

HYMNS: 733 86 53 11

INTROIT: Psalm 118:19-29

Open to me the gates of righteousness! I shall enter through them. I shall give thanks to the LORD.

This is the gate of the LORD, through which righteous people will enter. I shall give thanks to You. For You have answered me, and You have become my Salvation.

The Stone that the builders rejected has become the Cornerstone.

This has come from the LORD. It is marvellous in our eyes.

This is the day that the LORD has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, please give us success!

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD! We have blessed you all from the house of the LORD.

The LORD is God, and has given us light. Tie the festive procession together with leafy branches as far as the horns of the altar!

You are my God, and I shall give thanks to You. You are my God. Let me honour You highly.

Give thanks to the LORD! For He is good. For His mercy endures for ever.

COLLECT: Almighty and everlasting God, You sent Your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon Himself our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross. Mercifully grant that we may follow the example of His great humility and patience and be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

READINGS:

Isaiah 50:4-9a I have not turned My face from those who humiliate Me.

Philippians 2:5-11 He humbled Himself to the point of death.

John 12:20-43 The glorification of the Son of Man

Welcome to all worshipping with us today!

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Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.

Isaiah 50:4-9a

⁴ “The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, to know how to use a Word to sustain him who is tired out. He awakens Me morning after morning. He awakens My ear to listen, like those who are disciples. ⁵ The Lord GOD has opened My ear, and I Myself have not been rebellious. I have not turned back. ⁶ I have given My **back** to **those who struck Me** and My cheeks to those who plucked out My beard. I have not hidden My **face** from **insults** and **spittle**. ⁷ The Lord GOD will help Me. That is why I have not been disgraced. That is why I have set My face like flint and know that I shall not be ashamed. ⁸ He who **declares Me righteous** is near. Who will contest a lawsuit against Me? Let us stand up together! Who is My accuser? Let him confront Me! ⁹ Look! The Lord GOD will come to help Me. **Who** is he who **will condemn Me**?

Philippians 2:5-11

⁵ Have the same attitude as Christ Jesus had! ⁶ Although He was in the form of God, yet He did not consider His equality with God as a prize to exploit. ⁷ Instead, He emptied Himself, took on the form of a slave and became like other human beings; and, when He was found in the appearance of a human being, ⁸ He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. ⁹ That is why God also has very highly exalted Him and given Him the name that is above every other name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus **everyone** in heaven and on earth and under the earth **may kneel**, ¹¹ and that **everyone may confess** that Jesus Christ is **Lord**, to the **glory** of **God** the Father.

John 12:20-43

²⁰ There were some Greeks among those who were coming up to worship at the Feast. ²¹ They approached Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

²² Philip went and told Andrew. Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³ Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Truly, truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone, but, if it dies, it produces much grain.

²⁵ “The person who loves his life loses it, and the person who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ If anyone serves Me, he should follow Me, and where I am there also My servant will be. If anyone serves Me, the

Father will honour him. ²⁷ **Now My soul is troubled**, and what am I to say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour!’? No! For this reason, I have come to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify Your name!”

Then a voice came from heaven: “I both have glorified it and shall glorify it again.”

²⁹ Therefore, the crowd that was standing there and heard it began to say that it had thundered. Others were saying, “An angel has spoken to Him.”

³⁰ Jesus answered: “This voice has not come because of Me but because of you.

³¹ Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³² I, if I am lifted up from the earth, shall also draw all people to Myself.”

³³ He said this to indicate the kind of death that He was going to die.

³⁴ The crowd answered Him, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains for ever. How, then, are You saying that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this ‘Son of Man’?”

³⁵ Then Jesus told them, “The Light is still among you for a little while. Walk while you have the Light, that darkness may not overtake you! The person who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. ³⁶ While you have the Light, believe in the Light that you may become children of light!”

After Jesus had said these things, He went away and hid from them. ³⁷ Although He had done so many miraculous signs in their presence, they would not believe in Him, ³⁸ that the Word that the prophet Isaiah had said might be fulfilled: **“Lord, who has believed our report? To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”**

³⁹ This was the reason why they could not believe. For Isaiah said again: ⁴⁰ **“He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, that they may not see with their eyes and that they may not understand with their hearts and may not be converted, that I should heal them.”**

⁴¹ Isaiah said these things because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about Him.

