

Living Stones

"You yourselves are being built like living stones into a spiritual temple." (1 Peter 2.5)

Mason First Presbyterian Church

SUNDAY, APRIL 5, 2020



*I encourage you to set aside some time today for personal worship using these or other resources.
You are welcome to share this with your friends.*

Prayer of the Day

Everlasting God, in your tender love for the human race you sent your Son to take our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross. In your mercy enable us to share in his obedience to your will and in the glorious victory of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Gospel Lesson: Matthew 21:1-11

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

"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."

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

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

Call to Worship

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!

Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!

Lo, your king comes to you;

triumphant and victorious is he,

humble and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

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

Let us worship God!

(Romans 1:7; Zechariah 9:9 Psalm 118:26)

Hymn: “All Glory, Laud, and Honor”

All glory, laud, and honor to thee, Redeemer, King,
to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring!

Thou art the King of Israel, thou David’s royal Son,
who in the Lord’s name comest, the King and blessed One.

All glory, laud, and honor to thee, Redeemer, King,

to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring!

The people of the Hebrews with palms before thee went;
our praise and prayers and anthems before thee we present.

All glory, laud, and honor to thee, Redeemer, King,

to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring!

To thee, before thy passion, they sang their hymns of praise;
to thee, now high exalted, our melody we raise.

All glory, laud, and honor to thee, Redeemer, King,

to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring!

Thou didst accept their praises; accept the prayers we bring,
who in all good delightest, thou good and gracious King!

All glory, laud, and honor to thee, Redeemer, King,

to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring!

(lyrics by Theodulph of Orleans, c. 820; trans. John Mason Neale, 1851, alt.)

Call to Confession

Are you thirsty for grace? Are you hungry for mercy? God is calling; come to the waters.

Trusting in God’s grace, let us confess our sin.

(Isaiah 55:1)

Prayer of Confession

God of mercy, you sent Jesus Christ to seek and save the lost. We confess that we have strayed from you and turned aside from your way. We are misled by pride, for we see ourselves pure when we are stained, and great when we are small. We have failed in love, neglected justice, and ignored your truth. Have mercy, O God, and forgive our sin. Return us to paths of righteousness through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Assurance of Pardon

Listen, so that you may life: the steadfast love of the Lord never fails.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!

Thanks be to God! Amen.

(Isaiah 55:3)

Hymn: “Hosanna, Loud Hosanna”

Hosanna, loud hosanna, the little children sang;

through pillared court and temple the joyful anthem rang.

To Jesus, who had blessed them, close folded to his breast,
the children sang their praises, the simplest and the best.

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.

“Hosanna in the highest!” That ancient song we sing,
for Christ is our Redeemer; the Lord of heaven, our King.
O may we ever praise him with heart and life and voice,
and in his blissful presence eternally rejoice.

(lyrics by Jennette Threlfall, 1873, alt.)

A Prayer for Healing

By your power, great God, our Lord Jesus healed the sick and gave new hope to the hopeless. Though we cannot command or possess your power, we pray for those who want to be healed. Mend their wounds, soothe fevered brows, and make broken people whole again. Help us to welcome every healing as a sign that, though death is against us, you are for us, and have promised renewed and risen life in Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

A Prayer Those in Medical Services

Merciful God, your healing power is everywhere about us. Strengthen those who work among the sick; give them courage and confidence in everything they do. Encourage them when their efforts seem futile or when death prevails. Increase their trust in your power even to overcome death and pain and crying. May they be thankful for every sign of health you give, and humble before the mystery of your healing grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Jesus, remember us when you come into your kingdom.

Your kingdom come, your will be done.

For your church around the world, we ask new life.

Your kingdom come, your will be done.

For all who carry out ministries in your church, we ask grace and wisdom.

Your kingdom come, your will be done.

For people who have accepted spiritual disciplines, we ask inspired discipleship.

Your kingdom come, your will be done.

For Christians in every land, we ask new unity in your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done.

For those who cannot believe, we ask your faithful love.

Your kingdom come, your will be done.

For governors and rulers of every land, we ask your guidance.

Your kingdom come, your will be done.

For people who suffer and sorrow, we ask your healing peace.

Your kingdom come, your will be done.

For ...

Your kingdom come, your will be done.

God of love, as in Jesus Christ you gave yourself to us, so may we give ourselves to you, living according to your holy will. Keep our feet firmly in the way where Christ leads us; make our mouths speak the truth that Christ teaches us; fill our bodies with the life that is Christ within us. In his holy name we pray. 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 debts,
as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, forever. Amen.

Offertory Response: “God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending” (verse 3)

Treasure, too, you have entrusted, gain through powers your grace conferred:
ours to use for home and kindred, and to spread the gospel word.
Open wide our hands in sharing, as we heed Christ’s ageless call,
healing, teaching, and reclaiming, serving you by loving all.

(lyrics by Robert L. Edwards, 1961, alt.)

Prayer for Illumination

Eternal God, whose word silences the shouts of the mighty: Quiet within us every voice but your own. Speak to us through the suffering and death of Jesus Christ that by the power of the Holy Spirit we may receive grace to show Christ’s love in lives given to your service. Amen.

New Testament Lesson: 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.

