

Palm Sunday 2019 WHO WILL SEE THE KING?

Skits mixed with music & readings –

Gathering in the Spirit...

Welcome & Announcements

Hymn One:

Call to worship (based on Psalms 63 and 118)

Leader: O God, you are our God. We seek you.

**People: Our souls thirst for you as in a dry and weary land
 where there is no water.**

Leader: We thank you for being our salvation, for being our chief cornerstone.

**People: We bless you as we bind the festal procession with branches,
 up to the horns of the altar!**

All: O God, you satisfy our souls as with a rich feast.

In the shadow of your wings, we sing for joy, and you uphold us.

Prayer

Placement of visual elements -

Sharing the Good News...

Hymn Two:

Offering

Pastoral Prayer

Prayers for the people and end with - **Palm Sunday Prayer**

God, On this Holy day of Palm Sunday and Passion, we have so many mixed feelings in side of us.

We remember your son's triumphant entrance into Jerusalem

with the people shouting praises and waving Palm Branches.

And we join them with our own praises and yet...we remember too that this wonderful parade for your son, becomes another kind of parade before officials and the booing crowds.

And instead of the crowds singing his praises they are shouting to crucify him.

And our hearts are broken by those very shouts, and the pain and suffering Jesus bore that day.

And yet we know that it is because of his choosing to enter Jerusalem and taking the path he knew he was taking, there is hope, grace, love and salvation for all.

And there are still many in need of hope in our world.

There are still many in need of your grace in our world.

There are still many in need of your love in our world.

And there are still many in need of salvation in our world.

Lord, enter our lives, our churches, our cities, our countries once again today.

Heal us, Lord.

Transform us.

Renew us.

Draw us closer to you in this journey of Holy Week, empower us with strength and courage and with the assurance that you are with us, world without end. Amen.

(~ written by Rev Abi, and posted on her **Long and Winding Road** blog.)

Read Luke 19:28-40

Procession - Children parade off to SS

- Some of the Adults in procession are in the skit – An Unusual Parade

An Unusual Parade

R 1: Wanna see Jesus?
R 2: I do, too!
R 3: C'mon, bring your jacket
R 4: Grab a coat
R 5: Snatch a palm
R 6: Line the way!

R 2: I can't see!
R 3: Where is he?
R 4: Do you have binoculars?
R 5: C'mon, lift me up!
R 6: Above this crowd
R 1: This crowd

R 3: One person is a crowd
R 4: Where will he be?
R 5: How will he enter?
R 6: How will he enter?
R 1: How will he come?
R 2: How will he stride into Jerusalem?

R 4: A horse
R 5: Yes!
R 6: A white horse
R 1: A parade
R 2: A military march
R 3: A 21-gun salute!

R 5: Yes!
R 6: A political campaign
R 1: Convention
R 2: A coronation
R 3: How shall we address you,
prime minister?
R 4: Yes!

R 6: A concert tour
R 1: Sports event
R 2: A rally
R 3: Come, let us bow before our hero,
our star!
R 4: But, where is he?
R 5: The crowd disperses

R 1: Leaves
R 2: Like he's come and gone
R 3: No horse
R 4: No limousine
R 5: No paparazzi

R 2, 3, 4 How did I miss him?

R 1, 5, 6 How did I not see his face?

(pass black cloth to The Doubter)

Hymn Three:

The Doubter (wears black cloth as a bandana)

I had good intentions of seeing Jesus that day. But I wasn't looking for a donkey.
There's no shame in shouting hosanna. But, tell me, is a colt-rider capable of saving anything?
Let me back up a bit.
Under normal circumstances I might have been a follower. Had there been less "turn the
other cheek" nonsense and more brawn. Less hockey, more fight, if you know what I mean.
What's wrong with a bit of redemptive violence – when it is justified?
I never understood him.
Praising the woman who anoints his feet.
Equating love with a father who hugs a prodigal.
Identifying God as a mother hen. Shameful.
Why had there been so little mention of glory? Triumph? Or victory?

(pass black cloth to The Leader)

The Leader (wears black cloth as a stole)

I saw Jesus that day. The nerve of a ... Galilean – I can hardly spit out the word. A Nazarene, no less -
to ride a donkey – under the auspices of peace – only to stir up conflict.
Unequivocal provocation!
Why incite the masses with false ideological arguments that serve only to create controversy:
accusing the money changers of injustice,
assuming authority above our leadership,
avoiding questions of substance,
accusing us of shamefully accepting honour at the expense of the poor.
Does he know with whom he is speaking?
Does he have any idea by what authority we act?
Does he know we're on the side of God?
High time to end this disturbance and silence the rebel - once and for all.