⁴² Nevertheless, even among the rulers many became believers in Him but would not confess it publicly because of the Pharisees, to avoid being put out of the synagogue. ⁴³ For they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God.

WORDS FOR THE WEARY
Sermon for Palm Sunday, 2023
Isaiah 50:4-9a

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is the First Reading from before, Isaiah 50:4-9a: **“The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, to know how to use a Word to sustain him who is tired out. He awakens Me morning after morning. He awakens My ear to listen, like those who are disciples. ⁵ The Lord GOD has opened My ear, and I Myself have not been rebellious. I have not turned back. ⁶ I have given My back to those who struck Me and My cheeks to those who plucked out My beard. I have not hidden My face from insults and spittle. ⁷ The Lord GOD will help Me. That is why I have not been disgraced. That is why I have set My face like flint and know that I shall not be ashamed. ⁸ He who declares Me righteous is near. Who will contest a lawsuit against Me? Let us stand up together! Who is My accuser? Let him confront Me! ⁹ Look! The Lord GOD will come to help Me. Who is he who will condemn Me?**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Looking back at the history of the Israelites, we find it was full of trouble. It culminated with their leading off into captivity all because they disobeyed God. It was not God’s fault they were led away. All responsibility for their trouble was their own. While in captivity, they grew weary and perhaps could not see any future for themselves.

However, God would not forget His people. He would not write them off. Even though He was not to blame, yet He would remain faithful. He would not allow their miseries to continue forever but would provide help for them, who would come in the form of His Servant.

Today we hear this Servant begin to speak, who says, **“The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, to know how to use a Word to sustain him who is tired out. He awakens Me morning after morning. He awakens My ear to listen, like those who are disciples. ⁵The Lord GOD has opened My ear, and I Myself have not been rebellious. I have not turned back.”** The question we need to ask today is, “Who is this Servant?”

Earlier, in the opening verse of Isaiah 42, the LORD God, speaking through Isaiah, had said, *“Here is My Servant, whom I support, My Chosen One, in whom I delight! I have put My Spirit on Him. He will bring righteousness to the nations.”* God had chosen to call many individuals His servants to carry out various assignments. We remember servants such as Abraham, Moses, Caleb, David, and Isaiah, the prophets in general, Eliakim, Zerubbabel, and even heathen kings such as Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus. All these are mentioned in the Word of God as His servants.¹ The title ‘servant’ also occurs as a corporate name for all Israelites to indicate the reason for their existence as a nation.² However, neither an individual nor Israel collectively can qualify as the Servant described here in Isaiah. As we listen to Isaiah, it becomes progressively clear that he is not speaking about himself or about someone else among his fellow Israelites. No, he is proclaiming the good news about Jesus. Through Isaiah, God announced, “Here is My Servant,” and sent His Spirit upon Him. In effect, God said, “This is the One.”

Once introduced, this Servant becomes a dominant theme of Isaiah’s prophecy. When He appears next, in Isaiah 49, He speaks and identifies Himself as the LORD’s special Servant, and we understand who the Servant is and what He has come to do. He has been specially chosen by the LORD and anointed with His Spirit. His ministry will include proclaiming the Word of God, and He will not falter in His purpose, even though His work may appear to be in vain.

¹ Genesis 26:24; Psalm 105:6; Numbers 12:7-8; Numbers 14:24; Isaiah 37:35; Isaiah 20:3; 2 Kings 17:13; Isaiah 44:26; Isaiah 22:20; Haggai 2:23; Jeremiah 25:9; Isaiah 43:10, 45:1

² Jeremiah 30:10

In our text today, the Servant of the LORD adds new information. First, He begins by clarifying something.

This Servant had earlier mentioned that the LORD “*made My mouth like a sharp sword*” (49:2). Now He says, “**The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples...**” Part of His ministry would be to proclaim God’s Word. How can we be sure that the words of this Servant come from God? The Servant has obediently listened. “**Morning after morning,**” that is, again and again, the Servant gave the LORD’s Word His attention. But He has not just listened to the Word and then forgotten the words of God, as Israel and Judah had so often done, but He willingly *submitted* to the Word of God. He knew what the Lord GOD wanted and obeyed.

