

Palm Sunday

Readings: Isaiah 50:4–9a Philippians 2:5–11
The Passion of Christ;
Matthew 26:14–27:end



On Palm Sunday we remember the Passion of Christ. We take time to read through the story that is so familiar, yet - in the words of Tom Wright¹, offers us 'that which unmakes and remakes the world, ourselves included... the figure at the centre beckons, woos, disturbs, frightens and compels us.'

This year, one verse stands out as being particularly poignant to us, for reasons we may have never before fully appreciated, and is worthy of personal reflection. Pilate has asked the crowd who he should free, Jesus or Barabbas. The crowd screams for Jesus to be crucified...

'So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves."'

Because of our current health crisis, we are all taking great care to wash our hands, to rid ourselves of any possible contamination.

Points for reflection

In Matthew 26:39, Jesus prays in Gethsemane and says "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want." It's an astonishing act of humble service. It's not about thinking less of ourselves, but thinking of ourselves *less*².

How do you feel when you wash your hands, in the present time?

Do you pray, sing, or count as you wash?

How does this influence the way you feel, as a Christian?

How can this simple act, often done in our homes in isolation, be seen as an act of service?

Set aside time to wash your hands carefully, knowing that in the current climate you are not alone, but are sharing in a moment of loving service and prayer.

◆ Lord, you humble yourself. You bow down like a servant. You give yourself away for us. Teach us to learn from you how to love, how to hold nothing back, how to give ourselves. Fill us with that Spirit of yours that Spirit of loving and serving all our brothers and sisters sincerely, without counting the cost. Amen. ³

¹ Tom Wright, Twelve Months of Sundays; SPCK (2001) p.51

² Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Life: Zondervan (2002) p.265.

³ Liturgical Institute, Trier, in 'An Anthology for the Church Year, No. 109

