

March 28<sup>th</sup> Worship  
Palm Sunday

**Introduction to the Day**

This week, the center of the church's year, is one of striking contrasts: Jesus rides into Jerusalem surrounded by glorious shouts of "HOSANNA! (Save now)" John's gospel presents us with a humble king, riding the colt of a donkey. John's gospel points to the following that he has created, and the fear of loss of status it creates for the pharisees. John's gospel gives us a subtle hint of what is to come. We enter this holy week thirsty for the completion of God's astonishing work.

**Processional Texts**

**Zechariah 9:9-10**

<sup>9</sup>Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!  
Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!  
Lo, your king comes to you;  
triumphant and victorious is he,  
humble and riding on a donkey,  
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.  
<sup>10</sup>He<sup>[a]</sup> will cut off the chariot from Ephraim  
and the war-horse from Jerusalem;  
and the battle bow shall be cut off,  
and he shall command peace to the nations;  
his dominion shall be from sea to sea,  
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

**Psalm 118:25-29**

<sup>25</sup>Save us, we beseech you, O LORD!  
O LORD, we beseech you, give us success!  
<sup>26</sup>Blessed is the one who comes in the name of  
the LORD.<sup>[a]</sup>  
We bless you from the house of the LORD.  
<sup>27</sup>The LORD is God,  
and he has given us light.  
Bind the festal procession with branches,  
up to the horns of the altar.<sup>[b]</sup>  
<sup>28</sup>You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;  
you are my God, I will extol you.  
<sup>29</sup>O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.

**Prayer of the Day**

Almighty and everlasting God, who sent your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take upon himself our flesh, and to suffer death upon the Cross, that all people should follow the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may both follow the example of his patience, and also be made partakers of his Resurrection; through the same, your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. AMEN

**Gospel – John 12:12-24**

<sup>12</sup>The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup>They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting,  
"Hosanna!"  
"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"  
"Blessed is the king of Israel!"  
<sup>14</sup>Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written:  
<sup>15</sup>"Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion;  
see, your king is coming,  
seated on a donkey's colt."

<sup>16</sup> At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.

<sup>17</sup> Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. <sup>18</sup> Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. <sup>19</sup> So the Pharisees said to one another, “See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!”

<sup>20</sup> Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. <sup>21</sup> They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” <sup>22</sup> Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

<sup>23</sup> Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

## Message

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

This Sunday in the church year is one of those that brings up those memories and traditions of years gone by. For some it takes us back to when we were children and got to be a part of the Palm Processional at the beginning of the service, or perhaps watching our own children. I, personally, remember sitting in the Toufar row Chetek Lutheran. The family that sat behind us had a daughter in my class who was a good friend. I remember she would always turn her palm branch, through a series of folds, into a cross.

Our traditions around this day in the church year are so seemingly steeped in that triumphal entry that Jesus makes into Jerusalem. That tradition, in our tradition - the Lutheran tradition, has somewhat shifted to this day being a Palm and Passion Sunday where we have our Palm processional to begin worship, but by this point in worship, we are into the story of Holy Week before Holy Week has hardly even arrived. But, there are those who still cling to the tradition of this being Palm Sunday, and only Palm Sunday.

I think for some, I know for me at least – and this goes back to my being raised at Luther park in the summer and every Thursday evening experiencing the Triumphal Entry during the Christ Walk – the triumphal entry was, if we think of this in the larger picture of the season of Lent, a joyous moment. If we think of Palm Sunday in our 40 days of Lent, it almost serves as a joyful break in whatever Lent practice it is that we have taken on. It provides for us a moment of joy. It gives us an opportunity where we join the crowd, shouting:

“Hosanna!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Blessed is the king of Israel!”

We rejoice at the sight of a humble King’s triumphal entry into our lives and into our pain. And for just a moment we allow ourselves to forget about the fact that this is the start of Holy Week and all that it means for us as people of faith. We bring ourselves back to those first time hearers and ones who experienced this story and we allow ourselves to forget what is to come.

On the surface, our Gospel text has us in that joyful moment.

“The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting,

“Hosanna!” ...