We learn a second piece of important information from what the Servant will suffer.

He learned the will of God, and willingly obeyed. For this Servant, obedience meant that He would be beaten and humiliated. The Servant describes the treatment criminals experienced in the ancient East. “**The Lord GOD has opened My ear, and I Myself have not been rebellious. I have not turned back. ⁶ I have given My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out My beard. I have not hidden My face from insults and spittle.**” Such treatment was a disgrace and humiliation, but the Servant willingly allowed it to take place because of His obedience to the Word of the LORD God. His willing obedience would also be evident in the way He endured reproach and spitting. In this passage, the Servant of the LORD God clearly becomes the Suffering Servant.

The Servant who speaks in this passage must be a unique individual sent from God Himself to carry out a mission that would involve proclaiming God’s truth and enduring suffering and disgrace. He must be the promised Great Prophet³ and the Great High Priest, who would offer Himself as a sacrifice for sin.⁴ He is Jesus Christ, pictured here in prophecy. This is the

³ Deuteronomy 18:17-18

⁴ Hebrews 7:26-28; 9:6-12

Word that would sustain the Israelites and the same Word of our Lord that sustains us.

And don't we need sustaining? Often we are weary of journeying through life. Even though we are children of God, who have been called into His family through our baptism, it doesn't mean that somehow we are going to be spared any trouble in this world. God sometimes allows us to suffer, which comes in many different ways. It can come through unstable or evil governments, ongoing illness, the death of someone close to us, family troubles, loneliness, unfulfilled dreams, etc.

How often we forget that even though the sun may not always be shining on our lives, yet God's love and care for us are always there. Remember His words, "*I shall never leave you or forsake you*"? (Heb. 13:5). The trouble is we are often so overwhelmed by problems that we don't always remember this. Actually, spending so much time worrying about all our troubles *only adds to our weariness*.

But the greatest burden we carry is not any kind of physical suffering but our sins and the resulting guilt. We grow weary spiritually, which results in us thinking, "*How sinful I am! Has God really forgiven me? If He still loves me, then what must I do to get right with Him again.*"

Look to Jesus. Jesus, the Servant who suffered for us, sustains us with the very words that sustained Him. He invites the weary, "*Come to Me, all you who are working hard and carrying a heavy burden, and I shall give you rest!*"²⁹ *Take My yoke on you and learn from Me! For I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*³⁰ *For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light*" (Matt. 11:28-30). The legalism of the scribes and Pharisees had burdened the people to whom this invitation was first extended. They had no assurance of God's love and forgiveness. Jesus makes our burden light and the yoke easy by assuring us that His blood has atoned for our sins. We have been forgiven. Remember, in the Lord's Supper, ***He gives us His body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins***.

This Servant of the LORD God goes on to say, "**He who declares Me righteous is near. Who will contest a lawsuit against Me? Let us stand up together! Who is My accuser? Let him confront Me!**"⁹ **Look! The**

Lord GOD will come to help Me. Who is he who will condemn Me?"

We note a kind of defiance in the words of the Servant here. He will endure pain and suffering but remain absolutely confident that He is doing the will of the LORD and that the LORD will vindicate or justify, Him. That knowledge would enable the Servant to defy His accusers. He says, **“Who will contest a lawsuit against Me? Let us stand up together! Who is My accuser? Let him confront Me!”** The Servant is innocent of any sin. The accusations lodged against Him were intended to condemn Him, but all the accusations were nothing more than a moth-eaten garment, fit only to be discarded with the trash.

