



THE ARCHBISHOP
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In today's [Daily Telegraph](#) Archbishop Stephen writes about the undefended love of Christ. The article follows in full

On Palm Sunday, we remember Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Riding on a donkey to cries of "Hosanna!", Jesus entered the city, with palm leaves strewn across his path.

Across the country today, church services will mark the occasion by giving people their own palm—though not as the leaves that once welcomed Jesus as king. Instead, these palms will be folded into small, handheld crosses. Crosses which remind us that this part of the story does not end in worldly triumph – but in death and only from there to new life.

The crowds thought Jesus had come as a king to lead Israel against the Romans, but instead of power and glory, Jesus chose what appears to be ignominy and defeat. This seems nothing short of absurd.

However, on the cross, more than anywhere else, Jesus is demonstrating what God's power is actually like. Our human categories of power, those that come from position, ability, reputation, education and training, are limited and provisional. They shrink back when they see the power of love.

The crowds said of Jesus that "he taught as one who had authority". I think what they meant was authenticity, which of course, in every age, carries the greatest authority. What Jesus says is matched by what he does. His difficult teaching about going the second mile and loving your enemies and praying for those who persecute you is lived out. There is consistency.

Then, there is the power of undefended love.

In his passion and death, Jesus demonstrates a self-giving humility which, we discover, is the essence of divinity.

Divine power isn't quite the power that we thought it was or wanted it to be. It is humble. It is an embodiment of the "strength made perfect in weakness" that Paul speaks about (2 Cor 12. 9). The message of the cross is indeed "foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Cor 1.18)

It is the triumph of love. The power of the cross is not the power to overcome sin and evil by the exercise of greater strength or superior might, but the power of love to completely absorb and neutralise all that is thrown at it, even death itself. Christ forgives those who nail him to the cross. He reaches out to those who are crucified alongside him. He refuses to fight back. The crowds taunt him saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God." But he is actually saving everyone - by losing himself. He is authentically walking the second mile of undefended love that he says should be the mark of his followers.

The palm crosses we hold, remind us of taking up the cross of Christ every day. For this is the only way that hatred, oppression, self-righteousness, and the avarice that will swallow everything and everyone whole, will be defeated. It is the pattern of Christian discipleship.

When we say the Lord's Prayer we end by saying that power and glory belong to God, and we put ourselves in right relationship with God as children of God's kingdom.

We break free from the bonds of self-interest. We reclaim those values which help us look out for our neighbour, offer care in our communities as the Church does week in week out, and at the same time commit ourselves to re-build the international partnerships for social and economic well being and justice that our world is losing at the moment.

Hatred cannot win if we live lives of authentic, undefended loving. Or at least, just try. Which is the invitation of Palm Sunday. To hold a palm cross. To follow something other than yourself.

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