made it a
den of thieves

Everyone should enjoy being in the presence of God
A relationship with God is there for all

And when we read all of what he said we can see quite clearly that this was central to his ministry, his message.

When two or three are gathered – I am in the midst of them
Talk to God in the same way you would talk to your loving father
We can each one of us be friends with God again; to enjoy being in God's presence

So we are Saved for – a relationship with God
But its more than that

On Thursday we will be remembering the last supper

At that meal Jesus got down on his hands and knees
Did the work of a slave
Washed feet
Dirty smelly feet

And he did this to show his followers that they should look out for others
Do things for them
Even unpleasant things

Living a life of service

Saved for a life of service

And putting these together we can see that we are saved to live in God's presence
and to care for others

This is the fullness of life Jesus talked about

Not a life of self interest or self gratification,
but a life that relies on God and puts others first
fullness of life

So as we begin this Holy Week we begin to see the themes developing

Jesus – giving up his life to save us from mess and to save us for a life with God at
the centre ; and a life committing ourselves to serve others

Saving us – from mess to abundance of life
From life in the mire to life in its fullness