In Romans 8:33, Paul quotes these words and makes the point that just as the LORD God vindicated His own Son so that no accusation could be brought against Him, neither can any charge be brought against you and me. We are God’s chosen ones, justified by the blood of Christ, who even now intercedes for us. Whatever may be causing our weariness at this moment in life, we have a Father who loves us and will cause all to work for our good.⁵

Today is Palm Sunday, where from our Gospel we heard that *“the large crowd that had come for the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. They took branches of palm-trees, went out to meet Him, and began to shout, “Hosanna!” “Blessed is He who is coming in the name of the Lord!” and “the King of Israel!”* (John 12:12-13). Thus today marks the beginning of Holy Week. Do any of you doubt the love of God? By the end of this week, His only Son will be hung on a cross for you. Are you weary? Then look to Jesus and remember how weary He became by the end of the week, *all for you.* Because Jesus Christ has died and risen again for you, He will continue to sustain you in this life until the time comes when He will bring you to be with Him forever. He is the Suffering Servant who has suffered everything for you. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

⁵ Romans 8:28

PRAYER FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY IN LENT (PALM SUNDAY)

Heavenly Father, we come into Your presence with thanksgiving and joy. You are a great God. You rule over the whole earth from the deepest seas to the highest hills. We bow down and worship You, for You are our Maker. We are the people You care for, and the flock for which You provide.

We thank and praise You especially that You have sent to us the living Word, Jesus Christ, Your Son. We praise You that He willingly accepted the disgrace of dying on the cross for us. Grant that we may keep our eyes fixed on Him, and may not grow weary in doing good, become discouraged, or murmur when we are chastened and corrected. Uplift us with the assurance that, as we share in Jesus' sufferings, so we shall also share in His resurrection to eternal life.

Save us, then, O Lord, not by any good deeds that we have done, but by Your mercy, through the new birth given in our baptism and the new life created by the Holy Spirit. Rescue us from all sin, and purify us to serve and praise You.

Put Your will into our minds, and write it into our hearts. Put Your song into our spirits, that we may proclaim with joy: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

Give us the power to seek out those who are still strangers to Your salvation. Send workers to preach Your Word in truth, and to proclaim the name of Jesus as the only name under heaven through which people can be saved. Prosper the witness of all Your children throughout the world, that all may know You.

Give to this congregation, and to all who worship here, joy and energy as we serve You. Give us all willing minds and pure hearts that we may do our utmost to build and strengthen Your kingdom.

We pray for all who are burdened by sickness, sorrow, pain, anxiety, and fear of death. Be with them as they pass through troubled waters. Give them the faith that knows that You will deliver them in Your wisdom and love.

Lord, You are able to keep us from falling and to bring us faultless and joyful before Your glorious presence. To You, the only God, our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might, and authority, in all ages past, and now, and for ever and ever! Amen.

Article: What is Truth?

The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche said that the most profound thing in the New Testament was Pilate's question, "*What is truth?*" (John 18:38). Nietzsche may have read the New Testament. But he neither knew or believed its truth.

People today are very sceptical. Many ask Pilate's question: What is truth? They doubt and deny that we can know the truth. This doubt is a sort of desperate faith, a conviction that they cannot be convinced of truth. People want to justify their ignorance, their unbelief, their errors, and themselves by the hopeless hope that there is no truth, or at least no knowing the truth.

What good is a question by itself? "*What is truth?*" is asking, not answering. These are not even the best words we have from Pilate. Much better are the one statement we know he wrote and his firm defence of that statement.

Pilate wrote the truth when he had affixed above the dying Saviour's head a placard proclaiming: "JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS" (John 19:19). Pilate may not have meant it correctly. But that statement is true. In fact, it is Gospel truth.

"Jesus" means "Saviour" (Matthew 1:21). In fulfillment of prophecy, He was rejected by men and despised as a Nazarene (Matthew 2:23; John 1:46). He is David's Son as well as God's Son, the rightful King of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 1:1; John 1:49). He is the King who sacrificed Himself for His people. He will reign forever over the true Jews, all people who believe in Him and the forgiveness, life, and salvation He won for us by His suffering and dying for our sins in our place (Romans 2:28-29; Philippians 3:3).

The Jewish leaders objected to the words Pilate had written. Perhaps Pilate was tired of being pushed around. He insisted, "*What I have written I have written*" (John 19:22). Even a human ruler must at times insist on sticking with his words. We do not respect any man who does not stand by his word. How much more should we expect God, who cannot err and never changes, to stick with His Word?!

