

Worship for March 28, 2021
Sixth Sunday in Lent - Palm Sunday
Pastor John

Greeting/Musical Welcome
“All Belong Here” (The Many)

Call to Worship (Unison)
From Psalm 118:1-2, 24-29

O give thanks to the Lord, for God is good; God’s steadfast love endures forever! Let Israel say, “God’s steadfast love endures forever.”

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Save us, we beseech you, O Lord! Blessed be the one who enters in the name of God. The Lord is God, who has caused light to shine upon us. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.

You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, I will extol you.

O give thanks to the Lord, for God is good; for God’s steadfast love endures forever!

Gathering Hymn - Hosanna, Loud Hosanna
New Century Hymnal #213

**You are invited to uphold and wave your palm on the 3rd and final verse. For those at home, wave your hand if so inclined!*

“Hosanna, loud hosanna,” the little children sang;
Through pillared court and temple, the lovely anthem rang;
To Jesus, who had blessed them close folded to his breast,
The children sang their praises, the simplest and the best.

From Olivet they followed a mid a cheering crowd,
The victor palm branch waving, and chanting clear and loud.
The one whom angels worship rode on in lowly state,
And glad to see the children, slowed down the donkey’s gait.

“Hosanna in the highest!” That ancient song is ours.
We hail our great Redeemer and sing with all our powers:
“Hosanna, Christ, we praise you with heart and life and voice.
Hosanna! In your presence forever we’ll rejoice!”

Opening Prayer (unison)

Sacred One, Source of our Salvation, you lure us out of the dull and destructive. You capture our attention with your love, turning us toward the gifts of heaven. With joy and expectation, we cry, “Hosanna!” Come and show us the way. Amen.

Meditation

We have gathered here, week after week, in person and online, but sharing a common quest for a deeper faith and a deeper experience of the divine. I invite you now to close your eyes and let go of the things that distract and concern you. Listen! The time is drawing near. Jesus is preparing to enter Jerusalem. How

will we greet him? Will we follow him all the way to the cross? There is no deeper mystery than this: that the light came into the world, became flesh, and dwelt among us. The light of the world is going out. What will we learn this year of the pandemic, in the dark night of the soul?

Loving God, there are so many choices before us every day—choices offered by our friends, our families, our culture, our own past. Some of them encourage the well-being of the earth, ourselves and our neighbors; others are destructive. Help us to distinguish between them. May we learn from the choices of Jesus and embody compassion, justice, and inclusion in all we say and do. Amen.

Scripture - Mark 11:1-11 - Inclusive Language Lectionary

Jesus enters Jerusalem amid shouts of the people.

And when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of the disciples, and said to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, “Why are you doing this?” say, “The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.”” And they went away, and found a colt tied at the door out in the open street; and they untied it. And those who stood there said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” And the disciples told them what Jesus had said; and they let the disciples go. And the disciples brought the

colt to Jesus, and threw their garments on it; and Jesus sat upon it. And many spread their garments on the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. And those who went before and those who followed cried out. "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the realm of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest!" And Jesus entered Jerusalem, and went into the temple; and having looked at everything, since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Sermon

In the book *The Last Week*, by Marcus Borg and John Crossan, we are given an image with which to begin our Holy Week journey. There were actually 2 processions going on during that Passover week.

From the east, a procession by the King of Peace at the same time that the Roman Empire's representative Pontius Pilate enters from the west. Pilate was draped in the gaudy glory of imperial power: horses, chariots, and gleaming armor. He moved in with the Roman army at the beginning of Passover week to make sure nothing got out of hand. He intended to "keep the peace" in the city because those Passover crowds always got a little rowdy. He rides in on a warhorse, just in case the flags and weapons and troops aren't intimidating enough.

On the other hand, we have Jesus in ordinary robe making his entrance riding a humble donkey, surrounded by his somewhat ragged group of followers, and we know that he doesn't keep the

same kind of peace Pilate and Rome intend—that sort of peace that benefits the empire and all those folks at the top. No, Jesus brings a different kind of peace—the peace that surpasses understanding, and much of what is about to unfold in the next few days will be the price he pays to bring it forth. His disciples, of course, have seen and experienced things that have changed and transformed their lives and have raised their hopes sky-high. Maybe they still aren't exactly sure what to hope for when their leader rides—of all things—a donkey. A humble work animal versus a grand warhorse. Of course, this particular donkey has never been ridden—such is the case for an animal that is used for sacred purposes—and THAT should get their attention. Something sacred is happening! Right before their eyes! And this is no triumphant warrior or conquering power coming into the holy city (or into our hearts). THIS is the King of Peace.

