

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay
<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski
Palm Sunday – March 24, 2024

Call to Worship

We come to prepare for the holiest of weeks.
We will journey through praise, with joy on our lips;
we will travel through betrayal and death,
cradling hope deep in our hearts.
Jesus leads us through this week, and we will follow,
for he is the life we long for,
he is the Word who sustains us.
We wave palm branches in anticipation,
we lay our love before him, to cushion his walk.
Setting aside all power, glory, and might, he comes:
modeling humility and obedience for all of us.
Hosanna! Hosanna!
Blessed is the One who brings us
the kingdom of God.

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Hymn

Hosanna loud hosanna

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| 1. Hosanna, loud hosanna,
the little children sang;
through pillared court and temple
the joyful anthem rang.
To Jesus, who had held them
close folded to his breast,
the children sang their praises,
the simplest and the best. | 2. From Olivet they followed
amid the shouting crowd,
the victor palm branch waving
and chanting clear and loud;
Messiah, God's anointed,
rode there in humble state,
"Hosanna in the highest!"
rang out their praises great. |
| 3. "Hosanna in the highest!"
that ancient song we sing,
for Christ is our Redeemer,
the Lord of heaven our King.
Oh may we ever praise him
with heart and life and voice,
and in God's joyful presence
eternally rejoice! | |

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Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of grace and truth,
we gather in humility and hope
because we believe you have the power to change the world,

to change it for the better with your love.
We gather because we believe no one is beyond your concern,
no one is beyond your embrace.
Such love astonishes us.
Without your grace, we cannot even imagine such love.
In this hour of worship, inspire us with a vision of love
which will change the world and our lives for goodness' sake.

**Lord Jesus Christ,
you call us to be servants yet we confess we like to be served.
You call us to give ourselves away for love's sake,
yet we confess we like to hang on to what we have.
We can't imagine following you to the cross.
As we see your cross looming, we wonder,
Is this what you have in mind for us?**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. Palm/Passion Sunday. March 24th, 2024. Year B.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Jesus said: I do not call you servants any longer, but I have called you friends.
No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."
Christ has laid down his life for us and invites us to love one another
as he has loved us.

Trust his love to give you strength and make you new.

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Scripture Reading John 12:12-16

The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting, 'Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—
the King of Israel!

¹⁴Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it; as it is written:

¹⁵ 'Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion.
Look, your king is coming,
sitting on a donkey's colt!'

¹⁶His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him.

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Message Fear of Being Overtaken

Palm Sunday...a day we love to rejoice. It is one of the happiest services of the year with the palm branches giving us something to wave as we participate in worship and then take home to remind of us this joyful celebration.

For many of us we skip from this service of palm branches to Easter Sunday and we completely miss the point of it all, the basis for calling ourselves Christian. We miss the good news. So let's situate ourselves in the story. Use your imagination to see the story unfolding. It is the Passover festival, a time when crowds are coming into Jerusalem to celebrate, the city swelling with people everywhere.

Prior to where we picked up the story, Jesus has spent time at the home of Lazarus in Bethany. Now Lazarus is important to this whole thing because this was a man that Jesus had raised from the dead. Brought him to life right out of a tomb. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were all Jesus' friends and at this point in the story, Jesus was at their home to enjoy their company and hospitality before he headed into Jerusalem. It was here that Mary anointed Jesus with expensive perfume. Little did she know her actions were foreshadowing Jesus' death, the perfume preparing him for burial. It is also where Judas got upset with Jesus because of the expense that had been so lavishly poured on Jesus instead of being used to help others. Actually, Judas was siphoning from the funds so that was more his problem. Money gone meant less for him to skim.

When people learned that Jesus was in Bethany it became a spectacle as the gathering crowd not only wanted to see Jesus, but Lazarus, because Lazarus was the proof of what Jesus was capable of...bringing life from death! Now this was a problem for the chief priests of the faith as it meant that people were looking to Jesus for their hope and not paying attention to the demands and commands of these leaders. The chief priests began to plot how they could kill both Jesus and Lazarus. Jesus because he was leading people away from the power of the religious authorities and Lazarus because he was proof of Jesus' power.

