

**First Presbyterian Church
of Ithaca, Michigan**



**Holy Week at Home
April 5 – 11, 2020**

Palm Sunday
April 5, 2020

Call to Worship

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest!
Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of 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.

Opening Prayer

Loving God, as we come to the beginning of Holy Week, we remember your triumphant entry into Jerusalem. We sing your praises, shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David." You alone are the true King, the leader greater than all others. Even so, in your great mercy you chose to become like us, taking on human form and living among us. As we celebrate and shout "Hosanna" today, may we remember what will soon follow. Keep us faithful in word and deed, and help us love you to the best of our ability. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Hymn

Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

Wave your palm branches as you sing today's hymn!

197 Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

1 Ho - san - na, loud ho - san - na, the lit - tle chil - dren sang;
 2 From Ol - i - vet they fol - lowed 'mid an ex - ult - ant crowd,
 3 "Ho - san - na in the high - est!" That an - cient song we sing,

through pil - lared court and tem - ple the joy - ful an - them rang,
 the vic - tor palm branch wav - ing, and chant - ing clear and loud;
 for Christ is our Re - deem - er; the Lord of heaven, our King.

To Je - sus, who had blessed them, close fold - ed to his breast,
 the Lord of earth and heav - en rode on in low - ly state,
 O may we ev - er praise him with heart and life and voice,

the chil - dren sang their prais - es, the sim - plest and the best.
 nor scorned that lit - tle chil - dren should on his bid - ding wait.
 and in his bliss - ful pres - ence e - ter - nal - ly re - joice.

The opening two stanzas narrate the first Palm Sunday in the past tense, but the third stanza shifts to the present tense to emphasize what current singers do and believe. The repeated elements in this anonymous German tune suggest the repetitive patterns in a crowd's chant.

Scripture Reading

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever! Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever." Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Save us, we beseech you, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech you, give us success! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord. The Lord is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, I will extol you. O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Scripture Reading

Matthew 21:1-11

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.”

Silent Reflection

Prayers of Intercession

Jesus, you set your face towards Jerusalem and walked alongside those who suffer. Be our vision, that we too may walk the way of compassion and extend a hand to those we meet.

Lord, hear our prayer, and in your love, answer.

Lord, you stopped to heal the sick and tend to those broken in body, mind or spirit. Be our vision, that we too may be a source of healing to all in need of your grace.

Lord, hear our prayer, and in your love, answer.

Jesus, you said, “The first shall be last and the last first.” Be our vision, that we too may work towards your realm – when the marginalized and oppressed will be raised up and know that they are indeed beloved children of the Holy.

Lord, hear our prayer, and in your love, answer.

Jesus, you took the time to pray and to be silent. Be our vision, that through our prayers, meditation and reflection we may draw closer to you and find our way on this journey of faith.

Lord, hear our prayer, and in your love, answer.

Lord, you entered Jerusalem with peace in your heart. Be our vision, that we too can live as people of peace in the face of the world’s many conflicts. May we hold your vision of justice and peace ever before us.

Lord, hear our prayer, and in your love, answer.

Bless us, O Blessed One, as we enter into the days ahead of us. We will need your power and presence to sustain us as we move through these difficult days together. Spirit of Love and Life, stay close. These and all the prayers of our hearts we offer in faith, as we pray the way you taught us to pray:

Lord’s Prayer

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Hymn

All Glory, Laud, and Honor

All Glory, Laud, and Honor 196

Refrain

All glo - ry, laud, and hon - or to thee, Re-deem-er, King,

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

1 Thou art the King of Is - ra - el, thou Da - vid's roy - al Son,
 2 The peo - ple of the He - brews with palms be - fore thee went;
 3 To thee, be - fore thy pas - sion, they sang their hymns of praise;
 4 Thou didst ac - cept their prais - es; ac - cept the prayers we bring,

who in the Lord's name com - est, the King and bless - ed One.
 our praise and prayers and an - thems be - fore thee we pre - sent.
 to thee, now high ex - alt - ed, our mel - o - dy we raise.
 who in all good de - light - est, thou good and gra-cious King!

These stanzas for Palm Sunday have been selected and translated from a much longer Latin poem written by a bishop who was the leading theologian in Charlemagne's court. They are sung to a 17th-century German chorale, as adapted for these words in the mid-19th century.

Monday of Holy Week

April 6, 2020

Scripture Reading

John 12:1-11

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, since it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus.

Meditation

*by The Rev. John Stuart
Pastor, Erin Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee*

Women play an important role throughout Holy Week. They pastorally look after Christ, offering Him their comfort and tears during the most intense week of His life. In the midst of all the fear and pain that Jesus goes through, the women remain faithful when the men run away. Their devotion will earn them the privilege of being the first to know of Christ's resurrection – they will be blessed by God for their faith and love. When Mary pours out the expensive perfume and soothes Christ's weary feet with it, she is proclaiming that He is the most important person in her life. She is thankful for what Jesus had done – raising her brother from the dead – but she is also mindful that Christ the great Healer is human, too. He needs to be cherished and loved, cared for and comforted. This is why she does something beautiful for Him.

Prayer

by The Rev. Keith Kaufold

Lord, we confess that our sin is greater than ourselves. Our separation from you leaves our lives, our homes, and our communities abandoned. Jesus, you are the Light of the world, the hope of every city, the longing of every human heart. Holy Spirit, illumine our hearts to recognize what within us refuses your will in the present. Amen.

Tuesday of Holy Week

April 7, 2020

Scripture Reading

John 12:20-36

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. The crowd answered him, “We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” Jesus said to them, “The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light.”

After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them.

