

Worship Service “*Hosanna*”

Palm Sunday, Year A, 2nd April, 2023

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 CEV / Matthew 21:1-11 NRSV

Prelude/Procession of the Palms

Opening Music (Video) [*Chorus of Faith*](#) Michael Card

written by Michael Card and Phil Naish, CCLI SONG #1438656, 1994 Birdwing Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing), Davaub Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing), posted to YouTube by George Ting/GT Videos, used and reported under CCLI Streaming License 20261246

Welcome Guests / Announcements

Pass the Peace

Opening Hymn *Hosanna, Loud Hosanna* 238

Call to Worship (responsive)

One: Though we have known hardship and pain, though life has not always turned out as we had hoped, we will stand here and say:

All: God’s steadfast love endures for ever!

One: Though life becomes more complex, the deepest questions remain Unanswered, and the mystery of faith deepens, we will say:

All: God’s steadfast love endures for ever!

One: And though the pain of the world often seems more than we can bear or Address, we will stand firm in our faith and say:

All: God’s steadfast love endures for ever!

Invocation (closing with the Lord's prayer)

We await you, Coming One, with hope and expectation. Draw near to us, your people, and to all the longing people of earth. Reveal yourself again as Savior and Lord, even as we prepare to go with you to the cross and empty tomb that tells the hard story of earth’s salvation. Let us sing again the joy of your coming, and look forward to your reign in our hearts and lives, not only for our own sake, but for the sake of the world which you have redeemed and are redeeming through Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,

Lords Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kin-dom 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 kin-dom, the power, and the glory,
forever and ever, Amen

Psalm of the Day (Video) [Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 CEV](#)

Psalm 118:1-2,19-29, The Passover Praise Psalm A weekly bible reading, from the lectionary, narrated by Douglas Brown. Text from CEV : the Contemporary English Version Copyright © 1991, 1992, 1995 by American Bible Society. Used by Permission. Pictures from commons.wikimedia.org

Tell the LORD how thankful you are because he is kind and always merciful.

Let Israel shout, "God is always merciful!"

Open the gates of justice! I will enter and tell the LORD how thankful I am.

Here is the gate of the LORD! Everyone who does right may enter this gate.

I praise the LORD for answering my prayers and saving me.

The stone that the builders tossed aside has now become the most important stone.

The LORD has done this, and it is amazing to us.

This day belongs to the LORD! Let's celebrate and be glad today.

We'll ask the LORD to save us! We'll sincerely ask the LORD to let us win.

God bless the one who comes in the name of the LORD! We praise you from here in the house of the LORD.

The LORD is our God, and he has given us light! Start the celebration! March with palm branches all the way to the altar.

The LORD is my God! I will praise him and tell him how thankful I am.

Tell the LORD how thankful you are, because he is kind and always merciful.

A Time of Prayer

Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer (resources)

Gracious and loving God, In the journey of life, you are our guide and our companion. From our beginning to our end, you are there.

You run this race alongside us, at times encouraging us, at times comforting us, at times tending to our wounds, at time carrying us when we don't think we can take another step.

For six weeks we have been on a Lenten journey, and you have been right here with us—with us in our discipline and devotion, with us in our weakness and failure, with us in our fear, with us in our hope.

As we spend this final week with Jesus in Jerusalem, we are amazed once again by his gentle spirit and fierce determination. As he confronts those who challenge him, he confronts our own stubbornness and defiant wills. As he cares even for those who hate him, we are challenged to love as he loves. As he bears witness to the emergence of your kingdom, our eyes are opened to your presence all around us. As he moves with resolve toward his dark destiny, we find ourselves struggling to understand why it has to be this way.

God, the journey is not just about the destination; it is about each step along the way. The journey itself is a blessing, with all of its joys and sorrows. As we run this race you are shaping us into new people. As we move with you, we are continually born anew. Help us to be attentive to each step, in the darkness and in the light. Help us to fully experience all that we encounter, the good and the bad, for in it all we discover you.

Though the race of life goes on, our Lenten journey is nearing its conclusion. Bind us ever closer to Christ, so that we may turn our hearts and minds to all that he experienced in the crucible of this holy week, a week both terrible and wonderful.

We pray this morning in his name, Amen.

Special Music

Annie Center

Gospel Reading: **Matthew 21:1-11 NRSV**

When they 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."

