

Palm Sunday 2026
Isaiah 50:4-9a
Philippians 2:5-11
Matthew 26:14-end of 27

There is a wonderful moment in my favourite TV series, *The West Wing*, when the President asks one of his staff to be his new Chief of Staff. In typical President Bartlet style, he doesn't approach it head on, instead, he says, "CJ there's something I need you to do for me," "Sir?" she asks, "Jump off a cliff." It is an acknowledgment that in the holding together of government, you are at times in free fall, dealing with unknown and unexpected situations. I've never bungee jumped or abseiled but I guess that there is a moment when you have to step off the sure ground and give into the rope.

Palm Sunday is exactly that. In the drama of palms, processions and passion narratives we are brought to the edge of the cliff and invited to jump off. To allow ourselves to be caught by the oncoming liturgy in ways that we cannot know or expect.

In Matthew's version of the Passion, as the crowd approaches led by Judas, he has Jesus say, "the hour is at hand ... get up, let us be going." Our two other readings this morning remind us that the preparation for this hour has been a long time coming.

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Isaiah takes us back to the 8th century BC, to prophets, priests and kings and tells us of a suffering servant who will bring God's people home. Paul, writing to the Christians in Philippi, probably using a well-known hymn, takes us even further back into the life of the Trinity. The pre-existent second person of the Trinity, jumps off a cliff, empties himself of the fulness of his divinity and becomes human. Where will that lead?

We have the answer here in the Passion Narrative, the hour is at hand, get up let us be going. In a sense, Jesus has already said get up let us be going by becoming human, we'll think more about that on Good Friday. That's what has brought him to this hour.

Those words echo out from Matthew's gospel to us here this morning, separated by time and distance but not by intent. The hour is at hand, get up let us be going.

During the Triduum to come we will journey with the Welsh poet priest R S Thomas. This morning we begin that journey with his poem The Bright Field.

*I have seen the sun break through
to illuminate a small field
for a while, and gone my way
and forgotten it. But that was the pearl
of great price, the one field that had
treasure in it. I realize now
that I must give all that I have
to possess it. Life is not hurrying
on to a receding future, nor hankering after
an imagined past. It is the turning
aside like Moses to the miracle
of the lit bush, to a brightness
that seemed as transitory as your youth
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.*

Life is not hurrying on to a receding future; it is the turning aside. We can't hurry on from Palm Sunday to Easter Day, we have to turn aside, like Moses, to the mystery of Christ's passion. We have to spend time among the disciples, among the crowds, among the accusers, among the mourners, among

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the defeated before we can spend time at the empty tomb. We have to jump off the cliff and see where this journey over this week will take us, not hurrying on, nor looking back.

The hour is at hand, get up, let us be going, come, jump off a cliff.