

Reflection for Palm Sunday

Just last November Chris and I were in the Holy Land. It now seems a lifetime away. We went to the Mount of Olives and walked down into the Kidron Valley towards Jerusalem. What struck me at the time was just how close all these places were. We tend to think in terms of how long it takes to travel anywhere in a car. But in biblical times most people travelled on foot, or if they were very lucky, on a donkey. Down the Mount of Olives, across the valley, and into Jerusalem would take a couple hours on foot.



'Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. The Gold Dome of the Rock is where the temple was in ancient Jerusalem.'

Reflecting today on Jesus journey, people had been asking if he was going to attend the Festival of the Passover. They all knew how dangerous it was for him, that there was plotting to have him arrested.

He could easily have walked down quietly in the dark and very few people would have known he was there. But he didn't.

He could easily have walked down hidden in the crowds of people heading to Jerusalem for the Passover. But he didn't.

He stopped at Bethany, a few miles from the Mount of Olives and asked his disciples to fetch a donkey for him. And then he rode to the Mount of Olives and down in broad daylight, making it clear to anyone watching that he was on his way. The path down the Mount of Olives can easily be seen from Jerusalem, and the word would have gone round that he was coming. His followers rushed out to greet him with palms. The whole of Jerusalem knew he was coming.



'The Mount of Olives as seen from Jerusalem'.

As I reflected on this I wondered what Jesus was thinking. He knew what was ahead, he had been warning his disciples for days. But he didn't run or hide. He held his head up and did as his Father was asking of him. I thought of how many times I have hidden in the shadows, afraid to stand up and be counted. If we are to follow Jesus example we need to be seen and show that we are not afraid, particularly at the moment, with people in social isolation, afraid and sometimes feeling very much alone. We need to follow Jesus example, no matter what lies ahead, and trust in the Father, who will be will us no matter what we are going through.