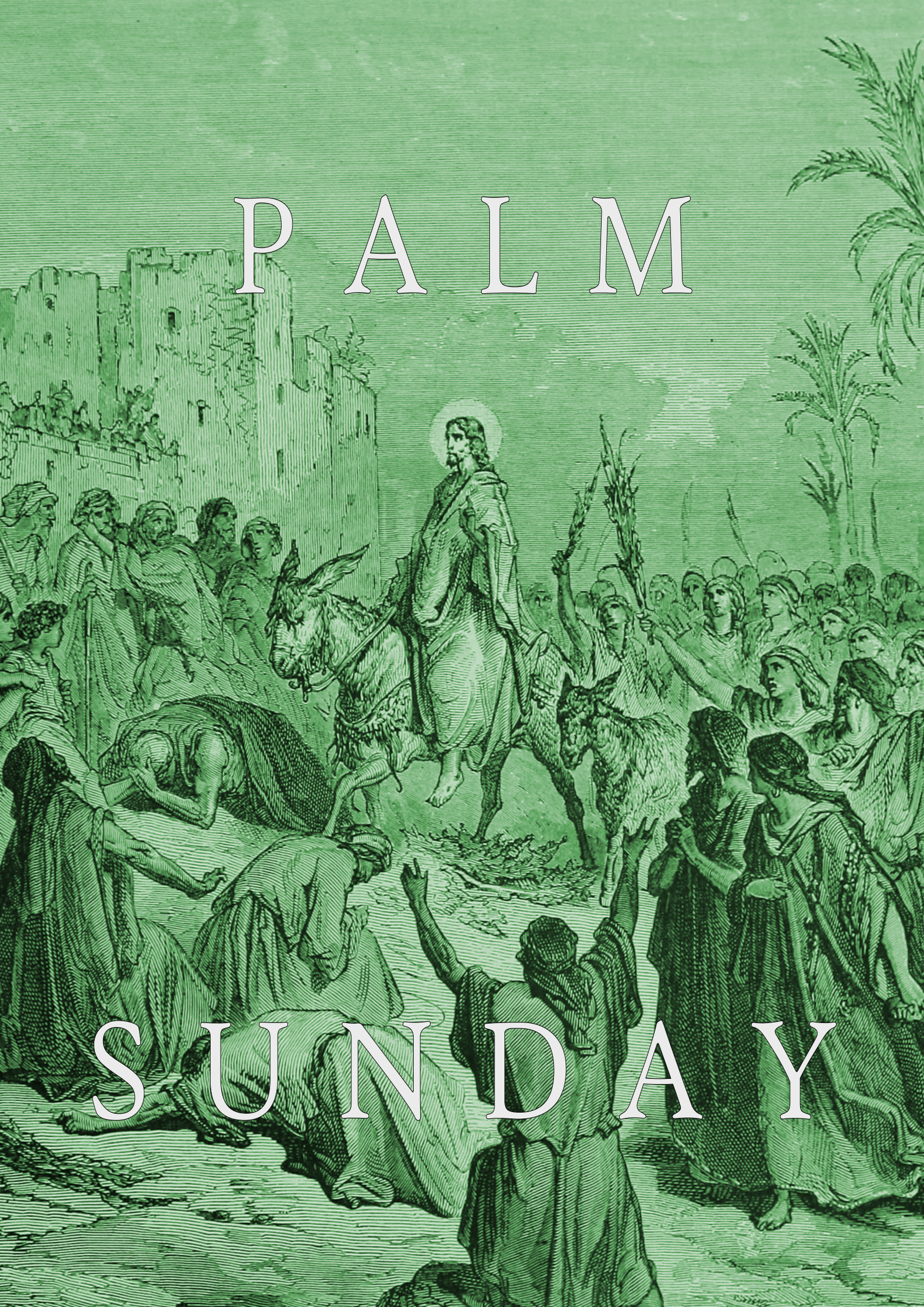


PALM



SUNDAY

TODAY'S CROWD IS TOMORROW'S MOB

This day is Palm Sunday, the day when we remember Jesus Christ riding into Jerusalem. The Gospel authors tell us of a journey that fulfils the prophecies of old:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
righteous and having salvation is he,
humble and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Zechariah 9:9

Jesus knew what he was doing when he rode into Jerusalem on that donkey, he knew that the crowds would see him and acknowledge him as king, the actions of the crowd confirm this.

THE CROWD

The crowds grabbed palm branches and their cloaks and threw them before Jesus' path; the crowd had laid out a royal red carpet like one you might see at a coronation. But more than that, they affirm Jesus as saviour in the words they use, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Lk. 19:38). It is a phrase found in Psalm 118, a psalm that rejoices in the ultimate triumph of God over all. In it, God's people call out for a saviour (Ps. 118:25) and in response God saves them, not through a miracle, but through a person, God's Messiah, the one sent to rescue God's people. In response to the coming of the Messiah God's people cry out "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Ps. 118:26). The crowd outside Jerusalem declare Jesus as the Messiah! No wonder the Pharisees want Jesus to keep them quiet! (Lk. 19:39).

But Jesus does not stop them. Instead he says "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out" (Lk. 19:40). Jesus is the

Messiah and Palm Sunday is the day that this revealed to the world. If the crowds did not do it, then he will see to it that nature itself testifies to this truth.

THE MOB

But, although the crowd wanted a Messiah and salvation the problem was they did not want the salvation Jesus offered. They wanted to be saved from Roman oppression and so they wanted a Messiah who would march into the city and free the Jews from Roman tyranny. The people of Jerusalem wanted a Messiah like Moses, one who would lead them on a new Exodus, freeing them from their oppressor by any means necessary. Instead, by Friday, they had a bloodied, beaten, and arrested king.

The cries of the crowd that declared Jesus as the Messiah had within a week turned into the shouts of a mob crying out “crucify him!” The crowds reject the messiah they welcomed on Palm Sunday and choose to free a ‘messiah’ more in-keeping with their own views - Barabbas, an rebel against the Roman authorities (Lk. 23:18-25).

THE SLIPPERY SLOPE

And so the joy of Palm Sunday, the enthusiasm and passion of the crowd is bittersweet, because we know that it is short-lived, that the fickleness and selfishness of the crowd will lead ultimately to a rejection of God’s Messiah.

This is where Palm Sunday challenges us. We hear the shouts of the crowd and see ourselves there alongside them praising Jesus and acknowledging him as our Saviour. But is this who we are? Do our lives, our words, our actions, reflect a belief of Jesus Christ as our Saviour? Or have we, like the mob on Good Friday, sought salvation that is more inline with how we want to live? Being a follower of Christ in this world can often be like being on a slippery slope, taking small steps away from who Christ is and towards who we want him to be. Palm Sunday reminds us of who we should be.

Holy Week is an opportunity to examine our faith, to dwell deeply

on God's word and to be transformed so that our lives are more like the crowd, and less like the mob, always trusting that whenever we slip down that slope, we will never be lost completely for "the steps of a man are established by the Lord, when he delights in his way; though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the LORD upholds his hand" (Ps. 37: 23-24).