Message - Hosanna

Here we are, Palm Sunday. That day when we traditionally shake off the gloom of the penance and self-reflection of Lent and sing triumphant hymns while waving palms, to shouts of "Hosanna in the highest!" We commemorate the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, sharing in the promise of the arrival of the long-awaited messiah, with those Israelites millennia ago. We look forward to gathering with friends and family, Easter Egg hunts, and fellowship and worship with our church family.

Yet one cannot escape the ironies and contradictions of this day. Many in the crowds of Jesus day yearned for the Son of David of prophecy to relieve them of the misery of oppression from their Roman oppressors and their puppet state enforcers. They were in a desperate state. Many were barely able to survive under crippling taxes and rents. There was little sense of self-determination. They felt stuck between a rock and a hard place, with little to no control of their situation.

Yet in Jesus they see redemption in the fulfillment of prophecy. Matthew's gospel has Jesus staging the scene like a boss. Following the words of Isaiah, Zechariah, and even the psalms read during the Passover festival, Jesus comes down from the Mount of Olives and enters the city, riding a lowly donkey with palms being waved and laid in his path. Wanting to be painstakingly accurate in Jesus as the prophesied messiah, the writer of Matthew actually errs on the side of literal translation of Zechariah to have Jesus improbably riding two

donkeys of different sizes into the city, all to the cries of joyous “Hosannas!”

Yet here is where the contradictions begin. Matthew's author and the crowds laud the triumphant arrival of their humble, peaceful ruler, yet peaceful humility is not their expectation. They long more for what is marching through a gate on the opposite side of the city. A heavily armed military force, led by a commanding figure on a war horse. They yearn for a might warrior to destroy their oppressors and enemies, and restore them to the might and glory of King David's time. They cry “hosanna,” which is ironic in itself. It translates from Aramaic as “help me, or save me,” yet over the centuries we have made it seem to be more like shouts of “hooray,” like Jesus was in some sort of ticker tape parade. Yet the help and salvation they sought was vengeance and retribution.

So quickly they forgot the words of the Haggadah, those words of the Psalms that speak of a God of love. So quickly did they forget the commandment to love their neighbor. So quickly did they disregard this acclaimed prophet from Nazareth's words to love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Like their ancestors in David's day, they didn't see a world built on God's terms, they sought worldly power and prominence as God's special ones. And when he failed to meet their selfish expectations of worldly power and success, the final irony is they would be the same people who cried “crucify him” at the end of the week.

It can be easy for us in hindsight to cast judgment, but can you blame them? They had endured centuries of domination and oppression, of feeling alone and abandoned, even by their God. The miserable status quo seemed to be all they could rely on; doing their best to get by in the system they had. Then along comes this ray of hope, this beacon of potential change. Yet when the hope he promises doesn't immediately materialize, when he fails to meet their expectations in the context of this world, they return to the system that they knew, that they were familiar with.

And that system played the situation well. Jesus was the real threat, not them. The injustice that system promoted and sustained was the only way to survive in this world. If this “prophet” and the threat of upheaval he represented was not eliminated, the consequences would be dire. Fear is a very effective tool, isn't it? Maybe the crowd's fickle reactions aren't so hard to understand.

Our world isn't so different. I'm sure many of us have experienced feeling alone and abandoned. Many still suffer under the oppression and dominance of a few. And I'm sure I'm not alone in the frustration and anger I feel at the oppression and marginalization of certain groups happening in our world now.

The true meaning of “hosanna” has more significance for us now. The question we need to ask ourselves, is what “help” are we seeking? How can we be “saved?” What is our perspective, in our own situation? I think for many of us, this new post pandemic world we have found ourselves in, has been sobering. For so long, we have relied on ourselves to define success and security.

We accumulated wealth to get all those items that we thought would give us, and maybe

our immediate families, all those things that would enable the joy and security we yearned for. We became insular, focused on our own little piece of the world, and filled the emptiness with stuff and community from a distance, on a little screen in front of us. Many sought to find their own way into being in that little group at the top, the group that convinced us their way was the ideal, and taught us to fear any challenge to that viewpoint. Yet suddenly, for an extended period of time, we were forced to stay in our own little piece of that world, and we realized what we had lost. Now that little screen was all we had, and all that stuff we acquired, and the potential prominence of being part of the powerful, seem like rather hollow foundations. Things like toilet paper and milk had more value than Gucci and expensive trainers.

