

Friends,

“Hosannah in the highest!”

“Hosannah to the Son of David!”

“Hail to the King of Israel.”

“The Messiah is coming, riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, just like Judah Maccabee who threw out the Seleucid overlords and restored worship to the temple.”

“Do you think this donkey-rider will do it for us and throw out the Romans?”

“Hooray! Hosannah! Hallelujah!”

We can imagine the joy, the excitement, the sense of hope. It has been 193 years since Judah Maccabee achieved the unthinkable, overthrowing the Seleucid empire and restoring worship in the temple. There are none living at the time of Jesus who can remember it. Nevertheless, the annual festival of Hannukah allows them to relive it each year, and 193 years is not that long. 193 years ago for us would be 1832, a year in which Charles Darwin began to sail “The Beagle” around the world thus developing his thinking towards the book “The Origin of Man”. In additions, “Les Sylphides”, a romantic opera by Filippo Taglioni premiered in Paris and Donizetti’s opera “L’elisir d’amore” premiered in Milan. All three works are still with us today. It is totally believable that the story of Judah Maccabee was at the forefront of the people’s minds as they gathered to welcome Jesus into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday.

The successful uprising that they imagined was not to be. Instead, there was to be failure, death and the ending of all hope. Then, of course, came the extraordinary events of Easter morning which re-wrote the script for what a successful “uprising” might mean and changed the behaviour of millions of people for millennia. In our day of dwindling Church attendance and loss of interest in faith, what might this story say to us about our thinking around “success” and how it might compare with God’s thinking?

God bless, Vicci