

**PALM SUNDAY
MARCH 28, 2021**

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, FALLS CHURCH, VA



*THE ENTRANCE RITE
(Gathered in the Narthex)*

PRELUDE Hosanna, Loud Hosanna Setting: Allan Mahnke

WELCOME

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

CALL TO WORSHIP from Psalm 118

This is the day the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good,
His steadfast love endures forever!

BLESSING OF THE PALMS

Let us pray. We praise and thank you, O God for the great acts of love by which you have redeemed us through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. On this day he entered the holy city of Jerusalem in triumph and was acclaimed Son of David and King of Kings by those who scattered their garments and branches of palm in his path. We ask that you bless these branches and those who bear them, and grant that we may ever hail him as our Lord and King and follow him with perfect confidence; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

PALM SUNDAY GOSPEL John 12:12-19

The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 12th chapter:
Glory to you, O Lord.

The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

"Fear not, daughter of Zion;
behold, your king is coming,
sitting on a donkey's colt!"

His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. The reason why

the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

PROCESSIONAL HYMN #443 Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

- | | |
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| <p>1 Hosanna, loud hosanna,
The little children sang;
Through pillared court and temple
The lovely anthem rang.
To Jesus, who had blessed them,
Close folded to His breast,
The children sang their praises,
The simplest and the best.</p> | <p>2 From Olivet they followed
Mid an exultant crowd,
The victor palm branch waving
And chanting clear and loud.
The Lord of earth and heaven
Rode on in lowly state
Nor scorned that little children
Should on His bidding wait.</p> |
|--|--|

**3 "Hosanna in the highest!"
That ancient song we sing;
For Christ is our Redeemer,
The Lord of heav'n our King.
Oh, may we ever praise Him
With heart and life and voice
And in His blissful presence
Eternally rejoice!**

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful,
Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

Jesus said: If any man would come after me,
Let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Christ was wounded for our transgressions;
He was bruised for our iniquities.

God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. Therefore, let us be reconciled to God and to one another.
(silence for reflection and self-examination)

Gracious God,
have mercy on us. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things done and left undone. Uphold us by your Spirit so that we may live and serve you in newness of life, to the honor and glory of your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life.
Amen.

KYRIE

O God, Father in heaven, have mercy upon us.

KYRIE

O God, Father in heaven, have mercy upon us.

**Your heart, O God, is grieved we know
By every evil, every woe;
Upon your cross-forsaken Son
Our death is laid, and peace is won.**

O Son of God, Redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us.

**Your arms extend, O Christ, to save
From sting of death and grasp of grave;
Your scars before the Father move
His heart to mercy at such love.**

O God, Holy Spirit, have mercy upon us.

**O lavish giver, come to aid
The feeble child your grace has made.
Now make us grow and help us pray;
Bring joy and comfort; come to stay.**

HYMN OF PRAISE (omitted during Lent)

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Let us pray. Almighty and everlasting God,
You sent Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take upon Himself our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross. Mercifully grant that we may follow the example of His great humility and patience and be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen



THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST LESSON Zechariah 9:9-12

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
behold, your king is coming to you;
righteous and having salvation is he,
humble and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the war horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and he shall speak peace to the nations;

his rule shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.
As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you,
I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.
Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope;
today I declare that I will restore to you double.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 118:19–29

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 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 pray, O LORD!
O LORD, we pray, give us success!
Blessèd is he who comes in the name of the LORD!
We bless you from the house of the LORD.
The LORD is God,
and he has made his light to shine upon us.
Bind the festal sacrifice with cords,
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.
Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever!

