

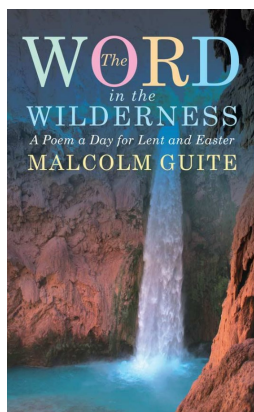
witness in the birth of the sacraments is both a human drama and a divine act of new creation. A sacrament is 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace' and it is certainly true that every word and gesture here, and each of the four elements, becomes a sign of God's redemptive love reaching us in Christ, from the cleansing water to the breaking and sharing of the bread and wine.

It is the Word himself who says of that bread, 'This is my Body': the same Word through whose utterance everything that is becomes itself. When this Word speaks, then something substantial, and new, is brought into existence. From his words in that room, to his Word dwelling richly in our hearts, the novum mandatum, the new commandment from which this day takes its name, springs into being. So too does the new reality of our communion with him physically in his body and his blood. There is on this day, therefore, a renewal of incarnation, an opening out of its fuller meaning. The body and blood he took for our sakes, woven in Mary's womb, is shared with us as he shares our nature, extended to and through us, so that we too are Christ's Body. Amazingly and wonderfully, he who took our human nature shares with us his

divine nature. The Spirit is here for us to breathe, the substance of the true God is there with us, not high and inaccessible as Isaiah found it when he saw the Lord mighty and lifted up, but close, humbled below us, kneeling at our feet to wash us, or broken and placed into our hands to feed us.

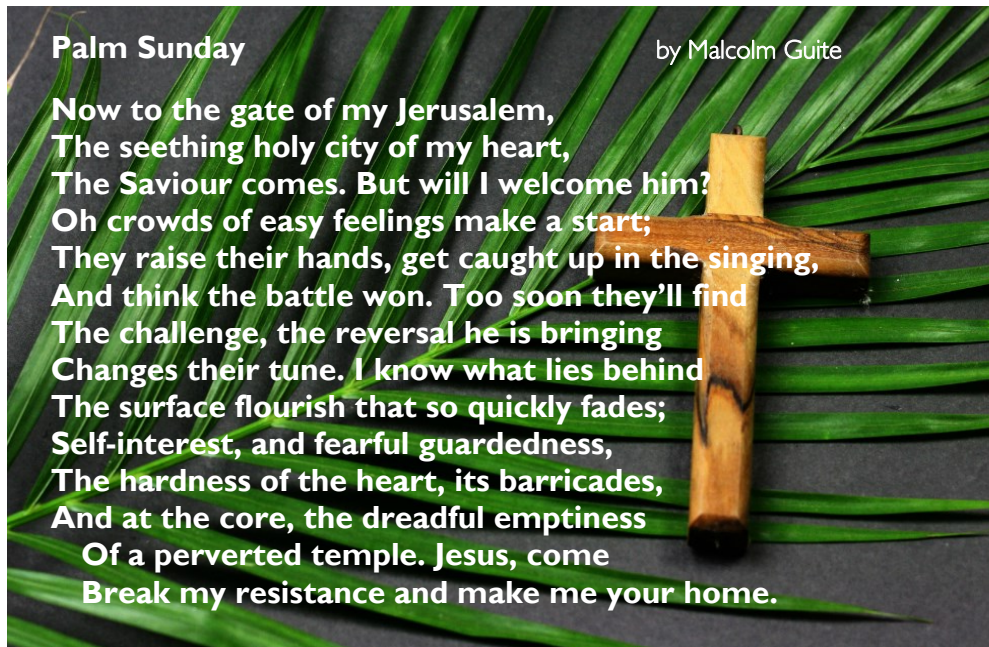
And all this happens 'on the night that he was betrayed'. It is not when we have already purged ourselves and attained some long-sought moral height that these things are offered to us. It is here and now, in the confusion and ambiguity of our daily life, in the midst of our darkness and disloyalty, here where we need him most, where he meets us: Though we betray him, though it is the night. He meets us here and loves us into light.

Guite, Malcolm.
"Word in the Wilderness".
Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd.
2014.



NAMBUCCA VALLEY ANGLICANS SUNDAY PAPERS

PALM SUNDAY
10.04.2022



Palm Sunday

by Malcolm Guite

**Now to the gate of my Jerusalem,
The seething holy city of my heart,
The Saviour comes. But will I welcome him?
Oh crowds of easy feelings make a start;
They raise their hands, get caught up in the singing,
And think the battle won. Too soon they'll find
The challenge, the reversal he is bringing
Changes their tune. I know what lies behind
The surface flourish that so quickly fades;
Self-interest, and fearful guardedness,
The hardness of the heart, its barricades,
And at the core, the dreadful emptiness
Of a perverted temple. Jesus, come
Break my resistance and make me your home.**

PALM SUNDAY

Holy Week is perhaps its own season, distinct from Lent, the week for which Lent is preparing us and towards which it is pointing. So we have come to the end and edge of our wilderness journey, out beyond Jordan and back again, and now we find ourselves standing with another crowd of pilgrims, all preparing, on Palm Sunday, to enter Jerusalem. Between now and Maundy Thursday

I share a sequence of sonnets for Holy Week from my collection Sounding the Seasons. In composing these sonnets I had in mind that mysterious and beautiful phrase in the Psalms about the man 'in whose heart are the highways to Zion' (Psalm 84.5). I wanted to develop the hint offered in that phrase that there is an inner as well as an outer Jerusalem, and that therefore the events of Holy Week are both about Jesus' outward, visible

and historical entry into Jerusalem and what he did there and then, and also about his entry into the inner Jerusalem, the 'seething holy city' as I have called it, of our own hearts. I wanted to explore what it might mean to say that we have our own gates, walls and watchtowers, that somewhere within us there is both a temple and a seat of judgement, and both might need to be challenged and cleansed. And I wanted to imagine that within us there is a 'house at Bethany', space for a more intimate encounter with Jesus, for healing, anointing and blessing.

