

WORSHIP GATHERING AND CELEBRATION

April 10, 2022—4th Sunday of Lent 11:00 A.M.

(Please be seated, silence cell phones and quietly prepare for worship.)

PRELUDE: “The Palms.....Jean Baptiste Faure

THE CHIMING OF THE HOUR

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

OPENING PRAYER

We praise you, O God, for your redemption of the world through Jesus Christ. Today he entered the holy city of Jerusalem in triumph and was proclaimed Messiah and king by those who spread garments and branches along his way. Let these branches be signs of his victory, and grant that we may follow him in the way of the cross, that, dying and rising with him, we may enter into your kingdom, through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

SOLO INTROIT:

“Hosanna! Blessed Is He That Comes In The Name Of The Lord!”

David Music

CALL TO WORSHIP:

Leader: Cheering crowds sang their praises as Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem to fulfill the ancient prophecy.

People: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

Leader: With palms and branches and with their clothes cast on the road to make a path, the people sang their joyous acclamation.

People: Ride on, Jesus, Ride through the crowds. Ride on to betrayal. Ride on to the cross. Leader: "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

People: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

***HYMN OF CELEBRATION: “Crown Him With Many Crowns” TWC 92**

CHIME CHOIR: The Old Rugged Cross.....arr. Samuel Stokes

CALL TO CONFESSION

Remember that our Lord Jesus can sympathize with us in our weaknesses, since in every respect he was tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with boldness approach the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

***UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Merciful God, you gave your only-begotten Son to take the form of a servant, and to be obedient even to death on a cross. We confess that we, too often, do not share his humility, that we do not live with a servant-heart. Forgive our arrogance, our selfishness, our short-sightedness and renew our faith that we may share in his obedience and the glorious victory of his resurrection.

***SILENT PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Leader: Hear the good news! The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

People: He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, that we might be dead to sin and alive to all that is good. Thanks be to God, we are forgiven!

***THE GLORIA PATRI**

TWC 805

SCRIPTURE READING:

Luke 19:29-42

SOLO "They Could Not"

Harris and Cloninger
Philip Aley, Vocalist

SERMON "Great Expectations"

Rev. Kellie Weekley-Mills

What kind of king
rides on a donkey
a donkey that might be borrowed,
or might be hijacked?
What kind of king
builds a castle
with a wide open door for children to
enter
but a needle-eye sized hole for the rich?
What kind of king
rides on a donkey
into the city where
his assassins are waiting?
What kind of king
enters his assassins' city
with a ragtag commotion for all to see
and not one security guard?
What kind of king

lets his subjects treat him like a
military liberator but doesn't
come with a single sword or weapon?
What kind of king
lets his followers send a
public message to the competing powers
with no intent of answering a single
challenge?
What kind of King are you?
What kind of King
can send two followers
to fetch a donkey
and know exactly what they'll need to
say?
What kind of king
can tell a blind beggar
"your faith has made you well."
And actually make him see?
What kind of king
can weep at the funeral of his friend
only to say, "Lazarus, come out!"
and watch him come back to life.
What kind of king
can sit at the dinner table
with his subjects and be subject to them
and wash their feet?
What kind of king
can carry his own cross
can serve his assassin and
help in his own execution?
What kind of king
can die
so that his assassins
can live?

What kind of King are you?

(What Kind of King a poem by Mike Gerhling - the Upper Room, Pittsburgh)

When Jesus nears the city of Jerusalem, he is greeted with the chant: "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" A familiar Psalm for those gathered, but adapted by Luke to read "the King" who comes rather than "the one" who comes. It echos another proclamation, at another arrival - that of Jesus' birth, his entry into earth, and human life. There too, he is recognized as royalty: Messiah, Christ, King. That time by God's angels.

The people's eagerness to anoint Jesus as King makes the powers that be nervous. For the Romans, Jesus himself doesn't come across as all that threatening. It's not even in the scope of their imagination that some average Jew promoting his theology could be any real challenge to their authority. After all, he had no army, no significant

weaponry, no wealth and no political connections. Any concern the Romans had over Jesus was probably linked to the concerns of the Jewish leadership. *Now they* were feeling threatened. This was a fragile peace they had with Rome; an arrangement that had benefited them, if they were honest, even as it had added burdens on the average Jew. Anything that threatened that delicate balance of power concerned them. And on top of that, this Jesus was making claims that, to their ears, were blasphemous. Not yet finding enough evidence to take any serious action against him, the Pharisees seek to at least control him and his followers. When they see what is happening, what is being said, as Jesus rides through the crowd, they urge him to shut it down. "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." "Fat chance of that!" Jesus informs them. There is something big happening here, on this day, in this place. And despite what lies ahead, this is a moment of cosmic proportions; so much so that all of creation is aware of it and will not let it go unacknowledged! "If the people are silent, the stones will shout out!" This exchange must have stuck in his mind as he continued on the road. They come to a place where the city of Jerusalem is in view, and Jesus is brought to tears. His heart breaks over the reality of his reception. God's love and mercy are poured out in abundance once again, but so many have failed to see it and trust it. "If you had only recognized the things that make for peace!" What an opportunity! What a fulfillment of God's promises! What good news for God's people! But the people refused to see. And now it will be hidden. The gift was rejected, and the potential, the peace that was ripe, now rots.

Jesus' grief is not just over and for those gathered around him that day. His grief is for all people, of all times and places. Including you and I here today. He grieves over our unwillingness to see him for who he is, and to trust him with everything.