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

SECOND LESSON *Philippians 2:5–11*

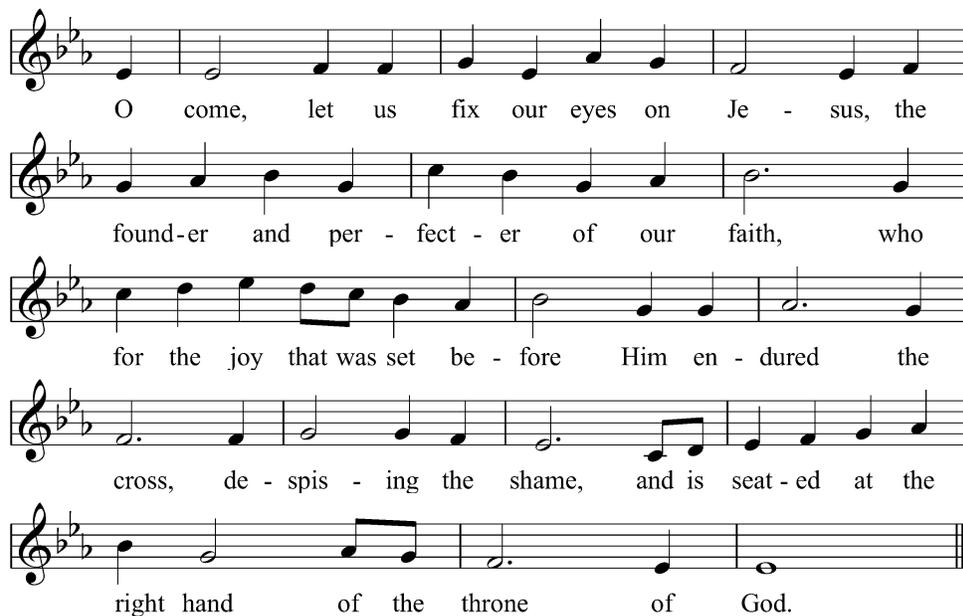
Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should

bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL VERSE #198 from One and All Rejoice O Come, Let Us Fix Our Eyes on Jesus



O come, let us fix our eyes on Je - sus, the
found-er and per - fect - er of our faith, who
for the joy that was set be - fore Him en - dured the
cross, de - spis - ing the shame, and is seat - ed at the
right hand of the throne of God.

GOSPEL READING John 12:20-36

The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 12th chapter.

Glorify to You, O Lord.

Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose 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 that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. So the crowd answered him, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" So Jesus said to them, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light."

When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ.

SERMON

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus. Amen. Dear friends in Christ:

Jesus said: “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” We in the church mark this “hour” of his every year in our Holy Week observance.

This year, I decided that our Holy Week gospel readings would all come from John’s gospel account. Our Lenten devotions – so wonderfully written by our members – have all come from Mark. I thought it would be a nice contrast to have our sermons based on John.

John’s gospel, I remind you, is a little different than the others. While the others seem concerned to tell as much of the story of Jesus as possible – each mentioning a good number of his miracles, parables and conversations – John mentions fewer of these, but gives more detail to the ones he does. John especially contains long conversations with and about Jesus. His Gospel was most certainly written after the others, and therefore also addresses some topics that were likely to be a concern to later readers. And John repeats many images, words and ideas throughout his Gospel to drive home his points.

One of the repeated images is found in today’s text. Jesus says: “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” This image, of Jesus being lifted up, is used two other times in John’s Gospel, including our reading from two Sundays ago.

The image is meant to make us think about Jesus’ death on the cross. Jesus will be lifted up on that cross as a means of healing the world. But we’ve noted, too, how the language here can also serve to direct us. As followers of Jesus, we lift him up to the world so that people can know of his healing power. We do this as a means of serving him. Note that Jesus, in today’s text, also speaks to the importance of being his servants.

As your pastor, I spend lots of time thinking about how we can best lift up Jesus to the world. Mostly this involves thinking through the sermon and the classes and the worship services we hold. But sometimes it involves other things as well. This week I spent a lot of time thinking about our Palm Sunday procession. I had to figure out how to do it safely in light of ongoing Covid concerns. As I was doing this, I realized that I tend to think a lot about the procession most every year. That’s because I want to make it meaningful and memorable. It seems like such an effective and important way to lift up Jesus.

