

Morning Prayer for Palm Sunday

April 5, 2020, 10:00 am

St. Mary's Episcopal Church & Concordia Lutheran Church

INTRODUCTION & REFLECTION

The Rev. Ann Lovejoy Johnson

In this time of world-wide crisis, congregations throughout the Northeast and elsewhere are not able to gather for worship as the body of Christ. While we cannot be together in person, we can hear the word of God and hold each other in prayer.

How will we observe Holy Week and Easter as a scattered community? Some congregations have the resources to pull together these observances on their own; others like St. Mary's and Concordia, prefer to partner together acknowledging that God is in the midst of us as we lean on one another. While God has been calling us to look ahead and embrace brave change, having our world turned upside down by a world pandemic was not what any of us had in mind! Now we are afraid. Now we find ourselves forced to adapt to many changes, including changes in our familiar routines with worship. This Holy Week and Easter observance, in 2020, is no exception. We are worshipping together in a completely new way, virtually 'gathering in God's name'. This is stretching most of us well-beyond our comfort zones.

Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong.

Let all that you do be done in love. (I Corinthians 16:13-14)

We believe God gives us the courage to be agents of reconciliation, justice and generosity. We are participating in ongoing, prayerful discernment together. This is how our path to a faithful future will unfold, with God's guidance. Today and this Holy Week may demand more from us than we feel is possible. And yet, we are rooted in a living tradition, where we invite all people to worship the Creator, to share the reconciling love of Jesus Christ and to participate in the work of the Holy Spirit. We are living the way of love that Jesus taught us, in ways we did not imagine.

Today we enter this oddly familiar and yet new observance of Palm Sunday from our homes where we may see one another in an altogether different way – literally seeing each other 'on screen' instead of 'in person.' We open our hearts wide to accept the vulnerability we share one with another, and that Christ shared with us during his earthy ministry. We lift up the extraordinariness of our ordinary lives, lived in love. This great love and sacrifice is at the heart of our Palm Sunday observance as we re-member the passion of Jesus Christ.

Our service today begins with Morning Prayer from *The Book of Common Prayer* and includes an adapted Liturgy of the Palms. We will share reflections on the Gospel reading for the Liturgy of the Palms (in zoom "break out room" for small group conversation).

Instead of blessing palms in the customary manner today with processions, we invite you to participate at home. On Sunday, April 5 in the morning, put a branch on the door of your house or on the window, to celebrate Palm Sunday. It could be any green branch you can get. Despite the physical distance we are keeping, this will be a sign of our connectedness as we enter into the Holiest of Weeks. Then, if you wish, email Rev'd Ann and Pastor Douglas a photograph of your green branch displayed. We will share this sign that we are united with Christ and one another. May our hope in Jesus Christ be renewed again this day.

OPENING SENTENCE

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. *I*

John 1:8, 9

CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

Silence may be kept.

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. Amen.

THE INVITATORY & PSALM

Lord, open our lips.

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

The Lord is full of compassion and mercy:

Come let us adore him.

**All: Come, let us sing to the Lord; *
let us shout for joy to the Rock of our
salvation.**

**Let us come before his presence with
thanksgiving *and raise a loud shout to him
with psalms.**

**For the Lord is a great God, * and a great
King above all gods.**

**In his hand are the caverns of the earth,
*and the heights of the hills are his also.**

The Lord is full of compassion and mercy:

Come let us adore him.

**The sea is his, for he made it, *and his hands
have molded the dry land.**

**Come, let us bow down, and bend the knee,
*and kneel before the Lord our Maker.**

**For he is our God, and we are the people of
his pasture and the sheep of his hand. *Oh,
that today you would hearken to his voice**

PSALM 130

1 Out of the depths have I called to you, O LORD;

LORD, hear my voice; *

let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication.

2 If you, LORD, were to note what is done amiss, *

O Lord, who could stand?

3 For there is forgiveness with you; *
therefore you shall be feared.

FIRST LESSON Isaiah 50:4-9a

The Lord GOD has given me
the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.

Morning by morning he wakens--
wakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.

The Lord GOD has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backward.

I gave my back to those who struck me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled out
the beard;

4 I wait for the LORD; my soul waits for him; *

in his word is my hope.

5 My soul waits for the LORD,
more than watchmen for the morning, *
more than watchmen for the morning.

6 O Israel, wait for the LORD, *

for with the LORD there is mercy;

7 With him there is plenteous redemption, *
and he shall redeem Israel from all their sins.

I did not hide my face
from insult and spitting.

The Lord GOD helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to
shame;
he who vindicates me is near.