So we get to the day when Jesus enters Jerusalem. Some of the other gospels tell this part of the story with greater detail. All that the Gospel of John tells us is that when Jesus was coming to Jerusalem people started laying down palm branches. This started even before Jesus got into the city. It was like rolling out the red carpet, but instead of carpet it was palm branches. Using palm branches for celebrations was a common occurrence. It didn't just happen for Jesus but happened whenever there was a dignitary approaching. And that is the crux, Jesus wasn't a dignitary, wasn't a ruler, and yet was getting recognized as such by the common crowd. Also, one can note that there were two crowds gathering, the crowd that was coming into town from Bethany where they had gathered to see Jesus and Lazarus and the crowd from inside the city that was gathering and maybe even coming out of the city to greet Jesus.

Now we really cannot say how big this crowd was, there is no indication, but it was significant enough to incur the anger of the religious rulers and later in the week also the Roman authorities. It also struck fear into these powerful figures as they had no idea how powerful Jesus was. In fact, the last verse of the reading says, "The Pharisees then said to one another, 'You see you can do nothing, Look, the world has gone after him!'" There were worried about their loss of power and influence.

For those in the crowd their fear was something different. They had feared from many years the crushing power of the Roman authorities, they feared for their well-being. They wondered how long before God would bring them the promised Messiah, the one spoken about in their Hebrew scriptures. Particularly in the writing of the prophet Zechariah there is much said about the suffering the people will face, but also promises a coming leader. The people assume it will be a powerful warrior much like in the good days of King David, but that is not the kind of leader that Zechariah speaks about. In Zechariah the prophet writes, 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. (9:9).

That chapter in Zechariah goes on to describe a king that sounds like a powerful earthly king, but we humans don't think like God does. God comes to us in the form of a servant king. One who is ready to show his power by giving life, not by taking life. His kingship is not demonstrated in his ability to dominate but in the ways he came to serve. Again, Lazarus was the example of that new life, but people still did not understand. It was not until after Jesus' death and resurrection, as the disciples remembered all the things that had been written and done, that they began to see differently, to understand differently the kind of kingdom Jesus ruled, and the kind of power Jesus had and has.

And this is the good news! Jesus has power to restore life, to give life, to transform life, but he does it, not by overpowering us, or by dominating us, but rather coming to us as a servant king. One whose law is love. One who... if we remember our themes as we approached Christmas are also important to the Easter story...one who brings hope, peace, joy, and love into a world in as desperate need of it now as ever.

We are as fearful today of what can overtake us as the people were in Jesus' time. There are places around the globe that we can name where the threat of power to take life and dominate others is clear and evident. It is in these stories that we can remember that Jesus in his own time did not rule by dominating but by love and service, giving his life so others could live. He still gives his life for us. We are called to be peace makers in these times, to do what we can in our place in the world to hold others accountable for how the most vulnerable are treated.

The most powerful tool we have is our corporate prayer, but we can also speak up and show up in our communities where we see an abuse of power. We can stand with others who are suffering injustice, those who are afraid of being overtaken by the rulers and authorities of our time.

There are also those who fear being overtaken but physical or mental illness, or other situations and challenges in their lives. We all live with different levels of fear in our lives. As Markus Roskamp writes when talking about this series on fear, "Sometimes those

fears and anxieties becomes so great they threaten to overtake us. They overtake our relationships, our joy, our purpose.”¹

Though we have fears, we are not left alone. Just as Jesus rode into Jerusalem, Jesus comes to us as a servant king. One who is with us in all our fears. One who promises to transform our fears so that we can live fully. And we are called to walk with each other and in community so that all can know that the Jesus who walked among people, who lived, died, and rose again as the king of life is still alive. Still bringing hope, peace, joy and love into the world through us and through the power of the Holy Spirit moving in the world.

