

Worship for Palm/ Passion Sunday
March 24, 2024

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Lenten Reading Robin McComas

Mark 11:1-11

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he set two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" They went away and found the colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They told them what Jesus had said to them, and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who followed were shouting,

"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!

Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple, and when he had looked around, at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Litany of Response

Humble and riding on a donkey,

we greet you.

Acclaimed by crowds and caroled by children,

we cheer you.

Moving from the peace of the countryside
to the corridors of power,

we salute you, Christ, our Lord.

You are giving the beasts of burden a new dignity;

You are giving majesty a new face;

You are giving those who long for redemption
a new song to sing.

With them, with heart and voice,

we shout, "Hosanna! God save us!"

*Hymn 197 Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

Prayer of the Day

**We praise you, O God,
for your redemption of the world through Jesus Christ.
Today he entered the holy city of Jerusalem in triumph
and was proclaimed Messiah and King
by those who spread garments and branches along his way.
Let these branches be signs of victory,
and grant that we, who carry them, may follow him in the way of the cross,
that dying and rising with him, we may enter into your kingdom,
through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns forever. Amen.**

First Reading

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Prayer of Confession

**Holy and merciful God, in your presence we confess our failure to be what you created us to be.
You alone know how often we have sinned in wandering from your ways, in wasting your gifts, in forgetting your love.
By your mercy, help us to live in your light and walk in your ways, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.**

Hymn 698 Take, O Take Me As I Am

Assurance of Forgiveness

The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.
I declare to you, in the name of Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven and we may dwell in peace.
Amen.

Moments With Our Young Disciples

Gospel Reading

Luke 19:28-40

Morning Message

How did it get to be Palm Sunday? It seems like we just wrapped up Advent and Christmas. But the signs are all around us: trees have budded and bloomed, the daffodils planted by a former homeowner have popped up in our back yard, my dog is fascinated by bird song, we had to mow our grass this past week. And we started a list of the projects we wanted to tackle once the weather breaks for sure.

It sounds like we are very organized, but, these are aspirational goals. We'll see how many we can really accomplish.

Others have aspirational goals in the spring. They knock on our door frequently, it seems, these days. Campaign workers, the Tru-green sales people, neighborhood kids passing out fliers advertising their yard work services for the summer. And occasionally, we will open the door to find well-groomed young men in their Sunday clothes wanting to speak with us about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

Now, I know some people pretend not to be home when such people ring the doorbell, but, I can't do that. I think about their young ages, being away from home, in sometimes inadequate living arrangements, trying to talk to strangers about Jesus. So, I listen and answer some questions. But, I confess, we don't have an extended conversation, except for the time two missionaries came to our door in the pouring rain. They were soaked and cold. They didn't want to come in. But, they did accept the umbrella we offered. And, to our surprise, a few days later, they returned with the umbrella and a thank you.

Pastor Yvette Schock, of the *Christian Century magazine*, says something like this happened to her recently. She opened the door to three visitors –a husband, wife and their teenage daughter who looked like she wished she could be anywhere else-holding Bibles and eager to speak with Yvette about Jesus.

“Do you know Jesus? Do you believe, if you die today, you would go to heaven?
Do you believe there is anything you can do to lose God's love?”

And so on.

Sensing that the direction of this question and answer exercise was going to eventually get into theological differences, Yvette thanked the people for stopping by, and offered her blessing on their church and their service to the Lord.

Yvette says not much gives her hope these days that people can truly talk across religious or political differences. I relate. I can feel myself becoming uneasy and even angry at times as I see or hear political ads, and as I note the comments some are posting to social media. I think the time is quickly coming that I will have to set Facebook aside until after the election is over.

But, even in the throes of angst and suspicion, of who's in and who's out- Yvette says this brief encounter with the visitors made her oddly hopeful. She says she felt a tenderness and respect for their commitment and their willingness to risk knocking on the doors of strangers to talk about

Jesus. She wondered then if she had shut down their conversation too soon. That maybe they would have had a more satisfying conversation had she not wanted to get back to her work.

Jesus' last week in Jerusalem is full of confrontation. He enters the city in a conspicuous way. His homespun parade stands in stark contrast to Pilate's show of force as he processed into the city. The next day, Jesus enters the Temple and turns the tables of the money changers over. Repeatedly, religious leaders confronted him, trying to discredit him to get him in trouble. But, Yvette says, the week began in an effort to show Jesus as an agent of peace. Jesus rides into town on a donkey, recalling Zachariah's prophecy that a humble king would appear, riding not on a horse, the beast of war, but a donkey. And this king would "command peace to the nations."

Jesus confronts and disrupts the systems that harm, corrupt, and exploit God's beloved children. He always pointed to God and the magnificent gifts of God's creation, providence, grace, and love for all humankind. And he does it in peace and humility.

Yvette says, like many churches around the world, hers will pass out palm branches today and parade around their block, singing their hosannas, "God save us." But, as she does, she says she will be thinking of her Baptist visitors, and how she might have encouraged further conversation, genuinely confronting the reality of their differences in a spirit of peace seeking understanding.

In this current climate of warring nations, government stalemate, political division, how do we want to live? Do we stay behind doors, cling to our brink, avoiding those we know will oppose most everything we affirm?

If that keeps you out of trouble, keeps your blood pressure down, maybe that's the way to go.

But, maybe we could borrow some courage from the missionaries of any church who make cold calls on people they don't know because they love Jesus and sharing that love is how they faithfully serve him. Live on the edge-dare to express an opinion or belief that your neighbor or your family member doesn't share.

I don't know. My defenses always wane with illness. So, I'll do what Christians do on Palm Sunday, here and around the world, clutch my palm branch and sing as well as I can, "Hosanna! God save us!"

* Hymn

*Affirmation of Faith The Nicene Creed p. 34

*Hymn 580 Gloria Patri

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns
Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings including our contributions for ECCHO and Centsability

* Hymn 607 Doxology

*Prayer of Dedication

Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things.

Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts.

Use us and what we have gathered,

In feeding the world with your love,

Through the one who gave himself for us,

Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

*Hymn 196 All Glory, Laud, and Honor

*Blessing

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

the love of God,

and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

*Postlude