Putting it in writing makes it even more binding. A man is more careful about what comes from his pen than about what comes from his mouth. Spoken words can be lost in the air. Written words stay put. That is the purpose of writing them down. Pilate was weak and pliable. But even he stood by what he had written. God is strong and immovable. There is no doubt that He will stand by what He has written.

What God has written, God has written. God stands by His written Word. Jesus said, "*The Scripture cannot be broken*" (John 10:35). What God has written stands forever true. His Word will never pass away (Matthew 24:35).

God's Word is Law and Gospel. The Law tells us about our sins and God's anger. But the Gospel tells us about our Saviour and God's grace, the forgiveness of our sins because of Christ's suffering and death in our place. The main message of God's Book is the Gospel, the good news. God arranged to have even Pilate write it and post it. Jesus died for all our sins.

What is truth? It is written!

Children's Message:

Today is Palm Sunday. It's the day we remember Jesus riding into Jerusalem. What animal was Jesus riding on? Yes, He was riding on a young donkey. And people were lining the streets as Jesus was riding the donkey. And what were they waving in the air? Branches of



palm-trees. The people were also saying something as Jesus was riding on the donkey and they were waving their palm branches. Do you remember what they were saying? It's kind of a strange word. They were saying "Hosanna."

Hosanna means "Save us!" Our Introit for today is from the Book of Psalms, which is a book of prayers. In that Psalm, one line says, "Save us, we pray, O LORD!" (Psalm 118:25). When the people are waving their palm branches and shouting "Hosanna," they're praying this prayer: Save us!



Now, a question. Have you ever gotten stuck somewhere? You might get stuck in mud and need somebody to help you get out. Sometimes cars get bogged and a big truck or a tractor is needed to pull it out! When you're stuck, you need someone to pull you out, to save you.

The people who waved those palm branches for Jesus felt as if they were stuck, because they had rulers over them, the Romans, who made them feel almost as if they were in prison. But it was really worse for them - and for us - even than that. When we do things that we're not supposed to do, sin, we *are* stuck in a kind of prison. We deserve to be locked away from God forever - stuck in hell. We need somebody to come and pull us out. We need somebody to save us.

That's what Jesus does! Later this week, we'll have church services in the middle of the week when we'll hear about how Jesus died on the cross. And next Sunday, we'll celebrate Easter and hear how Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus dies and rises again in order to save us from all of the times we sin. He pulls us out from being stuck. So, if you ever get stuck, you can call out to Jesus. Hosanna! Save me! I'm stuck! *Dear Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross to save us. Help us remember to pray to you whenever we feel stuck. Amen.*

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICES	GOOD FRIDAY	EASTER SUNDAY
Wednesday 5 April: LOWOOD 7.00pm HC	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR	8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR
Thursday 6 April: OAKEY 7.30pm HC	9.30am AUB LR 9.00am MARBURG HC	10.15am GRN HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR
Maundy Thursday, 6 April		
READINGS: Exodus 24:3-11; Hebrews 9:11-22; Matthew 26:17-30		
HYMNS: 51 295 71 286 291 84		
Good Friday, 7 April		
READINGS: Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9; John 19:17-30		
HYMNS: 58 part 1 63 75 (69 66) 58 part 2		
Easter Sunday, 9 April		
READINGS: Acts 10:34-43; Colossians 3:1-4; Matthew 28:1-10		
HYMNS: 95 89 92 (323 99) 88		

Monday, 10 April, 10.00am. Parish Sunday School Picnic at Aubigny. Everyone is invited. Could each family please provide something for a shared lunch and/or dessert? Children, if you haven't already, please take a colouring-in picture home with you today and enter it in the colouring-in competition on the day.

Wednesday, 12 April, 10.00am (NOTE THE DATE). Women's Guild at Bethlehem Toowoomba. Opening Devotion: Jenny. Choose a Bible verse from Leviticus chapters 13-16. Item of Interest: A piece of artwork done by an adult or child.

BIBLE STUDIES:

Thursday, 20 April, 10.00am at Lowood.

Sunday, 23 April, after service at Marburg.

Down's Bible Studies will resume in May.

Parish AGM - Sunday, 30 April, after the AELC Service to be held at Oakey.