

## Homily

Passion Sunday (John 12: 20-33)

*Rev Philippa White, Precentor Christ Church Cathedral*

+May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight,  
O Lord, our Strength and our Salvation.

This time last year, we were hurtled into a kind of life we had never imagined.  
Those of us with school-age children suddenly found ourselves teaching them at home.  
Those of us who normally go out to work suddenly found ourselves learning how to work  
from home – with partners, children, flatmates all trying to work from home too.  
Those of us who go to church suddenly found ourselves unable even to enter the building.  
And for some of us it's been still more challenging – through shielding, furlough, illness, or  
risky work.  
And of course we had to learn a new vocabulary. Key worker, bubble, self-isolation. Zoom!  
And with it, a new way of being.

Is it any wonder that so many of us have felt adrift?

And it's from that adriftness, however it has been and is present for you, that I invite you to  
hear again the Gospel message, the words of Jesus which Carol has read for us.

I invite you to enter the story in your mind's eye – to imagine you're there.  
There in Jerusalem, for the festival.

A foreigner.  
You've come a long way.  
And you're trying to get someone's attention.

'Sir!'  
Someone had pointed him out to you as you'd arrived. One of the men closest to the centre  
of the crowd. 'That's Philip,' they'd said, 'he speaks your language. He's the one you want.'

So you'd waited. Waited and waited as the sun grew hotter and the crowds louder, as the  
festival preparations around you intensified. It was weird to be in a crowd again. After the  
long journey, the long winter. After all that had happened. After the pain and the death.  
After...

... you shudder and stop your thought before it begins. It will all be all right, if you can just see  
Jesus.

'Sir!' you try again. 'Sir!'  
And Philip turns, looking quizzical.  
You'd had a speech prepared, but now you're so close it's gone. 'Sir,' you say helplessly again.  
'Sir, we want to see Jesus.'

He's gone – off to speak to another of the knot of disciples around the centre. You see them whispering, then pushing their way through.  
And then you see him. Jesus.  
Speaking to the disciples around him.  
Standing up and speaking to the crowd.

He's speaking Aramaic – but as you listen, suddenly he's speaking to you. You hear every word and understand it as if it's your own mother tongue.

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

Your shivers start again. You remember the long journey, the long winter. The fear. The pain. The grief.

You see Jesus – and Jesus sees you.  
And in the warmth of his voice and his gaze, you hear the promise that winter, fear, even death are not the ultimate reality.

For you have seen Jesus. And everything has changed.  
It's not all all right. But it's different. It's better. There is something about Jesus' promise that will stay.

Even when he's dragged out to be killed, his promise stays. 'If it dies, it bears much fruit.'  
And 'when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself.'  
And his words of love can fill you with hope.  
And he will rise.