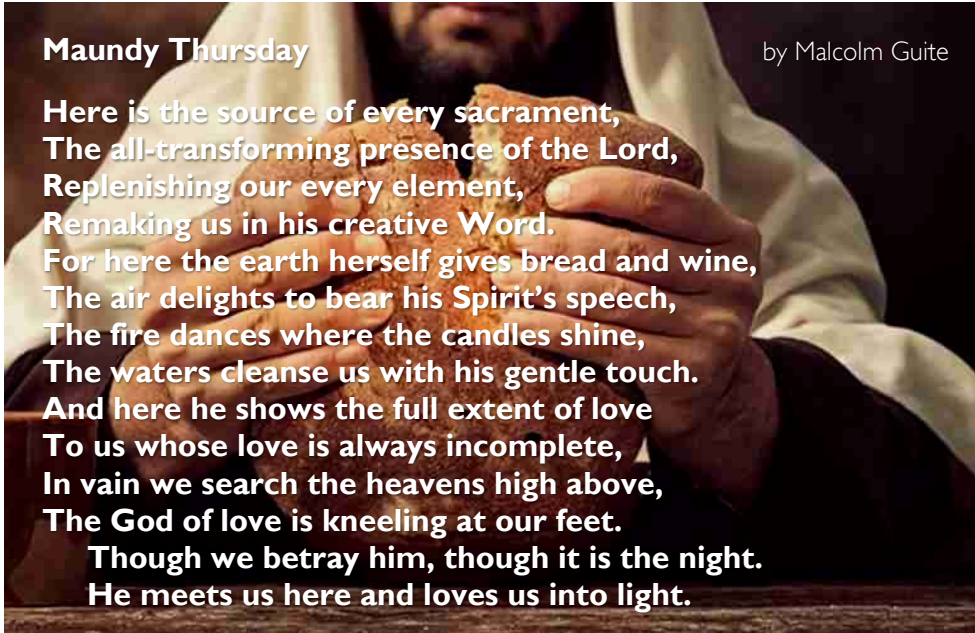
So in today's poem I let the outer story of Palm Sunday pose some questions for my inner life. What would it really mean to welcome Jesus as King into the Zion of one's own heart? How is the city already occupied and governed? Who is in charge now and how is power divided? Is there an uneasy compromise in my own inner Jerusalem, such as there was in the outer Jerusalem of Jesus' time? Is there a grand-looking temple where lots of time-worn rituals can be repeated as long as it makes no trouble for the secular administration? And that secular administration – the bit of me that makes the day-to-day financial decisions, about who should have my time, for how long and for how

much, the administration that decides what to buy and what to sell, what to acquire and what to lose – for whom is it really working? Am I in charge there? Or is my governing ego, like Pontius Pilate, really and fearfully beholden to another power structure? Are the big corporations and their advertisers actually running the show, manipulating my sense of what I need? Perhaps the Pilate of our little ego is in fact working for their empire. And what about the general population of my heart? The crowds of feelings and memories and thoughts, caught between the temple and the court, swaying this way and that, are not sure who to follow, or where their true loyalty lies. Can I invite Jesus in to all of that? And if I do, what will happen?

Guite, Malcolm. "Word in the Wilderness".
Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd.

Maundy Thursday

by Malcolm Guite



**Here is the source of every sacrament,
The all-transforming presence of the Lord,
Replenishing our every element,
Remaking us in his creative Word.
For here the earth herself gives bread and wine,
The air delights to bear his Spirit's speech,
The fire dances where the candles shine,
The waters cleanse us with his gentle touch.
And here he shows the full extent of love
To us whose love is always incomplete,
In vain we search the heavens high above,
The God of love is kneeling at our feet.
Though we betray him, though it is the night.
He meets us here and loves us into light.**

MAUNDY THURSDAY

There is so much happening on this day, so many threads of connection flowing to and from this deep source of love and gospel vision. My sonnet for this central and sacramental day can only suggest one or two of them. We spent time in Passiontide reflecting, through several poems, on the garden of Gethsemane, so in this poem I want to take us back to a little earlier in the day, to those all-transforming events in the upper room. The meditation I present in this sonnet is centred, like the C. S. Lewis poem we looked at earlier, on the ancient idea of the four elements of earth, air, water and fire.

Everything, ourselves included, was held to be a subtle combination of these four essential elements of creation, and it struck me as I contemplated the events of Maundy Thursday, with the foot-washing and the first communion, that all these elements of the old creation are taken up by Jesus and transformed in the making of the new. Jesus is both the fully human companion, cleansing his friends with a gentle touch, sharing his last supper with them, showing the fullness of his love, and also the Word, God in his full creative and shaping power, the One in and through whom everyone in that room and every element of the world is sustained in the beauty and particularity of its being. What we