...now, traditionally that is a word of praise. In Mark's gospel, however, the notes in the column give us the definition of this Hebrew word. “Save now.”

That changes the joyous feeling that this story typically gives me. And as we go on and read further into this gospel text in John 12, we start to notice some things that shed light on what is to come. The intent of the writer of John's gospel is to point to what Jesus is up to in his ministry. As we read this further, we hear the echo of our Zechariah text, the prophecy that says the king will come riding on the colt of a donkey.

John's Gospel goes on to say that “his disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written.” They remembered that these things had been written and that this would happen. We heard this recently in a Gospel text where the disciples had an experienced and the writer reminds us that the disciples would remember that it was to happen after he had died. And again, we have that here. “His disciples did not understand these things. They were confused about their King riding on a Colt, and they didn't understand these things at first, but when he was glorified, then they remembered that these things have been written of him and had been done to him.”

“So the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify” – Continued to tell the story of this thing that Jesus had done – “It was also because they heard that he had performed the sign.

The eager crowd went out to meet him. This crowd of people wanting to welcome their King, did so by shouting, “save now!”

Thus far we've been dancing on the surface, but we are about to start to dig a bit. We are in the comfort of this being a celebratory moment. We think that this is a celebration that their new King is coming humble, riding on the colt of a donkey. “The Pharisees then said to one another, ‘you see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.”

This is where we see our shift to Holy Week. This is where we see the foreshadowing and perhaps the wheels being set in motion. The plans that those who would take down Jesus are starting to take shape and get a sense of urgency. Their power is threatened by him. “You see, there is nothing we can do! The world has gone after him!”

When we hear the meaning of the Hebrew word, hosanna, it changes this joyous tradition we are so used to. It was foreshadowing, growing up at Chetek Lutheran when my classmates sitting behind the Toufar family row would turn her palm branch into a cross, of the story that was to come. It was telling the story of what was to come.

The Pharisees warning one another, telling each other, “There's nothing we can do. The world has gone after him.”

The writer of John's Gospel reminding us that his disciples would later realize what was happening is telling us what is to come.

We have the benefit of being 21st century hearers of the word.

We have the benefit of being able to flip back to Mark's account of the triumphal entry to get that definition of Hosanna.

We have the benefit of being able to read this, “As Jesus came into the city, the crowds lined the streets, shouting save now.”

It gives us a lens through which we view Maundy Thursday. That this humble king would turn around and give us a meal to remember him by and the mandate to love one another.

It gives us that lens through which we view Good Friday. That this humble king would suffer and die on a cross giving us his last words of forgiveness and a promise of paradise.

If we dig into these texts a bit, we see the shift to Holy week.

We see the shift to what Jesus is about that John's Gospel is always pointing us to.

We hear these words and we are reminded of the promise, the new life that this whole Lent journey is leading us to, this whole journey of life is leading us to.

This newness.

This wholeness.

This new life in Christ.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

## **Apostle's Creed**

### **Prayers**

Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

In Jesus you came among us as a suffering servant. Give your church humility. Redeem your people from pride and the certainty that we always know your will. Heal us and empower us to confess Christ crucified. Hear us, O God.

#### **Your mercy is great.**

In creation, life springs from death. Redeem your creation awaiting resurrection: restore lost habitats and endangered species. Create new possibilities for areas affected by climate change, grant relief from natural disasters, and nurture new growth. Hear us, O God.

#### **Your mercy is great.**

Jesus was handed over to the powers of this world. In all nations, instruct the powerful, that they would not exploit their power but maintain justice. Sustain soldiers, and guide those who command them, that they serve those in greatest need. Hear us, O God.

#### **Your mercy is great.**

On the cross Jesus joined all who feel forsaken. Abide with those who are condemned to death. Defend those who are falsely accused. Console and strengthen those who are mocked or bullied. Accompany all who suffer; grant respite and renewal. Hear us, O God.

#### **Your mercy is great.**

You called followers to tend Jesus' body in death. Sustain hospice workers and funeral directors. Bless this congregation's ministries at times of death: those who plan and lead funerals, those who prepare meals, all who offer support in grief. Hear us, O God.