Meditation

by The Rev. John Stuart

This event that we read during Holy Week reminds us that our faith in Christ began in Judea & Galilee but quickly spread through Greece and eventually made its way to Rome. The Greeks who are looking for Jesus have heard some wonderful stories and so, like any other tourists, they want to see the real thing. Jesus is heartened by this request. It means that His ministry of salvation is not just for His own people but for the entire world. His message is not just meant for some, but for all. Two thousand years later, we are the beneficiaries of this incredible gift of grace from God. In a time when our world is facing pandemic, we should also remind ourselves that the spread of Christianity has allowed us to receive faith, hope, and love, even in the most trying of times. God sent His dearly beloved Son so that we would not perish, but have eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

Prayer

by The Rev. Dr. Michael Spezio

Gracious and compassionate God, be with us in our lament. Turn our hearts and our most inmost parts toward seeing anew, toward the suffering that we ourselves experience in this moment, and toward the suffering that others experience because of our shared rebellion. Bring us this day into the grace of knowing that our suffering is that of others also, that our lament is their lament, and bring us into the grace of praying that our understanding may become full—and of praying for a fullness of understanding that all may share. Amen.

Wednesday of Holy Week

April 8, 2020

Scripture Reading

John 13:1-17

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

Meditation

by The Rev. John Stuart

The last words of this verse speak to us about the deep love Jesus had for those closest to Him. He knew that He was about to be betrayed; He understood the fate that awaited Him and yet, despite it all, His capacity to love others never left Him. Once again, we come across the very human side of Christ – a man who dearly loved His family and friends. This should give us all a great hope, for we are also dearly loved by Christ. Think about it, He proved His love for us because He was willing to sacrifice Himself for the mistakes we were yet to make! We hadn't even been born, but Jesus who loved us before Time began, was willing to lay down His life for us! In the midst of all that is holy and sacred this week, there is nothing holier than the love Christ has for us. What a wonderful Savior! What an amazing love!

Prayer

by The Rev. Dr. David G. Dawson

God, we have sinned against you and each other. We are not worthy to be called your children. Immerse us in deep lament. Do not allow us to excuse our sins. Meet us at the cross, where our lament can be done in the presence of the perfect suffering of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

Maundy Thursday

April 9, 2020

Maundy Thursday virtual service will be online via Zoom at 7:00pm EDT.

For this service, you will need bread/crackers and grape juice/wine.

Zoom Meeting ID: 989 875 4437 Password: 4437

Scripture Reading

John 13:21-32

After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, “Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.” The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him; Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “Do quickly what you are going to do.” Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the festival”; or, that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.

Meditation

by The Rev. John Stuart

This is one of the saddest incidents in the Bible. Judas, after being with Jesus on His ministry for three years, decides to betray the one person who could save him from this sin. It's a terrible event in human history, but it also reveals how mistaken we can be, especially when motivated by greed, power, or delusion. Betraying Jesus is something that you or I would never wish to do, but sometimes when we cast aside His truth or teaching, that is exactly what we are doing. We betray His words and ways; we follow our own kind of faith; we make up our own ideas about what is right or wrong. On his way to the Sanhedrin, Judas probably justified what he had chosen to do. It wasn't just about the money; he must have been angry or deeply disappointed with Jesus as a leader. He didn't want to be on the losing side...and yet, that's exactly where he landed.

Prayer

by The Rev. Dr. Donald K. McKim

O Lord Jesus Christ, you died to save us. You stretched your arms on the cross to embrace the world and gather us as your people in the church. We rejoice! May we share our lives with others who love you—and with the world you love so deeply. Amen.

Good Friday
April 10, 2020

Good Friday virtual service will be online via Zoom at 12:00pm EDT.
Zoom Meeting ID: 989 875 4437 Password: 4437

Scripture Reading

John 19:17-30

Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfill what the scripture says, "They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots."

And that is what the soldiers did.

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), “I am thirsty.” A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, “It is finished.” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Meditation

by The Rev. John Stuart

The Romans executed Christ in the garbage dump. It was the filthiest place imaginable and they did this to shame Him completely. Apart from a few men, most of the women who loved Him dearly, His mother included, stood at the foot of His cross. Jesus was bleeding profusely and his face must have been unrecognizable. He was naked and allowed no decency. He was God’s child being sacrificed on the twisted altar of sin that we had made. And yet, in that moment of suffering and humiliation, a new faith was born. Sin was paid in full and the debt we owed to God was redeemed. Christ gave everything so that we might be offered everything in return – the forgiveness of our sins and everlasting life.

Prayer

by The Rev. Kellie D. Wild

God, help us to know that you do not forsake us, that your steadfast love, grace, and mercy are always present in our lives. Let us rejoice and say “God is good” even when to our prayer we do not get the answer we so desperately want. Amen.

Holy Saturday

April 11, 2020

Scripture Reading

John 19:31-42

Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, "None of his bones shall be broken." And again another passage of scripture says, "They will look on the one whom they have pierced."

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Meditation

by The Rev. John Stuart

Two heroes enter the story – Joseph of Arimathea and the Pharisee Nicodemus. They both put their reputations and lives on the line by asking the Governor Pontius Pilate for Christ's body – a body of a traitor that was supposed to rot on the cross. They gently took down Christ's body which meant they would have been unclean for the rest of the Passover Festival. Thus, they not only gave up their reputations, they also set aside their rich religious traditions which must have been deeply shocking to them. Christ's body was placed in a nearby tomb. There was no time to do the usual preparations, although Nicodemus, like Mary earlier that week, brought some sweet-smelling nard to be rubbed on His body and take away the stench of death. There was nothing more anyone could do until the Special Sabbath was over.

Prayer

by The Rev. James F. Reese

Gracious God, Giver of all good gifts, enable us to give goodness and loving kindness to all people through the supremacy of the Spirit. Let your Spirit raise up our hearts that we may glorify you. Let each of us begin, continue, and end in your care. Amen.