But probably most of all, we missed each other. We missed the human interaction. We missed the “normal” that was. Yet when the world did open up again, what emerged was not quite the same “normal” as what was. Those at the lower end of the employment ladder realized the worth they had: the front line service workers, those who make it possible to supply us with our basic needs. Those who had always been marginalized were asserting their value and not accepting being regulated to the fringes of society. And much like the powers that be in Jesus' time, the powers of today seek to label those promoting radical inclusion as the problem, decrying the evils of being “woke,” trying to force the world back to a “normal” that was built on scapegoating and hate.

Maybe Holy Week is the perfect time to be thinking about the change we see. After all, after the joy of Palm Sunday faded, Jesus began his walk to the cross, alone. His dark time was beginning. Likewise, after the redemption we experienced with the reopening of our world, darkness has threatened to overwhelm many in our own spheres. Yet through it all, Jesus' message and the salvation it offered did not change. He didn't change his sound bites to appease the worldly needs of the crowd. He stayed with God's ideal. One of caring for one another, one of “us,” not me and them, of love, not retribution and hate. His resurrection offers the promise of a world based on that love, one that is in direct opposition to the world that condemned him as a threat.

The question for us today, is how will we bear our own crosses? How will we emerge from our own Passion Weeks? We have a choice. We can continue to keep rebuilding the same broken world that keeps leading to failure, desperation, and oppression, or we can try something different. We can choose to learn from this experience, to embrace the blessing of the struggles of the last several years, or we can just rebuild the same old status quo.

Will we let those times of loneliness and isolation just become faded memory, or will we seek to change our ways of being: to value community and togetherness? Will we seek to reach out to others, so that they are no longer “them” but “us?” And as disciples of Christ, as Christ's body, will we work to change our country and our world to be the great community of love and compassion we are called to? These may seem like hopeless idealistic goals, but we worship a God who works almost entirely outside of our box.

God's plan for us has been clear all along. The question is, will we follow it and choose the

cornerstone to build with that does not fit in the logic of this world? As we journey into the rest of this holiest of weeks, as we remember the trials of sufferings of our savior so long ago and the redemption it provides, I hope and pray that we emerge from this time a changed people, with a renewed understanding of what really matters, and a renewed commitment to be the true community God calls us to be, in response to the cries of Hosanna, help me, all around us today. Amen.

Call to Serve (resources)

Lord Jesus, you who expressed your kingship not by taking but by giving, not by demanding but by sacrificing – bless us now as we follow your example in the giving of ourselves in these signs of our lives – our tithes and offerings, our service and prayers, given in your honor and for the good of the world.

As we listen to this interlude from Annie, let's give thought to how we, as the body of Christ, can respond to the cries of “hosanna, help us” around us today, and share with the world the peace that can only be found in Christ.

A Time for Reflection

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Eternal God, you have created the heavens and the earth, giving breath to every living thing. We thank you for the gifts of creation and for life itself. We thank you for making us in your own image, for forgiving us when we act as though you have no claim on us, and for keeping us in your constant care.

We rejoice in Jesus Christ, the only one eternally begotten by you, born of your servant Mary, who shared the joys and sorrows of our lives. We remember his death and celebrate his resurrection, and in the beloved community of your church, we seek his kin-dom's arrival in this world.

We take courage from the abiding presence of your Holy Spirit in our midst. We offer you our praise for women and men of faith in every age who stand as witnesses to your love and justice.

Gracious God, we ask you to bless these gifts of our talent and treasure, and all of us with the outpouring of your Holy Spirit. Through these commitments, make us the body of Christ, the church, your servant people, that we may be salt and light and leaven for the furtherance of your will in all the world. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

God's steadfast love endures forever. No matter what you are going through, no matter what difficulties you face, know that you are loved deeply by God. You matter

to God. The hairs on your head are accounted for. Breathe deeply into the Spirit of Life, give thanks for your life, and bless one another. Care for one another. Love one another. Know that God's steadfast love will endure beyond what we are going through now. God's steadfast love endures forever. Amen.

Hymn *All Glory Laud and Honor* **237**

Benediction

And now we lay down the palm branches. And with them we lay down our belief that there is another way for you to be God. As the last echo of the final alleluia fades, so does our hope that this journey can end in any other way. The week stretches ahead glory-less and pain-full. Whether we walk with all faith or none we look towards the cross, knowing it is both the most human and most divine of all journeys travel the road with courage, with love, and with the uneasy peace that is the gift of faith into this holiest of weeks.

Amen.