

Humility

Zechariah 9: 9, Isaiah 50:6, Philippians 2:1-11

'Humility'. That's all it said. 'Humility'. It was a tweet from Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus, the Director General of the World Health Organization. 'Humility'. But what did it mean?

The same could be asked of the one who made quite a statement by his entry into Jerusalem on that very first Palm Sunday. What is this all about? What difference does he make?



Jesus is greeted by the people of Jerusalem with acclamation — the crowds spread their cloaks before him, and cut palm branches and spread them on the road. The crowds shout, "Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

How do we receive him today? Well of course, we can't even come together for worship, let alone rouse the place, the town, the city where we are to greet Jesus. But Jesus comes as the Holy Spirit opens the Word of God to us. How do we receive him?

The crowds who met Jesus that first Palm Sunday sing and cry and enact the words of the prophet Zechariah. Take a moment now to open your Bibles to Zechariah chapter 9 and go to verse 9:

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter (O people, O city) Jerusalem! Look your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

Jesus' entry to Jerusalem fulfils the Scripture about God's Messiah coming to rescue his people, written by the prophet Zechariah hundreds of years before. And as you look at Zechariah 9:9, this tells us two vital things:

The king comes to *you*. Jesus, God's messiah comes to you and to me and to the city, the town, the church, the neighbours, the family, the place where you are... and he comes triumphant and victorious...

And, secondly,

He comes humble, he comes in humility riding on a donkey.

He is triumphant and victorious, but also comes in humility.

But what does it all mean for us?

The crowds that greet and follow Jesus, like us at home, perhaps with our branches or our singing of hosanna (which actually means "Save us. We pray!"), will soon be replaced by shouts of 'crucify him' in the same city, and perhaps by the same people. As we enter into Holy Week now, we head with Jesus to Good Friday and the victory of the humble king who gives his life in the place of the



crowds, in the place of those who those who greet him and follow him as he comes today; in our place. This humble king will triumph for you and me. Open your Bible with me to the Old Testament reading at Isaiah 50:6:

I gave my back to those who struck me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;
I did not hide my face from insult and spitting.

We travel with the king to the place of his death, of his giving of his own life in place of you and me. Jesus fulfils the words of the prophet Isaiah who tells of the suffering servant — not the mighty king some expect or want, but the one who takes the anger and punishment of God because of human sin, yours and mine included, on his own body. This is the king who reigns on the cross, the symbol of our Christian faith.

The crowds sing “Hosanna”. Save us we pray. The crowds shout “crucify”, and the king saves.

We are brought face to face with the king who comes today. He bids us, “Follow me”. Follow me to the cross this Holy Week. Follow me at this time of uncertainty, and as you recognise that you are mortal and vulnerable. Follow me as you live differently in a changed world at this time. Follow me as you interact in very different ways with others. Follow me. And as we do so, a king comes to us and for us, to rescue from the power of sin and death and the evil one who would destroy us.

Hosanna! Save us we pray. And Jesus comes, and Jesus does. Good news. Sure victory and triumph over death.



So let's get back to that one word: humility!

Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus is an Orthodox Christian as I understand. He's also the Director General of the WHO. He tweeted one word 'humility' this past week. He later explained his tweet:

"Coming together is the only option we have to defeat this virus. While scientific and health tools are essential in overcoming the #coronavirus pandemic, so are humility and kindness."

See your king comes to you, humble and riding a donkey.

You are saved. Don't ever doubt this. The king has triumphed, and won the victory in love for you.

Now you and I, we who put our hope in this one, can carry this king in our hearts, in our voices, in our actions and lives when a world, a city, a town, a neighbourhood, a family seeks someone to help.

In humility we are called by God to serve our neighbours in selfless love, perhaps in very different ways as we phone, as we conference on line, as we stay in touch. Please let me know your stories of humble serving in your life; of ways that you are reaching out as Jesus Carriers to others, or others are reaching out to you.

Open your Bible at home with me as God calls and equips us in Philippians 2:1-11 to serve as carriers of Jesus:

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be

exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Amen.