

Palm Sunday 2026

I stand here in need of God's mercy and grace. May I speak in the name of the God who reveals Godself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Crucify him! Crucify him!

The same crowds shout in two very different ways in the space of less than a week. Great joy and welcome turns to a call for blood.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

These words we sing as part of the eucharistic prayer at the 10.30am service every Sunday, it is a way for us to honour Christ who comes to encounter us in bread and wine. Our sharing in Christ's body and blood is very closely related to the shouting of "Crucify him!", but it is not usually part of our liturgy. On Palm Sunday though in many churches, there is a dramatic reading of the Passion and the congregation reads the part of the crowd calling for Jesus' execution:

Crucify him! Crucify him!

It is not a comfortable thing for us to call out these words. In fact, I recently had a conversation with someone who told me they felt deeply uncomfortable about that moment in Palm Sunday services. And I can easily understand that. We would all like to think that we would not have been part of

the crowds calling for Jesus' execution. We would have been part of the crowds enthusiastically welcoming Jesus at his entry in to Jerusalem:

Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

But surely, we would not have turned around and changed our tune to

Crucify him! Crucify him!

in just a matter of days? Except, what if to call for the blood of that one man, who turned out to be less than we thought, could save our loved ones and ourselves from the possibility of yet another brutal Roman blood bath? When Jesus entered Jerusalem, we thought he finally was the one, the Messiah. He would come and liberate us from the oppressive regime of the Roman Empire. He would become our true king and we and our families would finally be free from the heavy taxes and the random cruelty of occupation. Our communities would finally be able to breath again and be able to rebuild all that was destroyed and suppressed by the occupying forces.

But he refused to become king, he did not start a liberating revolution. On the contrary, it is said that when they arrested him, he told even his closest followers not to fight back. No wonder they all deserted him. He clearly is no messiah. And now we have to worry that the Roman soldiers might brutally lash out against everyone who showed support for this man, whom we welcomed like a king. What happened a few days ago will easily look like a potential rebellion to the Romans and we know from experience that any rebellion is put down swiftly and with deadly force by the Roman army. It is better for us and our families to make it absolutely clear that we want nothing to do with this weak and useless would-be king and saviour.

Crucify him! Crucify him!

It made sense for the crowds to call for Jesus' blood; it was likely the prudent thing to do. It made sense for people to lash out, as their hopes and dreams of freedom, peace and justice were disappointed once again.

Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Crucify him! Crucify him!

The same crowds shouted in these two very different ways in response to Jesus in just a matter of days. We rejoice with the first and tend to recoil at the second. It is more comfortable to be in a judging place in relation to the crowds that shouted:

Crucify him! Crucify him!

But what if we ourselves are part of both crowds? What if we were full of hope and joy one day and just days after full of fear and disappointment? What would that make us? It would make us nonetheless precious beyond measure, beloved without conditions in the eyes of God. It makes us God's beloved creatures, for whom God's Son, having become human like us, died on a cross. Because God wanted for us, despite our worst and weakest moments, a future of hope without fear.
Amen.