

Holy Week

Joseph Stalin, the Soviet dictator, died following a massive seizure brought on by a fit of rage during a heated argument at a meeting in the Kremlin. As he crashed to the floor unconscious, a man called Lavrentio Beria, a member of the inner circle, himself a cruel and evil man, began to dance around Stalin's body shouting, "We're free at last! Free at last!" As Stalin received medical treatment, he momentarily stirred and opened his eyes. At once Beria stopped his celebrations, dropped to his knees and began to kiss Stalin's hand with all the supposed grief of a loyal supporter.

How fickle are people? How easily they change their opinions!

The crowds on Palm Sunday were right behind Jesus, well most of them. Exalting Him as their King! But that was to quickly change when Jesus cleansed the Temple and immediately there was a change of opinion.

Then at the Passover when Jesus shared bread and wine, and spoke of his sacrifice and that the bread and wine are symbols of his body and blood, there were mixed emotions. Some were willing to die with him, while Judas wanted to betray him.

This week, more than any other week of the year, Holy Week, is a time of mixed emotions. Holy Week invites us to enter a journey. A journey which is real and challenging. A journey which takes God to the cross.

Pilgrimages have always been popular and the recent pilgrimage that's been shown on television, following St Columba's footsteps is showing a lot of interest as a small group of celebrities walk together and discuss issues about faith.

Holy Week is an opportunity for us all to go on pilgrimage. To use our church services as an opportunity to take time each evening of the week and reflect upon the different events of Holy Week.

Like two bookends, we have the praise of Palm Sunday and the exaltation of the Resurrection but in between those two important days, lies a valley of darkness and shadows. From Monday to Saturday, we have Jesus going through the depths of suffering and rejection, nailed to a cross and crowned with thorns.

Holy Week is all about God entering our suffering and going to the depths of pain and rejection for us.

At our Lent Bible study last week, one of our members explained what the cross meant to them and that was God saying to the world, this is how much I love you.

It's a lovely thought, that the Eternal God, took on human flesh and died our death on a barbaric cross, to demonstrate his great love for this sinful and often cruel world.

So come and journey this week into the depths of this love and discover more about this love that was poured out for you and me.

Today is known as both Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday, we began this service with Palm branches cheering on Jesus and so we come to this part of the service now to take time to remember that he loves us all so much, and that the cross is the symbol of his love for us.

Let us sing together, hymn 374, *From heaven you came helpless babe, entered our world your glory veiled... This is our God, the servant King.*