(pass black cloth to The Crowd Enthusiast)

Read Isaiah 50:4-9a;

The Prophet Isaiah prophesies words that could come from Jesus on this day years ago.
The Sovereign LORD has given me a well-instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary.
He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed.
The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears; I have not been rebellious, I have not turned away.
I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard;
I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.
Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced.
Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame.
He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me?
Let us face each other! Who is my accuser? Let him confront me!
It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me. Who will condemn me?

Pastor: When our shouts of joy turn to derision and rejection, even in our anguish God's steadfast love endures forever. We are called to follow Jesus who sets his eyes on the cross. Palm Sunday is the start of Holy Week – the critical juncture between cries of “Hosanna” and shouts of “Crucify.” Palm Sunday week is filled with increasing tension as Good Friday is around the corner. This tension seems impossible given the street celebration we witness today. But these paradoxical dynamics are often within us still – even this side of Easter. We see this in the titles of our skits – The Unusual Parade, The Doubter, The Leader, the Crowd Enthusiast, The Observer, and the Faithful Widow. So often our ‘Palm Sundays’ give way to ‘dark Fridays’ and we must learn again and again to keep our Fridays open to the possibility of Easter – a resurrection cycle that's sometimes hard to see and believe.

The Crowd Enthusiast (wears black cloth as a scarf)

What a party! The weather. Atmosphere. Great community spirit.
Who doesn't love a parade?
And the excitement. Pandemonium! Woodstock all over again.
One of those historic-type moments.
Not that I expected to meet him. 100, 200,000 people.
What's the chance I'd see the superstar?
But it was on my mind ... you know, something I could maybe tell my grandkids –
“I was there. I saw him.”
And I did – he walked right in front of me. I almost touched him.
Kind of embarrassing - my infatuation for the guy - like I sort of loved him. In a way.
Hey, Jesus ... can I have your autograph?

(pass black cloth to The Observer)

The Observer (wears black cloth as a sash)

I had no problem loaning him my donkey. But I was curious, so watched from the back row –
and took a few notes.
Overall, I have to say, the street theatre was quite impressive.
Well orchestrated.
Well choreographed.
Exceptional crowd control, given it was Passover and standing room only.
And the branches – wow – they raised the crowd's energy exponentially. March madness.
Pretty strategic, too, to enter the city from the Mount of Olives, and stage the whole thing
from the traditional site of Jerusalem's final battle.
“A+” I'd say.
Give credit to his communications team - to be able to stir up a carnival from the back of a
donkey. And manage in that one moment to lampoon the whole system.
Ingenious.
Rick Mercer couldn't have done it any better!

(pass black cloth to The Faithful Widow)

Hymn Four:

Read Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.
Let Israel say: His love endures forever.”

Open for me the gates of the righteous; I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.
This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter.
I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.

The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;
the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.
The LORD has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad.
LORD, save us! LORD, grant us success!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you.
The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine on us.
With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.

You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, and I will exalt you.
Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.

The Faithful Widow (wears black cloth as a head covering)

I went to the parade empty handed not able to afford the concession price for a palm. 2 branches for a buck! I only had two copper coins. And they were for the treasury.
I don't necessarily care for the pomp and ceremony, anyway. Never have. What did we use to call it - "splash and dash." Get emotionally high, then disappear. No, I was interested in him.

I had heard him speak before – you know, of mustard seeds and pearls, lost coins and hidden treasures.
He speaks in parables – gets you thinking. Today I hoped to hear a parable again.
But he didn't speak, today, in words. His actions were a parable.

I'm old enough to know that actions speak louder than words, anyway.
And that's why I followed him – silently.
And stayed with him - even after the crowd had gone. I was the only one.

Perhaps those who look for horses can't see a donkey. Those who have power can't see his authority. Those who love the crowd's energy can't see what all the fuss's about.
Those who watch from a distance never really get involved.
I don't know. That day I was the only one.

And I saw him weep. On a hilltop overlooking the city. Weeping. Praying for us, I guess.
Praying for us – the political observer, the superficial lover, the power broker and the unbeliever.
Praying for us – because we have such a hard time seeing. That night I prayed for him.