It occurs to me that Jesus himself, on the day of that original procession, might have been engaging in an act of “lifting up” – since he says and does things that help promote the excitement. We don’t read about them in John’s account, but the other gospels all explain that Jesus sends his disciples ahead to find the right kind of donkey and tells them what to say to those who will question his request. These actions definitely seem designed to create a buzz.

Sometimes a little promotion isn’t so bad. Especially when there are things worth promoting.

I remember years ago a member of our congregation saying to me: “Pastor, we’ve got such a great church, but we need to promote it more. People need to know.”

I never quite know how to promote the church. And I certainly don’t want anyone to think that the church’s success is dependent on the right marketing. It isn’t. But I do sometimes think about how certain

acts of Jesus were undoubtedly meant to catch people's attention. And I'm reminded of how sometimes that is needed. People don't always pay attention on their own.

Isn't it interesting that today in the world of commercial advertising, where the issue is always about marketing and catching people's attention, the latest trend is for companies to tell us how much good they are doing? Yes, they will still use humor and sentiment, just like they have always done. But now they also want us to know about how much they are serving those in need and how they are making a difference.

We in the church should certainly applaud this emphasis on servanthood. Doing good to others is something we can all get behind.

That being said, we must also understand an important difference between the world's and the church's service. The world's service will always be geared toward more or better time here on earth. By contrast, the church's service will be geared toward both life on earth and life in the world to come.

Regarding that service geared toward the world to come, the church will promote both the joyful anticipation of that life and the way for people to get there. These will always be top priorities. God has promised a beautiful life beyond the grave for his children. However, only those whose sin is forgiven can rightfully be called his children. Reminding people of the forgiveness of sins given by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ is therefore of utmost importance.

Regarding the service of the church geared toward this life, the church will promote good deeds, justice, honesty and a life lived according to God's commands. Our teachings will be similar to the world's on these matters, but not the same. Our ethic will include the honoring and worship of God. And our ethic will be tuned more toward that which promotes an honorable and healthy life and less toward granting man its freedoms.

Many people, as we know, don't want to hear about the church's promises or ethics. They hear our talk about life beyond the grave and dismiss it for lack of proof or condemn it as a sales pitch. They hear our talk about ethics and denounce them as unfair or too harsh.

There will always be unbelievers. And there will always be those who criticize. These people will be a focus of our mission. We will invite them to hear. And we will always be open to their turning in faith. But they will not be our sole mission either.

In today's text, and throughout the Gospel of John, we see Jesus moving people to not only become followers of his but also to become a family of faith to one another. As such, this family's well-being will be a focus of our mission too.

In our text, Jesus calls us to serve him, not humanity. "If anyone serves me," he says, "he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him."

We are to serve Jesus because he is the one who both transforms the world and makes it possible for people to overcome the world. "Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out," said Jesus. Jesus defeated the forces of darkness during the events of that hour. He did so as he sacrificed himself for the sins which allowed the Devil to lay claim to authority.

During his ministry, Jesus started to form a family of believers who would assist him in the world's transformation. "While you have the light," he urged his hearers, "believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." Throughout John's Gospel, Jesus has been referred to as the one who brings light

to the world. It's one of those repeated themes. Now, here, as he becomes more intentional about building and equipping his family of faith, he tells how the light will be seen in them as well.

This family of faith will, in many ways, need to be separate from the world. It will need some distance so that it can maintain its uniqueness and purity. And yet, this family will always have a world focus as well. When Jesus entered triumphantly into Jerusalem to commence his passion, we're told that the Pharisees took note of the people's enthusiasm and said to themselves: "see, the world has gone after him." With these words, the Pharisees voiced their observation that things were different with Jesus. Jesus was attracting all kinds. His focus was beyond just those whom they considered good.

And then we hear that at the festival there were some Greeks. These non-Jews, no doubt in town to do business or perhaps sight-see, were curious about Jesus and wanted to see him. The disciples immediately accommodated them. And this detail also points to the worldly focus which Jesus wants his followers to have.

Jesus himself, in his words of explanation that day, said, "I, when I am lifted up from this earth, will draw all people to myself." Jesus wishes for all to follow him, receive his gifts, and be united in fellowship and purpose.

