

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.

There are two gospel readings this Sunday – the first is about the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem and the second, the liturgy of the Passion. The first reading is the focus of my reflection today.

The story begins with Jesus outside Jerusalem, where the crowds are friendly, cheering him and waving branches. Much like we would have done I expect, if we had been there. Trying to catch a glimpse of the teacher, the chosen one, who is riding on a borrowed donkey. And the crowds, including us, singing songs of celebration and praise, throwing down cloaks before Jesus before his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

But once he enters Jerusalem the tone is quite different: Matthew's text says, "When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?'"

We could call this Sunday, 'Turmoil Sunday.' The Greek for 'turmoil' can be translated as 'stirred up.' But more than just stirred up – the root of the Greek word is where we get our word 'seismic' – related to earthquakes. And this is a seismic moment for all the people in Jerusalem. Why were people so stirred up and agitated? Because many in the city of Jerusalem had a very different experience of Jesus from the crowds who had followed him and had travelled with him. In these words, 'stirred up,' there is a hint of Jesus' enemies lurking in the background; angry, preparing to challenge Jesus' authority, planning to entrap him with trick questions, and finally plotting to kill him.

The crowds inside the city identified Jesus only as "the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth." The inside crowds were mainly Judeans, who looked down on anyone from Galilee. Remember Nathaniel's question, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). But the crowds outside the city, those who had followed Jesus, greet Jesus as "the son of David" and "he who comes in the name of the Lord" (v. 9).

When Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, people responded very differently, depending on who they thought he was. The Judeans were expecting a different Messiah, one more like David, a warrior king. So, they do not accept that this man, who has been healing, proclaiming the Kingdom, and who is now riding on a humble donkey, could possibly be the Messiah, the awaited king.

When you think about it, it's the same for the worldwide Anglican Communion. There is one role, one honour, one seat, that has always been filled by a man. Nothing else was possible. But there was a seismic shift this week, that not everyone in the Anglican Communion has accepted.

I am speaking of course, the Archbishop of Canterbury. This last Wednesday was a historic day for our church; Dame Sarah Mullally was installed as Archbishop of Canterbury. Many said it would never be possible that a woman could become the leader of the worldwide Anglican Church. And there remain some who, even now, don't accept her in this role. But chains need to be broken, glass ceilings splintered. There was a social media post this week that says what many of us thought:

'Something happened inside Canterbury Cathedral that shattered 1,400 years of unbroken tradition, and the world collectively held its breath. Dame Sarah Mullally knocked three times with her staff on the great west door of England's most sacred cathedral, and when local schoolchildren opened it, and asked why she had come, she answered with words that will echo through eternity: "I am sent as archbishop to serve you, to proclaim the love of Christ, and with you, to worship and love him with heart and soul, mind and strength." In that single, hushed exchange, the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury, the first woman ever to hold a role stretching back to

Saint Augustine himself in 597 AD, stepped across a threshold no woman had crossed in fourteen hundred years of English Christianity.’

Yet Dame Sarah displayed the same humility as Jesus did, when Jesus entered Jerusalem on a lowly donkey, fit for a peasant and not for a king. Sarah said she came to serve, to proclaim Christ and to worship and love him with heart and soul, mind and strength.

In the same way, Jesus the Messiah, came to serve, to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to love him, even to accepting death on a cross. And Jesus is the one who came to save us. At the same time, he is the one who, for many in Jerusalem, was not the type of person who could possibly be the long-awaited Messiah. Not from the right town, or family or background. Certainly not like their hero, King David.

And that gives us all hope. We are chosen to be servants of God according to his will, not chosen according to the world’s rules. God chooses whom he will, to do his work in the world. And if we think we are not worthy, or not old enough, or young enough or any other factor we feel limits us from this, we are mistaken. No-one is excluded when God calls us to do his work in the world. And that is very good news.

And the Good news also for us at this Palm Sunday, is that Jesus did come. And he came as a servant, to proclaim the love of God and bring in the Kingdom of God. He came on a donkey, knowing that he was coming into Jerusalem to his inevitable death on a cross. Dying to redeem us.

Jesus came for all of us. He said, “⁷Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened (Matt 7:7-8).”

Dame Sarah also knocked – she knocked on the door of Canterbury Cathedral. She knocked three times and the door was opened to her. Her task is a momentous one, with the weight and responsibility for the whole Anglican Communion on her shoulders. But for Dame Sarah as it is for us, we are supported and uplifted in everything we do, by our loving, Lord Jesus, redeemer of the world.

Thanks be to God,

AMEN