

Sunday Home Worship for Wesley and St James, April 5th, 2020

Palm Sunday

King's College Cambridge 2013 Easter #4 All Glory, Laud and Honour
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHN8Uak6Yow>

*Call into Awareness of Divine Presence

We are almost through the season of Lent- and this year it's been a Lent like no other. Some regularly give something up for Lent- perhaps dessert, perhaps Facebook. Some build in habits of prayer, contemplation. It's each person's choice.

This year, instead, we have all given up , together- given up coffee with friends, given up visiting on the street corner, given up exercise classes and quilting groups and the curling rink, given up school, many of us given up going to our workplace, given up g family Easter dinners. And, especially poignant for us gathered here, we've given up Sundays in our shared worship space.

That's a lot of giving up .

Why? For the greater good, for protection of the vulnerable, for service to our community, to help with health and healing.

And in all this we follow one who also gave up for the good of others. Jesus enjoyed happy times with friends as much as we do. Jesus counselled people to consider the lilies, the birds of the air, to enjoy each moment with gratitude, to embrace the gift of each day.

And yet, all the while, he set his face towards Jerusalem- a holy city then and now- and yet a dangerous place, a place of death. And yet, there was great joy when he arrived there.... Hear again the ancient story

Reading : Mark 11:1-10- The First Palm Sunday

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent 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 a 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; 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 went ahead and those who followed were shouting, 'Hosanna
Blessed is the one 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.

Words of Reflection

How do we even do Palm Sunday this year?

Normally, we are in the zone.! Spring is coming. Easter is coming.t.

For Wesley people , the last few years Palm Sunday was the festive day when we went back into the sanctuary- Last Palm Sunday was best of all, our first Sunday in our renovated sanctuary .

Most years we can pick up on the excitement of that crowd around Jesus, shouting, waving palm branches. On a high! Full of hope!

But this year ?

This year, Jesus could not even have walked the streets with his 12, much less a crowd.

The Mark Palm Sunday story has the smallest crowd of the 4 .

But even it would be too many.

If Jesus passed through town today, we'd miss it.

We would all be staying home.

So, what does Palm Sunday say to you and me, as we do the opposite of going out and forming a crowd- not even a little one?

Well, if we dig deeper, and use our imaginations, I think there is something.

What is that crowd saying? What are they feeling? What are they expressing?

There's a sense of promise. A sense of hope.

Those green leafy branches feel like a new , hopeful growing season-

Is this not how the people saw Jesus- and how his first followers later on saw him- full of that greening power-

- promising healing , new growth, abundance, liberation , hope for every longing heart.

And the people needed that.

They were struggling-

Occupied by a foreign empire,

Financially stressed.

No social safety net.

barely surviving.

Hosanna they cried.

Save us.

Bring us a better tomorrow.

Or, even, a better today.

Isn't this a lot like us?

We are a free people, blessedly so, with a government and an infrastructure intended to help us,

We have many comforts and advantages undreamt of by most in that long ago crowd.

But today we too are struggling

Occupied by a pandemic ,

The pandemic has chased us out of the streets, the coffee shops, the schools, the libraries, and yes, even our churches-

**It's dispersed us, scattering back into our own homes where we don't receive visitors,
It's closed us off from loved ones , whether in another country, another province, or even
just down the street.**

**It prevents us from doing what we would usually do for each other - visit in hospital ,
gather for funerals, or, more cheerfully, invite someone to share a meal or a coffee.
And we are carrying anxiety, fear, grief- who knows what, it could be different for each.**

And we want this to be over-

I see this as we question our prime Minister , our Premier, our health officers.

How long?

Save us now.

Tell us we and our loved ones will live through this.

Tell us that someone will come up with a vaccine we can all go get.

**Who wouldn't dance in the streets- if the day came when this went away or got fixed and
it was safe to dance in the streets again!**

And yet, the Palm Sunday crowd did not get the answers they wanted.

Jesus did not make their troubles disappear.

He was headed for a whole pile of trouble himself,

Jesus had been warned.

Don't go to Jerusalem. It's dangerous.

He knew , and he went anyway.

He sacrificed his own safety,

somehow this is what he had to do for the good of others,

Yesterday was the 52nd anniversary of Martin Luther King's assassination.

