

PSALM 24 verses 1 – 10

¹ The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;

² for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.

³ Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place?

⁴ The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god.

⁵ They will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God their Saviour.

⁶ Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, God of Jacob.

⁷ Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.

⁸ Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.

⁹ Lift up your heads, you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.

¹⁰ Who is he, this King of glory? The LORD Almighty – He is the King of glory.

JOHN 12 verses 12 – 19

¹² The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. ¹³ They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting,

'Hosanna!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Blessed is the king of Israel!'

¹⁴ Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written:

¹⁵ 'Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt.'

¹⁶ At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realise that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.

¹⁷ Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. ¹⁸ Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. ¹⁹ So the Pharisees said to one another, 'See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!'

“NOT WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR”

READING: *John 12 verses 12-19*

Formed in Dublin in 1976, U2 fronted by lead singer “Bono”, has become one of the most popular and successful rock groups. Over those years there have been many stories relating to Bono’s Christian faith and it has caused much discussion as to whether this is true or a publicity gimmick, but that is not for us to judge. One of the group’s songs from their 1987 album “The Joshua Tree” is a song entitled “I still haven’t found what I’m looking for” in which Bono tells of all his experiences in life, but still hasn’t found what he’s looking for. He’s climbed the highest mountains, scaled city walls, had physical relationships, and says that he’s even spoken with the tongue of angels. But he still hasn’t found what he’s looking for. Then he says something even more interesting. He says that he believes in the “Kingdom come” and goes on to say, “You broke the bonds and you loosed my chains. Carried the cross of my shame. You know I believe it.” But continues, “but I still haven’t found what I’m looking for.” Which is quite a sad statement. To have a head knowledge that Jesus died on the cross to break bonds and loose chains and bear shame, to have that head knowledge and still say, “I still haven’t found what I’m looking for.” That is sad. But then again, how many people are like that? People who have an understanding of Jesus. They know the Bible stories. They know the basics of the Gospel and the Christian faith. But that’s not really what they’re looking for. They’re looking for something else. Just like Bono, they still haven’t found what they’re looking for.

Earlier in *John chapter 6* we read of the occasion when Jesus fed 5000 men, with additional women and children, with 5 bread rolls and 2 fish. After performing this miracle and everyone was well fed, Jesus became aware that there was a stirring amongst the people to make him king, but knowing that this was not part of his mission, he withdrew to the mountains out of the way of the people. The people wanted to make Jesus king, but He wasn’t going to have anything to do with the idea because they wanted to make Jesus the wrong kind of king. They thought they had found what they were looking for. They were wrong. They were looking for the wrong thing. They were looking for a king, but they were looking for the wrong kind of king. They were looking for a king that would fill their stomachs who would grant them their 3 wishes, meeting their material and physical desires. By witnessing his healing powers, some were looking for a king who would heal their bodies. It’s one thing to be hungry. But it’s a whole other thing to be sick.

They were also looking for a king who would deliver them. It was approaching the time of the Passover festival, a time of heightened nationalism, a time when the Roman authorities knew there would be an uprising that needed putting down. The Passover, a commemoration of the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, with the remembrance of God’s promise, through the prophets, of a coming deliverer. One who would rid them of their Roman overlords and make them a free nation once again. Could this miracle working man be God’s anointed? Definitely yes! But he was not quite what they were looking for. They were looking for a king based on what he could do for them, but what Jesus came to do, was very different to what they thought.

The entry into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday, heightened the expectations of the people. They cried out “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel!” These cries of expectancy, of hope would soon change by the end of the week when some of those same voices would be crying out “Crucify him! Crucify him!” In the space of a few days, these same people would be echoing the words which Bono and U2 would sing centuries later “we still haven’t found what we are looking for!”

Their perceptions of divine provision, of healing, of deliverance were very different to the provision, healing and deliverance, Jesus brought with him and offered to the people. Each year we read this account. Each year we visualise the excitement of the people. We can almost imagine the cries of the crowds, feel the sense of expectation, of hope. Surely the time had come for Israel to be free? But the kind of king the people longed for and expected, was not the King who had come. What

they hoped he would give to the people fell far short of what he would actually offer to them. The deliverance and freedom they longed for, fell far short of the deliverance and freedom Jesus would achieve for them. So, in the space of a few days their hopes would be dashed. The King had come, but he was not what they were looking for. No great warrior, but a man of peace – yet who would fight the greatest battle in history. A Messiah, a deliverer who would not rid them of the Romans, but seemingly surrender himself to them, be beaten, humiliated and crucified – yet through whose death and resurrection would come a freedom greater than they could imagine.

Whilst having my first COVID jab this week, I was “jabbed” by a nurse who started a conversation with me by saying “isn’t it strange how God does not always seem to answer our prayers the way we want, or think He should?” What an opening! I totally agreed with her, and who amongst us wouldn’t. As the conversation went on, she was not one who was saying that she hadn’t found what she was looking for, but that it made her trust in the sovereign will of God, that He knew what was best, even if it was not what she wanted. How true is that of us. This past year has been a truly horrible year for many. Any people have prayed like they have never prayed before. Some have experienced the disappointment of, seemingly, “unanswered prayer”. Yet, as I have often alluded to, God has still been at work. He hasn’t given up on us. In asking for healing, many have experienced loss. In asking for deliverance from lockdown, we have experienced new lockdowns. In trusting for provision of daily needs, some have experienced more need. Yet, even in those trying times, God has been there – providing comfort and strength, providing a sense of His presence in fear and loneliness, giving us “our daily bread” – Jehovah Jireh, God who provides through the generosity and thoughtfulness of others.

So, today as we join with the crowds in Jerusalem once again on another Palm Sunday, our question is, “what kind of king are you looking for?” If we are only looking for a king who will meet our physical desires; only looking for a king who will heal our sickness and make you feel physically well; only looking for a king who will deliver us from whatever difficulty we might find ourselves in; then we may not find what we are looking for. But, if we are looking for a king who will be our Lord, our Saviour, one who knows our needs and acts as He sees best, rather than what we want, then we will find what we are looking for. In Matthew chapter 7 verses 7 and 8 Jesus said, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you: For every one who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”

The great crowd in our passage this morning was seeking a deliverer. But they were seeking Him for the same reasons that many people today are seeking Him. They were seeking Him only as a convenient accessory to make their lives a little bit better. Jesus will not be a convenient accessory. He will not be an add-on. Jesus is already King. He wants us to seek Him as such. May we seek Jesus as our King this morning. When we do, then we will most definitely find what we are truly looking for.

“I STILL HAVEN'T FOUND WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR” sung by U2

I have climbed the highest mountains
I have run through the fields
Only to be with you
Only to be with you

I have run, I have crawled
I have scaled these city walls
These city walls
Only to be with you

But I still haven't found
What I'm looking for
But I still haven't found
What I'm looking for

I have kissed honey lips
Felt the healing in her fingertips
It burned like fire
This burning desire

I have spoke with the tongue of angels
I have held the hand of a devil
It was warm in the night
I was cold as a stone

But I still haven't found
What I'm looking for
But I still haven't found
What I'm looking for

I believe in the Kingdom Come
Then all the colors will bleed into one
Bleed into one
But yes, I'm still running

You broke the bonds
And you loosed the chains
Carried the cross of my shame, of my shame
You know I believe it

But I still haven't found
What I'm looking for
But I still haven't found
What I'm looking for

But I still haven't found
What I'm looking for
But I still haven't found
What I'm looking for