

### Westerham Hill Letter No.3

Dear Friends,

This Sunday is Palm Sunday when, cheered on by Galilean crowds waving their palm branches and placing them in front of Jesus, we remember and celebrate Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. As the crowds welcome the Lord, they cry out various verses of prophetic scripture proclaiming that this Jesus of Nazareth is the long promised Son of David, God's King and Messiah. He was of course a different kind of king, not a worldly king riding on a great stallion, but a shepherd king and suffering servant who was coming to lay down his life to save his people from their sins. Let me suggest that this Sunday we covenant together to join in prayer at 11.00am at the throne of grace and bring our united prayers to our heavenly Father, that we read one of the gospel accounts (all four gospels record this event) and perhaps sing (in our hearts at least) the hymn 'All glory, laud and honour' I will put the first verse (and chorus) at the bottom of this letter. As next Sunday is Easter Sunday, I would suggest we join together in prayer and praise in the same way at our normal meeting time.

If we were meeting as usual this week our second bible reading would have come from 2 Timothy chapter 4 and verses 9-22. I find these verses so relevant to our present situation. Paul is in prison and perhaps many of you feel somewhat imprisoned in self isolation, though we do have the advantages of modern technology to keep in contact. Paul is also facing death and in these verses do we not feel both the human loneliness and disappointment of his situation with most of his friends and colleagues miles away on Christian service, or else having deserted him and perhaps the faith as well, while at the same time showing his confidence in his God and Saviour. It reminds me of the psalmists, who so frequently express their full range of emotions at their current situation to God, but also show their trust and confidence in his sovereign power and his faithfulness to his promises within the same psalm.

Let me add some other quick thoughts and notes:

- 1) Despite the pain of persecution and desertion, we see that the work of the gospel is going on throughout the empire, for God's purposes cannot be thwarted.
- 2) In times of trouble and testing the church of God is refined. The process may be painful, but the end result blessed and glorious.
- 3) There are always evil people at work opposing the gospel message. This should not surprise us, nor should it dishearten us, but we do need wisdom to know how best to respond.
- 4) God is with us even though we are apart, but does this passage not remind us that we are in fellowship and partnership in the work of the gospel. Now, if our enforced separation makes us more conscious of the great benefits of fellowship and motivates us not only to maintain it, but increase it in the future, it will be a source of great blessing.
- 5) Notice Mark who disappointed Paul in earlier mission work (Acts 13.13) is now fully back in the fold and is useful too Paul. If we fail, God is merciful and can bring us back to serve Him and can restore fellowship with other believers.

- 6) Notice too that Paul is expecting to face death fairly shortly, but he is confident that the Lord would rescue him from every evil attack (v18). The rescue, the ultimate rescue, is spiritual, when our Saviour who died and rose again for us brings us into his eternal kingdom safe and secure.
- 7) Lastly God's grace be with you (v22) is in the plural. It is for us too!

Let us remember in our prayers this week:

- 1) All those who work in the health and care sectors having to make difficult decisions and perhaps costly decisions in terms of their own well being. This will include those within our own fellowship who give care to the vulnerable.
- 2) Remember those of our brothers and sisters who like Paul are in prison for their faith. In many countries prisons are not safe places at the best of time, but certainly not with the virus around.
- 3) Let's pray too for those in authority over us, often having to make difficult decisions without sufficient information to go on. Now is the time to seek wisdom from above.
- 4) Many people in the media have mentioned in one way or another how helpless they feel and how, as the Americans would say, 'when everything can turn on a dime'. Let us pray that this fear and uncertainty will lead many to seek their hope in the God who never changes and knows the end from the beginning, while it is still the day of grace.

All glory, laud and honour to Thee, Redeemer King,  
To whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring  
Thou art the King of Israel, Thou David's royal Son,  
Who in the Lord's name comest, the King and blessed one.

Kevin