And I left my 2 coins - all that I have - trusting actions are louder than words.
Trusting, in time, there will be more – enough – after the tears have been shed.
Yeah, I'm old enough to know that God is found in strange places – even on a donkey.

Pastor: What did Jesus think was going to happen on Passover, entering Jerusalem the way he did? Passover was the most volatile and political time for the Israelites. Passover invokes and memorializes the divine act of liberation from Egyptian oppression. The blood of the lambs on the doorposts of the Hebrews saved them from the death that visited Egypt, just as Jesus' blood offers us eternal life today. The Passover feast serves as a kind of shorthand for the entire Exodus experience -- leaving Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, God's election of Israel at Sinai, the giving of the commandments, the wandering in the wilderness, and the eventual movement into Canaan, and the forming of a nation with land.

Having a rebuilt temple to worship in after a time of exile is a sign of hope that God triumphed over the greatest superpower of its day -- Babylon and then at Jesus' time, Rome. It also was a symbol of national identity. This must have resonated in the minds of the Jews in their second temple celebrations of Passover.

So political & revolutionary sentiment runs through the Passover feast. This explains why Pontius Pilate and his Roman legions left the comfortable confines of his palace in Caesarea for the Jerusalem -- as a threatening presence & crowd control during Passover. The Romans distrusted associations, crowds, and gatherings such as the one that was in Jerusalem.

For example, in his letter to Pliny the Younger, the emperor Trajan (c. 111 CE) wrote, "When people gather together for a common purpose -- whatever name we may give them and whatever function we may assign them -- they soon become political groups." Put bluntly, give people enough time and space and they will soon turn against you. This suspicion, already embedded in this scene at Jerusalem, haunted the Christian movement on its path to legitimacy under the rule of Constantine.

And Zechariah's (9:9) Old Testament prophecy didn't calm people's expectations down. It was: "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout,

Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

The Synoptic Gospels pick up on Zechariah's prophecy. It's an important symbol of what occurred in Jerusalem. But Luke's story is the only one that tells of Jesus riding the colt. And while there is much in this procession scene that mimics a royal procession, there is no place in the Hebrew Bible where we find kings riding on colts like this. So the implication is that the "triumphal" entry into Jerusalem is meant to praise Jesus as God's envoy or agent. Jesus going along with this indicates that he fully realized this mantle of his messiahship.

Jesus entered Jerusalem like a conquering political or military ruler, as was the custom. The crowds were expectant. They wanted the Messiah as they defined it to come to free them from Rome. So Jesus fulfilled an old prophecy. The king riding on a colt, the foal of a donkey. But kings and generals ride big intimidating horses. A donkey is a humble mount, and the colt of a donkey even more so. Donkeys are smaller than horses, not as fast or responsive as horses--unsuitable for battle. The colt of a donkey could barely carry a full-grown man.

Jesus didn't want there to be any confusion about the message that he was bringing to Israel and the world when he arrived in Jerusalem. This was a way of showing that he was not like a typical triumphant emperor or General. It was a way of telling those present that he was not who they thought he was. It's an echo of the angel's announcement at his birth. "Peace, good will, glory to God in the highest." But Jesus' definition of peace is different from that of a national political leader. Instead He offers shalom, inner and outward peace so we don't need to feel troubled or fearful. The Kingdom of God is a different kind of kingdom this is of invitation and faith and followership.

Confession and reconciliation

Worship Leader: *(reading 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.”

Who will confess Jesus as Lord today?

Confessional response *(one or more persons stand in the congregation and say)*

I (or we) will confess Jesus as Lord today.

(The person or persons then come forward, place their bowls on the worship center table, and offer their confessional response in the form they have chosen.)

Worship Leader: We are all invited to confess Jesus as Lord. Let us bring ourselves to God in prayer. *(Worship leader leads in prayer.)*

All: ***Living God, give us the courage to confess your Son, Jesus, as our Lord.
When others vie for our loyalty, we will confess Jesus as Lord.***

Worship Leader: When earthly powers claim supremacy *(pause)*, we will confess Jesus as Lord.
When our souls hunger for reality and truth *(pause)*, we will confess Jesus as Lord.

All: ***In the morning and in the evening, we will confess Jesus as Lord.***

Words of Assurance

Worship Leader: Our generous God has provided for us.
(Leader moves to the worship center table and fills the bowls with bread while speaking these words of assurance.)

Hymn Five:

Benediction

Sending (from Philippians 2)

As we enter into this Holy Week, may every knee bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, at the name of Jesus, and may every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.