But Jesus also knows there will be some who just don't believe. As he explains in the verses immediately following our text, there will be many "who love the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God."

As we think about Jesus forming a family of believers – the "flock" as he described them two chapters earlier, "children of light" as he calls them here – let us be extra attuned to this focus as we observe his final words and actions during the events of Holy Week. In particular, let us think about what he said and did with his disciples on the night when he was betrayed – those events we remember on Maundy Thursday. And let us note what he said and did publicly during his trial and crucifixion which we remember on Good Friday. And, finally, let us observe his focus when he rises from the dead and appears to his disciples. We will see in these days that as much as Jesus said what he said and did what he did for the sake of the whole world, he also showed a special heart for gathering a family of faith.

Today, as we begin this holy time of lifting up Jesus to the world, let us then also appreciate how Jesus promises to draw us together as family. "If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him," Jesus said. And when we believe in the light, we become children of light.

May it be so. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY # 442 All Glory, Laud, and Honor

Refrain

**All glory, laud, and honor
To You, Redeemer, King,
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring.**

- 1 You are the King of Israel
And David's royal Son,
Now in the Lord's name coming,
Our King and Blessèd One. *Refrain***

- 2 The company of angels
Is praising You on high,
And we with all creation
In chorus make reply. *Refrain*
- 3 The multitude of pilgrims
With palms before You went;
Our praise and prayer and anthems
Before You we present. *Refrain*
- 4 To You before Your passion
They sang their hymns of praise;
To You, now high exalted,
Our melody we raise. *Refrain*
- 5 As You received their praises,
Accept the prayers we bring,
O Source of ev'ry blessing,
Our good and gracious King. *Refrain*

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen

OFFERING All Glory, Laud, and Honor Setting: Henry V. Gerike

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! We praise You, Father, that You have sent Your Son to save our fallen world. As we enter this most holy week and ponder again the mysteries of our salvation, show us the answer to Your people's prayers of "Hosanna," "save now," in the Passion, death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Uphold the world in Your strength and mercy. Preserve Your Church and the preaching of the Gospel. Bless our homes, that parents and children may serve one another faithfully and grow in faith and love. Give health and wisdom to all who serve in public office, and through their service bless us all. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We bring before You the sick, distressed and needy [*especially* _____]. Give Your abiding comfort and healing. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Look with favor on all communicants at Your table. Grant that we come in penitence and humble faith to eat Your Son's body and drink His blood to nourish our lives for love and service. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, we remember the sufferings and death of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, for our salvation. We praise You for His great love in which He went to the cross, and offered Himself as paschal victim. We draw strength from Him as our great High Priest Who ever intercedes for us.. Gather us together, we pray, from the ends of the earth to celebrate with all the faithful the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom. Graciously receive our prayers, deliver and preserve us, for to You alone we give all glory, honor and worship, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

THE 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 trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

BENEDICTION

The Lord bless us and keep us.

The Lord make His face shine on us
and be gracious to us.

The Lord look upon us with favor and ✠ give us peace.

SENDING HYMN #967

Ride On, Ride On in Majesty

- 1. Ride on, ride on in majesty!
Hear all the tribes hosanna cry;
O Savior meek, your road pursue,
With palms and scattered garments strewed.**
- 2. Ride on, ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die.
O Christ, your triumphs now begin
O'er captive death and conquered sin.**

3. **Ride on, ride on in majesty!**
The winged squadrons of the sky
Look down with sad and wond'ring eyes
To see the approaching sacrifice.
4. **Ride on, ride on in majesty!**
Your last and fiercest strife is nigh.
The Father on his sapphire throne
Awaits his own anointed Son.
5. **Ride on, ride on in majesty!**
In lowly pomp ride on to die,
Bow your meek head to mortal pain,
Then take, O Christ, your pow'r and reign!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE *Ride On, Ride On in Majesty* Setting: James L. Brauer

ALTAR FLOWERS: "In Thanksgiving for God's mercies during Lois' recovery" By Pastor and Lois Lehrer.

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