

Worship at Home for Palm Sunday, April 5 2020

You may choose to read right through this document, stopping for your own reflection at any time, or only read the prayers or the scripture or reflection. You might read with family or friends, or alone. Links will take you to music that may enhance your experience as you move through the worship, but you might choose to visit them later, or not at all. Feel free to share this with anyone who might be interested.

If you'd like to comment or have a question, please email me directly:
minister@applewoodunited.ca

In the Spirit

Rev. Joanne

Today there is a communion liturgy included in your Worship at Home. You might like to gather a piece of bread or cracker and a small glass of juice before you begin reading, if you would like to experience communion in this way. If you would prefer to have Rev. Joanne 'present' with you by phone or online, please call or email.

Centering Prayer

Today, God, we do not parade together.

Today, God, we sit separately but never alone.

Today, God, your Spirit of life and love fills our spaces,
fills our hearts, fills our worship.

Amen

Opening Music "All Glory Laud and Honour"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3a8fTTrAdE>

Opening Prayer

God of palm leaves and dusty roads, young donkeys and excited people,
help us to welcome you into our homes today through closed doors and physical distancing .
Lead us to small parades through our living spaces as we proclaim
that the blessed one has come in your name.

Continue to lead us, God, through the stories and reflections
that will take us to the cross and beyond as we enter Holy Week.

Amen

First Scripture Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

O give thanks to the Lord, for God is good;
God's steadfast love endures for ever!

Let Israel say,
‘God’s steadfast love endures for ever.’
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 chief cornerstone.

This is the Lord’s doing;
it is marvellous in our eyes.

This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Save us, we beseech you, O Lord!
O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
We bless you from the house of the Lord.

The Lord is God,
and God has given us light.

Bind the festal procession with branches,
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.

O give thanks to the Lord, for the Lord is good,
for God’s steadfast love endures for ever.

This is a psalm of celebration and thanksgiving – what are you thankful for right now? What are the ‘cornerstones’ in your life presently?

Second Scripture 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 fulfil 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.'

Reflection

I have attended quite a few parades in my life, and I am sure many of you have as well. There is something exciting and deeply human about being in a lively crowd all enjoying an experience that can bring out the best in us as smiles and good will are shared. Of course at the moment, no one is sharing in a crowd experience. It would be a foolish and dangerous thing to do in our present world circumstances. It was also a foolish and dangerous thing for the people who gathered and cheered outside Jerusalem's walls that day nearly 2000 years ago. Not for the same reasons, of course.

For the people who gathered and cheered and declared Jesus the One whom God sent there was risk. The Roman occupation of those lands was so embedded that the leaders of the Hebrew community worked with the occupying forces to collect tax, mete out punishments, and be part of the 'good order' of society. In fact some scholars imagine that while Jesus paraded into Jerusalem by one gate, an Imperial Procession including Pontius Pilate was taking place at another – a reminder to the city of Roman rule and presence at a time of feasting and celebrating.

So the threat of arrest, imprisonment, even death (remember John the Baptist) was real for those palm-wavers and scripture-shouters that accompanied Jesus. There was risk for Jesus, too, and we who are Easter people know how the rest of this story unfolds throughout Holy Week. We know that Jesus will be arrested and betrayed. We know that Peter will feel so fearful and imperiled that he will deny knowing Jesus. We know that those closest to Jesus will hide away in fear.

Following Jesus has always been risky for those who challenge the status quo, for those who speak out in his name, for those who declare that God's way of justice and compassion is more important than economies that favour the already-rich and the powerful. Just like this humble parade where the principle player rides in on a donkey not a war horse and the people shout with hope and faith rather than fear of oppressors, God's ways are different. Rather than a display of earthly power, Jesus' parade

into Jerusalem marks him as “an undeniable expression of God’s presence in the world” writes theologian Veronice Miles.

We follow Jesus into the unknown, because with him we know God’s love. We follow this parade knowing that we will encounter Good Friday, but that ultimately we will arrive at Easter, at a dawn full of hope and light and new life.

Following Jesus and living into God’s way looks different than it ever has before. We are living in a time and in a world where parades are absent and the spread of virus and fear can seem rampant. We cannot gather to protest inequities, we cannot reach out physically to those on the margins, and we cannot soothe a tired or worried brow with our hands. We can still follow Jesus into the unknown, knowing that we may encounter loss. We can still follow Jesus to a new day and a new dawn that is perhaps beyond our knowing right now, just as the disciples could not imagine an empty tomb.

We follow Jesus and live God’s way as we spread words of hope and caring, when we remember to keep safe distances or stay at home. We follow when we write an extra cheque to the food bank or to our church. We follow when we take a moment to thank God for our front line workers and first responders, grocery store clerks and cashiers.

We may not join a parade today, but we can still follow Jesus’ way – whatever may be ahead.

May it be so.

Music: “Ride On, Ride On in Majesty”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zo5pfI6z6IA>

A Sacrament of Communion *Our tradition of communion is very much a spoken one, and one of physical presence. If you feel comfortable, you might read this aloud with someone, or to yourself if you are alone. If you can access our podcast, you will hear these words spoken by our podcast team.*

The celebration of communion is always a festival of friends,
a pulling together of our loves and our hopes,
our moments of agony and our glimpses of wholeness.

It is here, where bread is broken and wine is poured,
that we can most fully be ourselves and see others for who they truly are:
children of the living God.

As we share in our separate spaces, the common things of life - bread and wine, crackers and juice, memories and dreams - become holy, touched by God.

Here in our isolations, that which is earthly becomes divine,
and we that are God’s people become more than we have ever dreamed.

Let the heavens be joyful!
Let the earth be glad!
Let us give thanks to our God!

We praise you, loving God, for creating all things, for making us in your image, and for seeking us when we turn from you. We thank you for coming to us in Jesus; born in a humble stable to a young woman, spending time with the marginalized, teaching the crowds, faithful to you unto death on a cross, and who lives among us still.

We share this meal in remembrance of Jesus, offering you our lives in praise and thanksgiving.
Fill us with your Spirit, to make us one in Christ even when we cannot be one in physical presence.
Make us one in love for you and for all people – especially the lonely and frightened, the worried and weary, the ill and the grieving, the hungry and thirsty.
In word and in deed, God, we seek your reign of peace and justice on earth.

Send your Spirit across our distances that we, and these gifts, touched by your Spirit no matter where we are, may be signs of life and love to each other, and to all the world.
Holy God, bless what we do as we share our communion in unfamiliar ways.
Glory be to you, eternal God, through Jesus Christ,
in the power of the Spirit.
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.

Sharing in Communion
We do what Jesus did the night before he died.
He took bread, gave thanks, broke the bread,
and gave it to his friends, and said,
"Take, eat; remember me."

Then he took the cup, and said,

"Take, drink; remember."

This is the time to break your bread and eat, and sip your juice, remembering or saying out loud "Jesus Christ, the bread of life" and "Jesus Christ, the true vine."

Take a moment to reflect and perhaps to offer your own prayer to God before continuing.

Prayer after Communion

We give thanks that bread broken brings wholeness;
that wine poured out replenishes;
that time spent with the Risen Christ and one another as we read or listen,
even in our separate homes, is gift and grace.

Amen.

As we move into Holy Week, we seek a way forward through the days to come.

May we enter into the story, hold one another in prayer, and remember that God moves with us through all our days.

Closing music:

Taizé Community: "Watch and Pray"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FCr2tn4yYKY&t=43s>