He too went where it wasn't safe to go,

Because he had to stay true to his dream for this people.

And today some are going where it's not safe .

Especially health care workers,

And other essential service workers-

They are unsung heroes, taking risks daily so that others can live.

They did not choose this- no one would- we would all rather stay safe and alive.

Jesus enjoyed being alive too!

**Those front-line workers are bravely doing what they can to help us all get through this
And hoping they too will get through to see better days.**

And what of the rest of us?

Our service is also to keep others safe and help them get through this

And hope that we too will get through to see better days

There are no guarantees

There were none in that first Holy Week either.
Except that Divine Love would continue!

We can only embrace our call for now,
Our call to sacrifice much that sustains us and gives us joy,
In order to do what is right and good for everyone.
And as we do so, we keep in mind those who've paid the greatest costs,
We note the cracks, the gaps which make this time extra tough for some and we strive to
make this better any way we can- now, or later.

This Holy Week, we wait in place -
For now , we remain absent from one another,
Yet present in any way we can-
Still weaving a web of caring and compassion,
Still growing the greening power of health and hope for all.

And so we share in Jesus ' self-giving Love,
Love for each precious one.
Though apart, we can do this together-
Thanks be to God who holds us close through all that is yet to come.
Amen.

Musical Selection

Ride on , ride on in majesty from King's College, Cambridge
<https://youtu.be/g-qDQSjnzH8>

***Offering Prayer and Prayers of the People**

What made that long-ago Holy Week holy? Was it the self-giving love of Jesus, living and loving to the full even when that took him into dangerous times and places? Was it Divine Compassion for the failings of those who betrayed, denied, deserted or remained silent? Was it the courageous witness of the few who waited at the foot of the cross and remained to mourn? Or is it you and I who make that week holy in our remembrance, in our attempt to love and live as well as we can, in our imperfect efforts to keep courage and hope alive? As we seek Wisdom and Guidance for our holy week journey, we give what we can- of what we have, of what we are, of what we yet hope to be. May our giving and living open a way for the greening power of your Creating and Recreating Love to bring new life and hope here and around the earth.

And in these days, we pray for those who are bearing burdens of fear, of illness, of sadness,
Those who are ill, of COV or other diseases,
Those alone in hospitals or care facilities where no one can visit,
Those grieving the loss of loved ones and having to wait who knows how long for the rituals which might bring comfort,
Those who wonder how to pay rent or put food on the table or whether their business will survive,
Those whose homes are unsafe because of abuse and violence,
The homeless who are especially at risk,

Children who are missing the security and care they found at school,
Parents who are overwhelmed ,
Those struggling with mental health and finding isolation hard to bear,
Those of course on the front lines,
And our medical officers and governments trying their best to lead us well and keep as many as possible safe.

And now in a moment of silence we hold in Love and Light all who need our prayers.
And we let that Love and Light surround us too , as the Spirit prays the prayers too deep for words.

These and all the prayers of our hearts we gather into the words shared by beloved community around the world and across the ages: Our Father.

Mission and Ministry, Joys and Concerns

Blessing

Let us journey on through this Holy Week like no other in a season like no other. Let us enter prayerfully, heartfully, into the poignant last days of Jesus' life, the Last Supper, the last hours, as we ponder what is poignant for us today. Know: it is in brokenness that we give thanks for healing, in sadness that we give thanks for joy, and in the shadows that we see the light.. Know that God's Spirit is with us not only in joyful celebration but in the , saddest and loneliest places. Remember – knowing that you do not remember alone.

Hosanna loud Hosanna sung by First Plymouth Church Lincoln Nebraska
<https://youtu.be/dEPSQyVgXhw>

Coming Events and Announcements

As you already have them. Plus-

Thurs. April 9 NO Wild Mercy group. We finish the book next week.

Thurs April 9 10 a.m. Spiritual Discussion Group with Jane and with Suren Yoganathan,
link <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/796554157>

Sun April 12 11 a.m. Zoom Easter service will include communion - please have ready some bread or a roll or a cracker , and some grape or other juice or whatever drinkable you have, and we will receive it together after the communion prayer.