#### **Your mercy is great.**

You inspired the centurion to confess Jesus as your Son. We praise you for the faith you have given to people of all places and times. Give us also such faith to trust the promises of baptism and, with them, to look for the resurrection of the dead. Hear us, O God.

#### **Your mercy is great.**

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## **Offering**

## **Offertory Prayer**

Faithful God,

you walk beside us in desert places, and you meet us in our hunger with bread from heaven. Accompany us in this meal, that we may pass over from death to life with Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

## **Lord's Prayer**

## **Blessing**

You are what God made you to be:  
created in Christ Jesus for good works,  
chosen as holy and beloved,  
freed to serve your neighbor.

God bless you ☩ that you may be a blessing,  
in the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity.

**Amen.**

Go in peace. Share the good news. **Thanks be to God.**

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS!**

### **Holy Week at Good Shepherd**

- **Palm Sunday**
  - Worship for Palm Sunday will be virtual with videos premiering online at 9 am
- **Maundy Thursday**
  - **YOU ARE INVITED** to Maundy Thursday Worship in the parking lot.
    - **From the comfort of your car - Worship with Holy Communion at 7 pm**
    - **If that time is difficult for you, Holy Communion is offered throughout the day.**
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  - Worship will be a collaborative effort of the 8 ELCA churches of Eau Claire and we will hear song and reflection on the Seven Last Words of Christ
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**Amen.**

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## Crosses We Don't Choose<sup>1</sup>

*Then Jesus told them, "... take up their cross and follow me." Matthew 16:24b*

Dear Members and Friends of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin,

My friend Julie's mom had dementia. Julie picked up that cross and carried it as her beloved mother faded away. Paul was in second grade when he was diagnosed with diabetes. It was a cross he would carry for the rest of his life. Erica's drug addiction was a cross she and her family carried for years until she found sobriety. They were all crosses they didn't choose.

Jesus carried his cross on the road to his crucifixion. Along the way he falls, and a man named Simon of Cyrene<sup>2</sup> is forced to pick up Jesus' cross and carry it the rest of the way to Calvary. Simon was most likely a reluctant cross bearer. Most of us are reluctant cross bearers. We don't choose the pain or suffering we've been dealt, and yet we carry the load. We don't choose to carry another person's cross when they are too weak to carry it themselves, but we are at times compelled by love to do so.

This month marks the one year anniversary of the pandemic. It is a cross that we've all carried to one degree or another. For some it has been an inconvenience and for others a heavy burden of suffering and profound grief. Theologically there is no way to put a positive spin on the coronavirus or 2020. It has been a cross we didn't choose. The strain of carrying this cross is evident in our country and congregations. We are all weary of it.

On Palm/Passion Sunday and Good Friday we are drawn into the story of Jesus' arrest, trial, and death. We walk alongside him in the crowd as he carries his cross, our cross, compelled by love. We walk with a suffering Jesus straining under the weight of this cross, stumbling, falling, getting back up and finally letting go, letting another carry it. Jesus knew pain in his human body, and so Jesus knows our every weakness. Jesus himself was beaten, knew suffering and was unable to carry the weight this cross. He falls to the ground under the weight of his love for us.

As a church we invite others to walk in the way of Jesus knowing that they are carrying crosses they didn't choose for themselves. We invite others to walk in the way of Jesus because as a community of faith we shoulder the burden and carry it all together. We help another carry their cross out of love. We are Simon of Cyrene.

Maybe that is what this past year has taught us; that we need each other; we aren't alone. We've been isolated, quarantined, but not alone. We can't take our congregations for granted. We need our faith communities and the relationships with other believers because we can't carry our own crosses. We follow the way of Jesus together bearing our neighbor's crosses out of love.

It is in the cross that Jesus carried and on which he was crucified that we can know the love of God and salvation. This is Luther's Theology of the Cross. It is in the crosses that we as a community of faith carry together as we follow in the way of Jesus that we too see and know the love God.

Dear friends of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, I am grateful for you, that during the pandemic, we were able to walk in the way of Jesus together. May you each know the joy of Easter! Christ is Risen. He is risen indeed.

Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson

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