We have a clash of kingdoms: Caesar or Christ. Caesar's kingdom is based on domination and power, the kind of kingship Jesus refuses when tempted in the wilderness. The kingdom of God Jesus preached is based on justice, mercy, and the love of God.

In our reading today, I think it is interesting to note that we do not know which disciples were given the task of “borrowing the colt.” This particular passage does not give us any hint about who those folks might have been. But we do know that Jesus gave them directions and they followed. Jesus seems to know that all of this scenario will work out the way that it does.

Following Christ is a vulnerable choice. Following Christ is about following his example. How that is played out in our lives is unique for all of us. But more times than not, it looks like carefully and lovingly shepherding a relationship with those closest to us. Easily missed, but maybe the foundation of this entire Gospel episode is the very relationship that Christ had with the disciples.

Jesus “sends” them and tells them that they’ll find a colt tied that has never been ridden. These details suggest that either Jesus willed this with his words, or he knew enough about the community to know that one might find a colt to that description there. But even with these strange directions, the disciples decide to follow his directions. And before they can complain that “this is a strange task”, he tells them what to say if anyone questions them.

This is friendship. This is intimacy. This is relationship. Jesus and the disciples have a strong relationship by this point. After all, they’ve been on preaching tours, engaged in theological debate, shared meals, talked about the meaning of multiple parables, endured a storm, witnessed people return to life after being rumored dead, and healed multiple people together. They’ve been through a lot together. One reason the disciples do what Jesus said is that Jesus has proven himself trustworthy.

We cannot expect people to follow us if we do not make the risk worthwhile. We can not convince folks into following us by simply saying, “The Lord needs it so.”

Perhaps those two chosen disciples had questions. Maybe they wondered why Jesus needed an unridden colt. But even with those questions, they decided to take the risk and to carry out the task anyway.

Florestine Reville says, “perhaps we are here to teach the world something about tolerance, patience, endurance, generosity, and about overcoming insurmountable odds.”

This week as we journey on our way to Jerusalem...maybe even stumbling, wailing, or lamenting along the way...we can rely on God’s grace to carry us. Today, we can make a way for Jesus, spreading our garments on the road, waving or even walking on the palms, and singing our songs of praise.

May we trust the unknown future to the God who sustains us in every holy week of our lives. Thanks be to God!

Pastoral Prayer/Lord’s Prayer

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

“With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to you; I will give thanks to your name, O Lord for it is good.” (Psalm 54:6)

During this time of isolation and need, the work of the church goes forward and is more important than ever. For those who attend in person, there is a freewill offering plate at the back of the sanctuary. Please honor physical distancing and turn taking as you approach. Both pledge payments and freewill offerings are also welcomed at:

St. Paul’s UCC

Attn: Julie Mathes

115 S. Cedar St.

Madrid, IA. 50156

Offertory Response

Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

Praise God, all creatures here below!

Praise God above ye heavenly host!

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! Amen.

Offertory Prayer

Closing Hymn - You Are Salt for the Earth, O People

New Century Hymnal #181

**You are salt for the earth, O people: salt for the reign of God!
Share the flavor of life, O people: life in the City of God.**

Refrain:

Bring forth the reign of mercy, bring forth the reign of peace;
Bring forth the reign of justice, bring forth the City of God!

You are a light on the hill, O people: light for the City of God!
Shine so holy and bright, O people: shine for the City of God!

Refrain

You are a seed of the Word, O people: bring forth the reign of
God!
Seeds of mercy and seeds of justice, grow in the City of God!

Refrain

We are a blessed and a pilgrim people: bound for the reign of
God!
Love our journey and love our homeland: love is the City of God!

Refrain

Blessing/Benediction (unison)

Moving through the gentle and angry, the humble and bold, the
hopeful and resolute, Christ makes known the power of God.

It does not trickle down from on high but rises up among us:
In the streets. From deep within. Among all the creatures of the
earth.

Let us go, declaring Hosanna!

Salvation is among us.

The Lord bless you and keep you

The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

The peace of the earth be with you

The peace of the heavens too

The peace of the rivers be with you

The peace of the oceans too

Deep peace falling over you

God's peace growing in you

Closing Announcements

*Opening Prayer and Blessing/Benediction from *Enfleshed*, 2021 (Paid subscription).

**Meditation from *Before the Amen*, Maren Tirabassi & Maria Tirabassi, Editors, The Pilgrim Press, 2007.g