Who will contend with me?
Let us stand up together.

Who are my adversaries?
Let them confront me.

It is the Lord GOD who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?

CANTICLE A Song of Penitence (Prayer of Manasseh 1-2, 4, 6-7, 11-15)

All: O Lord and Ruler of the hosts of heaven, *
God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
and of all their righteous offspring:
You made the heavens and the earth, *
with all their vast array.
All things quake with fear at your presence; *
they tremble because of your power.
But your merciful promise is beyond all
measure; *
it surpasses all that our minds can fathom.
O Lord, you are full of compassion, *
long-suffering, and abounding in mercy.
You hold back your hand; *
you do not punish as we deserve.
In your great goodness, Lord,
you have promised forgiveness to sinners, *
that they may repent of their sin and be saved.

And now, O Lord, I bend the knee of my heart,
*
and make my appeal, sure of your gracious
goodness.
I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned, *
and I know my wickedness only too well.
Therefore I make this prayer to you: *
Forgive me, Lord, forgive me.
Do not let me perish in my sin, *
nor condemn me to the depths of the earth.
For you, O Lord, are the God of those who
repent, *
and in me you will show forth your goodness.
Unworthy as I am, you will save me,
in accordance with your great mercy, *
and I will praise you without ceasing all the
days of my life.
For all the powers of heaven sing your praises,
*
and yours is the glory to ages of ages. Amen.

SECOND LESSON Philippians 2:5-11

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death--even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Reader: The Word of the Lord

People: Thanks be to God

CANTICLE The Song of Zechariah (*Luke 1: 68-79*)



1 Blessed be the God of Is - ra - el who comes to set us free
2 With prom - ised mer - cy will God still the cov - e - nant re - call,
3 My child, as proph - et of the Lord you will pre - pare the way,



and rais - es up new hope for us: a Branch from Da - vid's tree.
the oath once sworn to A - bra - ham, from foes to save us all;
to tell God's peo - ple they are saved from sin's e - ter - nal sway.



So have the proph - ets long de - clared that with a might - y arm
that we might wor - ship with - out fear and of - fer lives of praise,
Then shall God's mer - cy from on high shine forth and nev - er cease



God would turn back our en - e - mies and all who wish us harm.
in ho - li - ness and righ - teous - ness to serve God all our days.
to drive a - way the gloom of death and lead us in - to peace.

THE LITURGY OF THE PALMS (*adapted*)

Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord.

Peace in heaven and glory in the highest

Let us pray.

Almighty God, as your Son Jesus came to Jerusalem to bring to completion the work of our salvation, so come to the homes of your people and bless us by your presence. Call your church again to the way of the cross. Give us strength to follow it. Quicken our memories and stir our hearts as we contemplate those mighty acts, whereby you have given us life and immortality; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

THE GOSPEL

The following gospel is now read aloud, without introduction or conclusion.

Matthew 21:1-11

When Jesus and his disciples had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

"Tell the daughter of Zion,
Look, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

"Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

"When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

The Officiant now says three times:

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

Hosanna in the highest!

THE HYMN

All Glory Laud and Honor

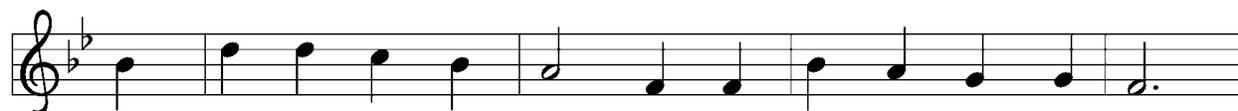
Refrain



All glo - ry, laud, and hon - or to you, re - deem - er, king,



to whom the lips of chil - dren made sweet ho - san - nas ring.



- 1 You are the king of Is - rael and Da - vid's roy - al Son,
- 2 The com - pa - ny of an - gels are prais - ing you on high;
- 3 The mul - ti - tude of pil - grims with palms be - fore you went;
- 4 To you, be - fore your pas - sion, they sang their hymns of praise.
- 5 Their prais - es you ac - cept - ed; ac - cept the prayers we bring,



Refrain

now in the Lord's name com - ing, our King and Bless - ed One.
cre - a - tion and all mor - tals in cho - rus make re - ply.
our praise and prayer and an - thems be - fore you we pre - sent.
To you, now high ex - alt - ed, our mel - o - dy we raise.
great au - thor of all good - ness, O good and gra - cious King.