Then and now our expectations seem to get in the way. Perhaps we relate to the expectations of the crowd - Jesus as miracle worker, healer, solver of problems. Not totally off the mark, Jesus did his fair share of this. But to see that as the primary purpose of the Incarnation of God on earth is more than a little short-sighted. And it can put us deep in a faith crisis when the prayers aren't answered, the healing doesn't come.

Similar is the expectation of Jesus as a sort of "Santa Claus". As children, most of us added the occasional "special request" to our prayers: A new bike, a big basket of candy on Easter morning... There is, of course, nothing wrong with asking God for food to put on the table, or financial stability, or any of life's necessities. But if our prayers focus *mainly* on what *we* want, when we see God as the provider of our own little earthly kingdom, we can easily lose sight of our call to seek first God's kingdom. Maybe we see Jesus as the means for political gain. The people wanted to make Jesus King - not just of their hearts, but of the nation. For many of them, Jesus was their ticket out of Roman oppression. If this was indeed God's Son, then certainly Jerusalem - indeed, all the earth! - would be Jesus' kingdom, and the Jews would be on top. Maybe he would gather an army, like David of old, and take it all by force!

The expectations of the Jewish & Roman leaders on the other hand, illustrate how our expectations can be quite pitiful in comparison to the reality. Like a child trying to conceive quantum physics, they had no idea of the scope and complexity of the matter. Their power and authority had filled their heads to the point there was no room for new possibilities. The Scribes & Pharisees were sure they knew best. The Romans were

secure in their military might. That the Messiah might come in this man riding in on a donkey - ridiculous! To them this Jesus is an agitator, a false prophet, yes. But never their King.

Both the people and the leaders will turn on Jesus, mainly because he didn't meet their expectations. Before we jump to judge them, we must take a glance in the mirror to acknowledge our own complicity. Our arrogance, thinking we know best, thinking we know what we need, continues to create a very limited, very human plan. And this keeps us blind to seeing those acts of God, those things that make for peace.

Of course this rejection - then and now - cannot and will not thwart God's plan.

Throughout this story of vacillating human responses, of human blindness, weakness, and hardness of heart, one thing remains constant: God's will to show mercy and to save. Without jumping ahead to the end of the story just yet, we can affirm that even in the midst of this human tragedy, God is at work for good. He might not have been the kind of King the people were expecting - but we are thankful to say, Jesus is the kind of King that we need.

So I conclude with the second part of our poem by Michael Gerhling, and may it be our prayer of commitment to keep waving the palms and hailing Jesus as our King, no matter what life might bring our way.

What kind of King are you?

A King who came not to be served
but to serve and to give
his life as a ransom
for many.

A King who keeps his promises

A King who I can trust

A King who can save

A King I want to follow

And so I come to you, King Jesus

not to be served by you

but to serve you

and to give my life to you.

So take my cloak

use it to clothe the naked

or use it for your donkey to step on.

I don't care

so long as you're the one taking it.

Because you're the only one who

will give me a new garment in return,

a white robe made of saints righteous
deeds,

a garment that fits so well it'll be

a new self, your self.

Use me, King Jesus,

all of me.

As you see fit.

Make me a knight or a bishop or a rook,

or make me an expendable pawn.
I don't care what piece I am.
So long as yours is the hand that's
moving me.
Because yours is
the mighty hand with an outstretched
arm.
Yours is the hand that rules with an iron
scepter,
and that knit me together in my mother's
womb.
So let me follow you,
King Jesus
all the way to Golgotha.
Let me walk next to you
and put palm branches at your feet
and shout "Hosanna!" with the children.
And if the child in me shouting
"Hosanna!"
grows up to an adult shouting "Crucify!"
bring me back to the water where I can
be born again.
Let me sit at the table with you
and take bread and wine from your hands
and let me lay my head on your chest.
And if thirty pieces of the world's silver
are ever enough to draw me away
Wash my feet and make me clean again
Let me pray with you at Gethsemane
and learn from you how to be vulnerable
with the Father
let me see your tears and sweat and
grief.
And if my prayers give way to sleep
wake me again
with the waters of regeneration.
Let me walk with you to the cross.
Let me be Simon of Cyrene,
and learn to carry your cross with you.
And if my Simon of Cyrene becomes
Simon Peter
and I walk away from your cross to deny
you
lead me back to these waters where I can
still die with you.
And live.

And all along this long rough road
let my song be:
Hosanna!
Blessed is he who comes in the name of
the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest!

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (Unison) Apostle Creed**

Please see the laminated cards titled CREEDS located in the pew racks.

***HYMN “ In The Cross Of Christ I Glory” TWC 209 (v1,4,& 5)**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & THE LORD’S PRAYER

CALL TO OFFERING

Let us present ourselves to God as those who have been delivered from death to life. Now is the time for the gathering of our tithes and offerings.

OFFERTORYMUSIC: “All Glory, Laud and Honor” St. Theodulph

***DOXOLOGY TWC 809**

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Lord, take these gifts which represent a portion of all that you have given to us along with the humble offering of our lives. Use all of us to do Your work in the world. Amen.

***HYMN: “Hosanna, Loud Hosanna” TWC 203**

***CHARGE AND BENEDICION**

***CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE:**

“God Be With You Till We Meet Again” TWC 840

***POSTLUDE: “ Crown Him With Many Crowns” T. Tertius Noble**

***Please stand if you are able**