Palm Sunday was the start of a week that amplified the tension, fear, and struggles of power in individuals and the community both spiritual and secular. It's most intimate moments at the table with Jesus and his disciples at what we call the Last Supper, then the horror of the cross and crucifixion, the silence of Holy Saturday, and the amazing love and grace of Easter Sunday.

Whatever you come with, in worship or daily life, be it fear of what may overtake you, or with joy and peace, may this day and the coming days, remind you of God's transforming and lifegiving power to overcome even death so that we are promised new life as we live and breath this day and also when our own death comes to us. We are all children of God, not only in this place but all people are God's people. May we be signs of God's response to power, so that no one need fear the powers that may threaten to overtake them or us.

We are the people of God, restored in community, to community, and for community. Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

Prayers of the People

In Jesus Christ, O God, you came to us in humility,
reaching out to all God's little ones with mercy and compassion.

You ask us to do the same.

In gratitude for all the mercy and compassion we have known,
we pray for those who find themselves in humble and fearful circumstances:

Hear us as we pray:

For the unhoused in our communities,
and for refugees wherever they take shelter; (Pause)

For all who find themselves without enough resources to cope
when necessary things are so costly; (Pause)

For those who live in isolated communities
and lack the access, care and technology most of us take for granted; (Pause)

Embrace them, O God, in your mercy, and humble us,

¹ Roskamp, Marcus. [Reformed Worship 122 © December 2016](#) Worship Ministries of the Christian Reformed Church. Used by permission.

lest we put too much trust in our life styles as the source of life's goodness.

Hear us as we pray

for all those who have been humbled by unexpected circumstances and
for those who are fearful because of their circumstances;

for those who face illness or injury; (Pause)

for those who know death or disaster, fear or failure; (Pause)

for victims of crime

and those who suffer through the misjudgment or mistake of others; (Pause)

And we pray for those who suffer

because of the consequences of their own actions and choices. (Pause)

Embrace them, O God, in your mercy,

and humble us, lest we imagine we can live our lives untouched by trouble.

Hear us as we pray

for all those who have not yet learned the lessons of humility

and through their actions have cast a shadow of fear in the lives of others;

for those who live carelessly or drive recklessly,

endangering themselves and others; (Pause)

for those who abuse the trust and power in their positions,

betraying those whose interests are in their hands; (Pause)

And we pray for those who mislead others to protect their own interests

or indulge their fame with no thought for the consequences. (Pause)

Humble them, O God, in your mercy,

and humble us if we are tempted to ignore the responsibility you give us all

to care for our neighbours' needs.

Create in us compassion and courage

as we come to the Cross with Christ and in humility pray the words Jesus taught us:

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Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Invitation to the offering

As Holy Week opens, we remember what Jesus faced,

how the crowd cheered him one day and called for his death by week's end.

Close friends betrayed him and ran away.

In our offering, we declare our love and loyalty to Jesus,

and that we are here for him.

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Should you wish to support this ministry and/or would like to learn more about St. Andrew's, get involved in our ministry and work, or make a donation toward the life and ministry of St. Andrew's Presbyterian, in Thunder Bay visit our website at <http://standrewspres-tbay.ca>

Hymn

Filled with excitement

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1. Filled with excitement, all the happy throng
spread cloaks and branches on the city streets.
There in the distance they begin to see,
riding on a donkey, comes the Son of God.

Refrain

*From every corner a thousand voices sing
praises to him who comes in the name of God.
With one great shout of acclamation loud
triumphant songs break forth:
"Hosanna! hosanna to the King!
Hosanna! hosanna to the King!"*

2. As in that entrance to Jerusalem,
we sing hosannas to the Christ, our King,
to the living Saviour who still calls today,
asking us to follow him with love and faith.

Refrain

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Benediction

Go with courage to face the days ahead.

May the Christ who walks on wounded feet walk with you on the road.

May the Christ who serves with wounded hands stretch out your hands to serve.

May the Christ who lives with a wounded heart open your hearts to love.

May you see the face of Christ in everyone you meet,

and may everyone you meet see the face of Christ in you.

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