REFLECTION

The Rev. Ann Lovejoy Johnson

Rumor has it that Jesus has come to set us free. Crowded together at Jerusalem's gate, the people expect a political leader, a warrior-king of the line of David come to free Israel from the yoke of Roman domination. This is the scene – people spreading branches of palm and cloaks on the road. It turns out, though, Jesus was not the leader who was anticipated. For instead of entering the holy city on a warhorse, this Jesus comes deliberately on a colt, riding on the back of a donkey, seemingly mocking the authorities. As we celebrate his triumphal entry, we imagine ourselves in a crowd on the road to Jerusalem. Rumor has it, Jesus has come to set us free. We anticipate with great excitement the arrival of the infamous prophet Jesus. With palm branches, a political statement and a symbol of Israel's sovereignty for generations, Jesus is hailed as the Son of David, saying “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” Hail the Son of David! He will deliver us!

What Jesus taught, according to Matthew, had little to do with politics or Roman occupation or insurrection. Jesus' teaching was occupied with God and specifically with the hypocrisy of religion and the blindness of God in their midst. Jesus comes in meekness. A triumphal entry? The triumph of the meek and the victory of the humble. That is how Jesus comes to set the people free.

Today we are not in a crowded church or making a procession with palm branches. Today we are 'gathering' from our homes and may have placed branches on our door or window. We are longing for the coming of Jesus. We are longing to be set free. And while we are longing, we know how this story of Jesus goes, and the hope of the resurrection. Still, we settle here with this story of Jesus entry into Jerusalem, and ask how God may be speaking to us today through this passage.

Today I invite you to reflect upon what we are waiting for God to do, and what is God already doing in our midst.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

How is Jesus inviting us to be set free? Free from what?

What are we longing for God to do? How is God here in our midst?

PIANO MEDITATION

Beautiful Savior

recorded by Kelly Sharp

THE APOSTLES CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth;

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

THE PRAYERS

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

Our Father, who 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

SUFFRAGES

V. Show us your mercy, O Lord;

R. And grant us your salvation.

V. Clothe your ministers with righteousness;

R. Let your people sing with joy.

V. Give peace, O Lord, in all the world;

R. For only in you can we live in safety.

V. Lord, keep this nation under your care;

R. And guide us in the way of justice and truth.

V. Let your way be known upon earth;

R. Your saving health among all nations.

V. Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten;

R. Nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

V. Create in us clean hearts, O God;

R. And sustain us with your Holy Spirit.

COLLECT FOR PALM SUNDAY

O God of mercy and might, in the mystery of the passion of your Son you offer your infinite life to the world. Gather us around the cross of Christ, and preserve us until the resurrection, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

A COLLECT FOR SUNDAYS

O God, you make us glad with the weekly remembrance of the glorious resurrection of your Son our Lord: Give us this day such blessing through our worship of you, that the week to come may be spent in your favor; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

IN THE MORNING, A PRAYER

This is another day, O Lord. I know not what it will bring forth, but make me ready, Lord, for whatever it may be. If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely. If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly. If I am to lie low, help me to do it patiently. And if I am to do nothing, let me do it gallantly. Make these words more than words, and give me the Spirit of Jesus. Amen.

A COLLECT FOR MISSION

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. Amen.

Intercessions and thanksgivings follow.

Now I invite your prayers for all the needs of the world God so loved, silently or aloud.

THE GENERAL THANKSGIVING

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.

BENEDICTION

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**
Romans 15:13

THE HYMN

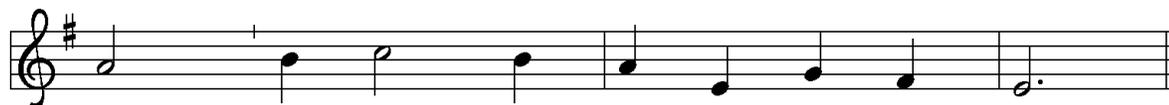
Ride On, Ride On in Majesty



1 Ride on, ride on in maj - es - ty! Hear all the
2 Ride on, ride on in maj - es - ty! In low - ly
3 Ride on, ride on in maj - es - ty! The hosts of
4 Ride on, ride on in maj - es - ty! In low - ly



tribes ho - san - na cry; O Sav - ior meek, your road pur -
pomp ride on to die. O Christ, your tri - umphs now be -
an - gels in the sky look down with sad and won - d'ring
pomp ride on to die, bow your meek head to mor - tal



sue, with palms and scat - tered gar - ments strewed.
gin o'er cap - tive death and con - quered sin.
eyes to see the ap - proach - ing sac - ri - fice.
pain, then take, O Christ, your pow'r and reign!

The Passion Reading is included separately for personal meditation and prayer today or on Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday of Holy Week