Anthem: “Hosanna We Sing” by Stan Pethel

You can listen to this bright and peppy anthem [here](#).

With a shout of hosanna he entered the gates,
Young and old singing his praises, in his path,

their garments and branches are laid.
He is the King of the ages.
Majestic procession beyond all compare,
Exalted and lifted on high.
The praises of earth then did ring in the air,
and heaven cried out in reply.

Hosanna, hosanna, for blessed is he who comes!
Hosanna, sing hosanna, who comes in the name of the Lord.

Our Redeemer and Savior, our guide and our friend,
Prophets of old did proclaim it.
Creator sustainer, beginning and end,
the king of our hearts and our spirits.
A heavenly presence that shines from above,
presented for all now to see.
The true King of glory in heavenly love
Among us forever shall be.

Hosanna, hosanna, for blessed is he who comes!
Hosanna, sing hosanna, who comes in the name of the Lord.
Sing hosanna, hosanna, for blessed is he who comes!
Hosanna, sing hosanna, who comes in the name of the Lord.
Sing hosanna, hosanna we sing!

(words and music by Stan Pethel)

Sermon

An audio recording of this meditation (without the pictures) is also available online, on the main page of our website, masonpresbyterian.org.

If this were a normal year, we would be gathering in our sanctuary with great festivity, singing jubilantly, while the children of the church wave their palm branches high. There would be a spirit of mirth and merriment, joy and gladness. Palm Sunday has always been one of my favorite days in the entire church year.

But alas ... this is not a normal year.

In Jerusalem, every year on Palm Sunday, there is a procession leading down the Mount of Olives, retracing the route that Jesus himself took on that triumphant day long ago. It typically looks like something like this:



I don't think it's going to look like that this year.

What do we do, when we can't gather for worship, like we normally do? What do we do, when we can't gather with the crowds? This year, it seems, we have to sit in our living rooms, perhaps with family around, or perhaps not, depending on our circumstances. There were massive crowds surrounding Jesus that day long ago; today, many people will celebrate Palm Sunday alone.

If you're in Jerusalem, making your way down the Mount of Olives, you can stop at a small chapel that looks like this:



This chapel is built on or near the site where Jesus paused to weep over Jerusalem as he beheld the holy city. Luke tells us about that moment, in his version of the Palm Sunday story (Luke 19:37-44). The chapel – which is designed to resemble a teardrop – is called “the Church of Dominus Flevit.” The words “Dominus Flevit” mean “the Lord wept.” Jesus looked out, across the valley, towards the bright, shining city of Jerusalem ... and he wept.

I think Jesus is weeping now ... not just for Jerusalem, but for the entire world.

I want to be jubilant on Palm Sunday, like those crowds that gathered around Jesus long ago were jubilant. I want to sing and shout “Hosanna!” Yet every time I look at a news report ... I want to cry, like Jesus cried.

Maybe we should *all* cry. Maybe the whole Church of Jesus Christ should cry. Maybe instead of “Dominus Flevit” it should be “Ecclesia Flevit” – *“the Church wept.”* This year, at least. Hopefully, prayerfully, by this time next year, we will all be rejoicing once again.

We start our Holy Week journey today. Four days from now we will gather with Jesus in an upper room, to commemorate Jesus’ last meal with his disciples. Five days from now we will gather around Christ’s cross. And Sunday ... well, Sunday ... Christ will *still* be risen, even if we can’t gather together to celebrate that victory.

We make this Holy Week pilgrimage differently this year. We will make it, to a large extent, in solitude.

Except ... except ... we have to remember: *we are never alone*. We need to journey with this in mind. As we practice our social distancing, we have to remember that the Lord is *always* by our side. “It is the Lord who goes before you,” we read in Deuteronomy 31:8; “he will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you.” “Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed,” we read in Joshua 1:9; “for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” “Fear not, for I am with you,” we read in Isaiah 41:10; “be not dismayed, for I am your God.” “Behold,” says Jesus in Matthew 28:20, “I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

We might be sitting alone, this Palm Sunday. We might *feel* alone, this Holy Week. But we have to remember: we are *never* alone. Jesus Christ, our weeping Lord, is *always* right here, by our side.

Come. Pick up a palm branch, and celebrate. The Lord Jesus Christ is *still* our triumphant King.

Hymn: “Ride On! Ride On in Majesty!”

Ride on! ride on in majesty!
Hark! all the tribes hosanna cry;
thy humble beast pursues its road
with palms and scattered garments strowed.

Ride on! ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die;
O Christ, thy triumphs now begin
o’er captive death and conquered sin.

Ride on! ride on in majesty!
The hosts of angels in the sky
look down with sad and wondering eyes
to see the approaching sacrifice.

Ride on! ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die;
bow thy meek head to mortal pain;
then take, O God, thy power, and reign.

(lyrics by Henry Hart Milman, 1827, alt.)

Blessing

May the steadfast love of God,
the abundant grace of Jesus Christ,
and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit
be with you this day and always.

Amen.

(Philippians 5:1, 11)

Credits

Prayers courtesy of the PC(USA)'s 2018 Book of Common Worship

Scripture passages are from the New Revised Standard Version

Special thanks to Darlene for hymn suggestions and Deb for anthem suggestions