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PALM SUNDAY WORSHIP – March 28, 2021

GATHERING MUSIC

GREETING AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

GATHERING

*A Reading from **Mark 11:1-11** followed by a Palm Sunday Litany*

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.

(Congregation Stands)

P In celebration, we join the crowds of old,

C waving branches, giving honor to the Messiah.

P Yet, our celebration is bittersweet, for our story doesn’t end here.

C We know the pain of what lies ahead.

P Today anticipates the rest of the story—

C a story of betrayal and death, a story of hope and resurrection.

OPENING HYMN - “*All Glory, Laud and Honor*” (vs 1-4)

GREETING

P The Lord be with you

C And also with you.

P We gather to give thanks and praise to Jesus.

C Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

HEARING THE WORD

SCRIPTURE READINGS

First Reading

Isaiah 50:4-9a

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 wakens—
wakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.
The Lord GOD has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backwards.
I 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.

The 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;
he who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me?
Let us stand up together.
Who are my adversaries?
Let them confront me.
It is the Lord GOD who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?
All of them will wear out like a garment;
the moth will eat them up.

Second Reading

Psalm 31: 9-16

Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;
my eye wastes away from grief,
my soul and body also.
For my life is spent with sorrow,
and my years with sighing;
my strength fails because of my misery,
and my bones waste away.

I am the scorn of all my adversaries,
a horror to my neighbours,
an object of dread to my acquaintances;
those who see me in the street flee from me.
I have passed out of mind like one who is dead;
I have become like a broken vessel.
For I hear the whispering of many—
terror all around! —
as they scheme together against me,
as they plot to take my life.

But I trust in you, O LORD;
I say, 'You are my God.'
My times are in your hand;
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.
Let your face shine upon your servant;
save me in your steadfast love.

PSALM RESPONSE – *"I Place My Life"*

GOSPEL

Mark 15:1-47

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' He answered him, 'You say so.' Then the chief priests accused him of many things. Pilate asked him again, 'Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you.' But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. Then he answered them, 'Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?' For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate spoke to them again, 'Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?' They shouted back, 'Crucify him!' Pilate asked them, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Crucify him!' So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, 'The King of the Jews.' And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, 'Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!' In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe.' Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'Listen, he is calling for Elijah.' And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.' Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'

There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid.

SERMON

Palm/Passion Sunday, "Triumph and Betrayal."

So, we begin another Holy Week—and again our world provides us with the darkness that lies behind this lesson. The innocent die. 8 last week in Atlanta; 10 this week in Boulder, Co. The dying of the innocent never ends.

And our lessons and our liturgy remind of the events of the last week of Jesus' life. Once again, we are reminded of the roar of the crowd on that first day of Passover Week 2,000 years ago, as the people welcome Jesus into Jerusalem. It is a festive beginning to the week for the disciples and for Jesus, and yet the undercurrents of darkness and suffering are not far from the surface of events. For we know that soon the cheers will turn to curses, and the power of the leadership of Judaism and Roman occupation forces will come down on Jesus with all their might and he will be arrested, put on trial, and crucified, by the end of the week. And once again he who is innocent dies.

Before his arrest Jesus is teaching in the Temple—teaching with words of hope and compassion. Healing the ill, giving hope to downtrodden; words and acts that said that perhaps indeed Jesus was the long-promised Messiah. After all, did not John the Baptist say that one mightier than he was coming after him? Indeed, if Jesus was the Messiah, then all kinds of possibilities would now be on the table. Israel would be free! God could rule through Israel and tribute and power would flow into Jerusalem rather than Rome. If Jesus was the Messiah, then all the world would be at a crossroads of knowing that the God of Israel was the God of all humanity, and humanity would have to change, and Israel would be at the center of that change.

The time seemed right, for during this week of Passover, Jews from all over the Roman Empire and beyond were in Jerusalem. Many would have heard something about this Jesus after being in Jerusalem for some time even before the beginning of Passover. Perhaps they heard him teaching in the Temple, perhaps they heard of him raising Lazarus from the dead earlier, and then the thousands who welcomed him into the city, well it was just amazing! But there was one thing that the crowds didn't notice when Jesus rode into the city: he came in on the colt of a donkey. The donkey being the sign that the people's king comes to them in peace.

What a contrast I'm sure to Pilate who comes into Jerusalem on a white war horse with 1,000 troops of the 5th Legion along side him. While the procession of Jesus brings expectations of hope, Jesus will find that in five days His mission will appear to end with a travesty of justice that paradoxically will prove to be God's means of salvation for all of humanity—but that part of the story is still to come.

But for now, and as far into the future as we can see, we as the people of God find ourselves at a Crossroads—a Crossroad that meets at the foot of the Cross of Christ. Indeed, throughout our life in Christ there are and there will be many crossroads that we will find ourselves at, at the foot of the Cross.

In our Christian life, we will find ourselves at the crossroads of foolishness and the road to wisdom—which will we take? In our Christian life, there will times when we meet Christ at the crossroads of weakness of faith and strength of faith, which will we take? In our Christian life there will be choices perhaps of suffering for the faith, or taking the road of temptation, which will we take? In our Christian life, there will be the roads of following those who promote fear, division and hate, and those who lift up compassion and care for all people, whom will we follow? In our Christian life we will have presented to us, to road to light and life, or the road to darkness, which road shall we take. And we should always remember, that from the Cross, it is Christ to asks us, which road do you follow?

Come here the rest of the Story this week and its' climax next Sunday. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY - *"O Sacred Head"*

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We believe in God, who has created all things and continues to create new life within us.

We believe in Jesus, sent by God to reveal the depth of divine love. By his life, his death and resurrection we live as a renewed and hopeful people who experience joy and abundance of life.

We believe that the Holy Spirit is present, now and always, calling us to faith, giving us gifts, and empowering us for service. AMEN

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

OFFERING

OFFERTORY

PRAYER OF BLESSING

P Let us pray:

C God our provider, you have not fed us with bread alone, but with words of grace and life. Bless us and these your gifts which we have received from your generous hand. Use them to bring your blessing into the lives of others. AMEN

MEAL

A Brief Confession

P Your mercy, O Lord, is our salvation.

C Your compassion, O God, is our healing and renewal.

P Forgive us for that which has grieved you.

C Grant us pardon for that which has troubled you.

P God's mercy is deep, God's compassion great, we are a forgiven people in Jesus.

C Thanks be to God. AMEN.

Communion Dialogue

P Jesus, you are the bread of life;

C The bread of life from heaven.

P We eat of this bread, drink of this cup;

C Come Lord Jesus, come.

P On the night he was betrayed ...

The Lord's Prayer

Communion Verse

"Bread of Life from Heaven" – ELW #474 (refrain – Cong., verse – Cantor, refrain – Cong.)

*** Cantor does the verse.**

4/7 – v.1, 4/14 – v.3, 4/21 – v.5, 4/28 –v.4

Communion Invitation

P Eat this bread, drink this cup.

C We come to Jesus to be fed the bread of life.

COMMUNION MUSIC - "Above All"

Erin/Kristan

COMMUNION BLESSING

P Let us pray:

C We have been healed, renewed, and empowered to be life-giving servants of the Lord. As we have been fed with grace and mercy, send us out to be merciful agents of grace. In the name and power of Jesus we pray. AMEN

SENDING

BENEDICTION

SENDING HYMN - "Jesus Remember Me"

DISMISSAL

P We go from this place and time of worship gifted to serve the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God! We go in Jesus' name.

(To watch the videotaped version of the worship service, click the link below)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCt8qX94ICK-omDHSc71en4w>