



Celebrate

Sunday of the Passion / Palm Sunday

April 2, 2023

Today, we encounter the paradox that defines our faith: Jesus Christ is glorified king and humiliated servant. We too are full of paradox: like Peter, we fervently desire to follow Christ, but find ourselves afraid, denying God. We wave palms in celebration today as Christ comes into our midst, and we follow with trepidation as his path leads to death on the cross. Amid it all we are invited into this paradoxical promise of life through Christ's broken body and outpoured love in a meal of bread and wine. We begin this week that stands at the center of the church year, anticipating the completion of God's astounding work.

Procession with Palms

Matthew 21:1-11

If possible, the assembly gathers at a designated place outside the usual worship space, so that all may enter in procession. Palm branches, or branches of other trees and shrubs, are distributed before the service begins.

The presiding minister begins (repeated one or more times).

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying 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. ³If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." ⁴This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

⁵"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."

⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. ⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The

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 highest heaven!"

¹⁰When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" ¹¹The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

The presiding minister and the assembly greet one another.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

We praise you, O God, for redeeming the world through our Savior Jesus Christ. Today he entered the holy city in triumph and was proclaimed messiah and king by those who spread garments and branches along his way. Bless these branches and those who carry them. Grant us grace to follow our Lord in the way of the cross, so that, joined to his death and resurrection, we enter into life with you; through the same Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

continued

The assisting minister addresses the assembly.

Let us go forth in peace,
in the name of Christ. Amen.

The assembly follows the ministers into the church. "All glory, laud, and honor" (ELW #344) and other suitable hymns, psalms, or anthems may be sung as the people process into the church or once they have taken their places.

The presiding minister concludes the procession.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Prayer of the Day

Everlasting God, in your endless love for the human race you sent our Lord Jesus Christ to take on our nature and to suffer death on the cross. In your mercy enable us to share in his obedience to your will and in the glorious victory of his resurrection, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

Psalm

Psalm 31:9-16; refrain, Ps. 31:5



In - to your hands, O LORD, I com - mend my spir - it.

Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I¹ am in trouble;

my eye is consumed with sorrow, and also my throat¹ and my belly.

¹⁰**For my life is wasted with grief, and my¹ years with sighing;**

my strength fails me because of affliction, and my bones¹ are consumed.

¹¹I am the scorn of all my enemies, a disgrace to my neighbors,
a dismay to¹ my acquaintances;

when they see me in the street¹ they avoid me.

¹²**Like the dead I am forgotten,¹ out of mind;**

I am as useless as a¹ broken pot. R

¹³For I have heard the whispering of the crowd; fear is¹ all around;

they put their heads together against me; they plot to¹ take my life.

¹⁴**But as for me, I have trusted in¹ you, O LORD.**

I have said, "You¹ are my God.

¹⁵My times are¹ in your hand;

rescue me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who¹ persecute me.

¹⁶**Let your face shine up-¹ on your servant;**

save me in your¹ steadfast love." R

The servant of the Lord expresses absolute confidence in his final vindication, despite the fact that he has been struck and spit upon. This characteristic of the servant played an important role in the early church's understanding of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

The Lord God has given me
the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.
Morning by morning he awakens—
awakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.
⁵The Lord God has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backward.
⁶I gave my back to those who struck me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled
out the beard;

I did not hide my face
from insult and spitting.

⁷The Lord God helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to
shame;

⁸he who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me?

Let us stand up together.
Who are my adversaries?
Let them confront me.

^{9a}It is the Lord God who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?

Second Reading

Philippians 2:5-11

Paul uses an early Christian hymn to help us comprehend Jesus' obedient selflessness on the cross and how God has made Christ lord over all reality. The perspective of the cross becomes the way we rightly understand God, Christ, our own lives, and fellowship within the community of Christ.

Let the same mind be in you that was in
Christ Jesus,

⁶who, though he was in the form of
God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,

⁷but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,
⁸he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point
of death—
even death on a cross.

⁹Therefore God also highly exalted
him

and gave him the name
that is above every name,

¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and
under the earth,

¹¹and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Gospel Matthew 26:14—27:66 or Matthew 27:11-54 [not printed]

In fulfillment of scripture and obedience to God's will, Jesus goes to the cross so that a new covenant in his blood may bring forgiveness of sins. Even the soldiers who crucify him recognize him to be the Son of God.

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Sustained by God's abundant mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

Save your church, O God. Enable us to boldly confess in every time and place that Jesus Christ is Lord. With the humility of a servant, equip congregations, synods, and other ministry settings to proclaim your extravagant love for all. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Save your creation, O God. Every living being you have made has purpose. Give us renewed appreciation of farm animals who labor in the fields, service animals who accompany their human companions, and beloved pets who live alongside us. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Save the peoples of the earth, O God. Restore dignity to those who are scorned and persecuted for their religious beliefs or political activism, and deliver them from the hand of their enemies. Bring peace to places where conflict runs deep (*especially*). Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Save those who cry to you in any need, O God. Watch over all who are incarcerated or awaiting trial, and stand with those who are unjustly accused. Be present with those feeling isolated, lonely, or fearful (*especially*). Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Save us in your love, O God. Guide the work of church musicians, pastors, choirs, readers, deacons, technicians, acolytes, and all who assist in worship. Sustain them in their leadership as they accompany congregations through this Holy Week. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Save us at the last, O God. We give you thanks for your saints of old who embodied your servant love. As you came to their aid, so deliver us in times of trial, that every knee would bend in praise to you. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your steadfast love and your promise to renew your whole creation; through Jesus Christ our Savior.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday Psalm 36:5-11. **Tuesday** (commemoration of Benedict the African, confessor, died 1589) 1 Corinthians 1:18-31. **Wednesday** Isaiah 50:4-9a. **Maundy Thursday** (commemoration of Albrecht Dürer, died 1528; Matthias Grünewald, died 1529; Lucas Cranach, died 1553; artists) John 13:1-17, 31b-35. **Good Friday** John 18:1—19:42. **Resurrection of Our Lord/Vigil of Easter** Romans 6:3-11. **Resurrection of Our Lord/Easter Day** (commemoration of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, theologian, died 1945) Acts 10:34-43 *or* Jeremiah 31:1-6. Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Colossians 3:1-4 *or* Acts 10:34-43; Matthew 28:1-10 *or* John 20:1-18.

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