

## **Sunday 5 April 2020 - online worship from Knox Church, Dunedin, New Zealand – for Palm Sunday**

**It can be accessed from the Knox Church YouTube Channel**

*<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYksSjG0If00NeogNIGs7A>.*

**or from the Knox Church website – <https://knoxchurch.net/>**

### **Palm Sunday Living in the spaciousness of God**

This sermon takes us from the expanse of Galilee, through the Jerusalem gates, to the confines of the city, to the pinpoint of the cross. So let's begin.

Like nearly everyone else, I have stayed at home now for over a week. I have driven the car only once. And I have only walked as far as the edge of our neighbourhood.

With a limited horizon, I have become aware of the dimension of space, not outer space, not the frontier, more the space we are spending our time in, our bubble. In many ways, that space has shrunk.

We are fortunate to have many windows in our space, our home, and through our windows we see trees and birds and clouds – and the number of cats that traverse our property! This space has become the place we not only sleep and eat and relax – it is also now where we work. And for many of us it is where we teach our children or offer counselling or manage staff or what?

Today we heard the Palm Sunday story of Jesus and his followers entering the city of Jerusalem. Up until now, they had been in Galilee, travelling freely, healing and teaching, conversing and partying, calling and following.

Now they were on the outskirts of the city, with a colt and a donkey.

They came to the gate of the city. It represented a transition to a different space, a space more risky, more dangerous, where the authorities watched and waited. Jesus and his followers couldn't do anything now without being noticed. Powerful unseen forces lurked down narrow alleys. And beyond them, people of influence in a building somewhere started talking and planning. One way or other, this movement needed to end.

The people of the city looked on but they didn't know what to make of it. "Who is this? people asked as they peered from their balconies or complained about the noise or closed their doors to keep out the sound. More protestors from troublesome Galilee?"

As the week progressed, followers fell away. Even the closest ran. They couldn't keep up with his praying. They didn't have his determination. So he became steadily more isolated. Until the shouts of hosanna became the shouts of crucify him. And the space became more and more confining, pressing in, shutting down. That's what the rulers wanted, of course. Now a solitary figure, with but one or two alongside, his mother, his friend, he carried his own cross. And then he was lifted up and nailed to the cross. And there, with two criminals, he died. Cursed. Betrayed. Forsaken. Naked. Alone. Crucified.

On that cross, what had been so spacious and expansive and free and inclusive - remember the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, the fishers called from their nets, the tax collector called from his desk, the religiously divided communities to whom he reached, people sick for years offered healing - all of that free-ranging ministry now became a lonely shut down criminal on a cross.

A pinpoint. A vortex. A focus. From broad Galilee, through the Jerusalem gate, to Jesus on a cross. Palm Sunday marks a key transition.

And yet, and yet.

On that cross, through the utter commitment of Jesus to the way of God, the way of non-violence, the way of love, through that never giving up, there opened out for you and me the most spacious life we can ever know. Through that most narrow of ways, the death of Jesus on a cross, the broadest of love was let loose in the world. We were ushered into an open space, with broad horizons and total acceptance and incredible inclusion.

A place of freedom to move and explore and most of all to know love and to love. We were ushered into the very realm of God.

In Philippians, we read that God empties Godself. Emptiness makes space, space for every one of us.

In our shrunk space, we live with the spacious God.

And so we can make space for others, in care. Staying home to protect each other. Phoning people. Talking to neighbours over the back fence. Buying groceries. Praying for the people in our street. Putting a palm cross on our letter box. Finding a window to place a bear. Sending a message of encouragement. Still giving what we can to people in need.

We cannot process outside, but we can process inside, going with Jesus this week, through the Jerusalem gates, through the garden of sorrows, along the via dolorosa, to the cross.

And there to know that even in the smallest of spaces, we live in the spaciousness of God.

## **KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN**

***Captivated by the vision of the realm of God,  
made known in Jesus, given in grace***



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