



*Celebrating
175 Years*

**Melville United Church
April 5, 2020
Palm Sunday**



Worship prepared today by
Rev. Marion Loree

We acknowledge with respect the history, spirituality and culture of the Indigenous peoples with whom Treaty 4 - also known as the Haldimand Tract - was signed and the territory wherein our church resides, and we acknowledge our responsibilities as treaty members.

Welcome

We gather in community. Even though we cannot be together physically, we share in the community of faith through things like this - printed or videoed worship. Today is Palm Sunday. This day begins Holy Week - the last week leading up to Jesus' death. On this day we mark Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The people had heard of this fellow Jesus and were hopeful that he was the one who would liberate them from Roman oppression. And so they greeted him with praise and enthusiasm. We know that their cries of Hosanna would soon change to shouts demanding his crucifixion. But this day was a time for celebration.

And so this day we also begin with celebration. As we wave our imaginary palm branches and sing (or read) the words of VU 123 - Hosanna, Loud Hosanna. I invite you to imagine the children parading around the sanctuary as they have done so many times before, waving their palms and singing.

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Hymn: Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

VU 123

- 1** **Hosanna, loud hosanna**
 the happy 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.
- 2** **From Olivet they followed**
 'mid an exultant crowd,
the victory palm branch waving,
 and singing clear and loud;
the Lord of earth and heaven
 rode on in lowly state,
content that little children
 should on his bidding wait.
- 3** **'Hosanna in the highest!'**
 That ancient song we sing,
for Christ is our Redeemer;
 earth, let your anthems ring.
O may we ever praise him
 with heart and life and voice,
and in his humble presence
 eternally rejoice!

Sharing the Light *(take a moment to light a candle and centre yourself to prepare to enter in to a time of worship and prayer. As you light the candle repeat the following words)*

I light a candle

in the name of the God who creates life,
in the name of the Christ Presence who loves life,
in the name of the Spirit who is the fire of life.

Centering words: Vedic Prayer

O God, enemy of folly and ignorance,
grant me the joy that all beings may see me
with the eye of a friend,
and that I see all beings
with the eye of a friend,
and that all beings see all beings
with the eye of a friend.

Call to Worship:

I invite you now into a time of worship.
A time for recognizing and acknowledging
the still small voice within each of our hearts.
A time to listen and reflect on issues of the day.
A time to find calm and hope and inspiration.
Come, let us worship together.

Opening Prayer:

Hosanna God! We wave our palms and sing our praise as we remember Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Holy Presence, may your Spirit enter the heart of our worship this day, giving us the strength to endure the journey which is ahead, strength as we journey with Jesus to the cross and strength to weather the storm of Covid-19. Amen.

Scripture: In Times of Terror

(a paraphrase of Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29)

Sometimes life is a bowl of cherries. Sometimes, it's more like a trip to the emergency ward. I felt these words of James Taylor from his book "Everyday Psalms" were especially appropriate during this time of Covid-19

As we ride the ambulance of life, God,
facing endless uncertainties,
we sense your presence beside us.

Your constant love and care comforts us;
our fears fade away.
Where masked figures fix shattered souls,
you hold my hand.
In a time of terror, you hover over me;
you give me the breath of life.

Vulnerability leaves us isolated and alone;
yet we are buoyed up by compassion.
The moment we most fear becomes the moment to
remember!
This can only be God's grace.
Awareness washes over us like returning consciousness.
We are alive! We are not alone!

Thank you, God. Thank you.
Thank you for those who serve in your name.
Our fears overflow with gratitude.
God lives in the hearts and hands of healers.
Wherever there are people of goodwill,
wherever kindness and compassion exist,
God is.

You are my God; I will thank you with every thought.
You are my God' I will honour you with all I do.
I will never feel alone again;
in all the ambulances of life,
your love will hold me up.

Scripture: Matthew 21:1-11 (The Inclusive Bible: the First Egalitarian
Translation)
(Jesus enters Jerusalem)

As they approached Jerusalem, entering Beth-Phage at the Mount
of Olives, Jesus sent off two disciples with the instructions. "Go
into the village straight ahead of you, and immediately you will
find a tethered donkey with her colt standing beside her. Untie

them and lead them back to me. If anyone questions you, say,
'The Rabbi needs them.' then they will let them go at once."

This came about to fulfill what was said through the prophet:
"Tell the daughter of Zion,
'Your sovereign comes to you without display,
Riding on a donkey, on a colt -
The foal of a beast of burden.'"

So the disciples went off and did what Jesus had ordered.
They brought the donkey and her colt, and after they laid their
cloaks on the animals, Jesus mounted and rode toward the city.

Great crowds of people spread their cloaks on the road, while
some began to cut branches from the trees and lay them along
the path. The crowds - those who went in front of Jesus and those
who followed - were all shouting,

"Hosanna to the Heir to the House of David!
Blessed is the One who comes
in the name of the Most High!
Hosanna in the highest!"

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred to its
depths, demanding, "Who is this?"

And the crowd kept answering, "This is the prophet Jesus,
from Nazareth in Galilee!"

Message: Jesus Comes

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem came at the end of his ministry.
Everything he did and everywhere he went up until this time was
leading him to this place at this time. In the Holy city, the centre
of Jewish culture and religion, he was to face the final showdown
and power of the authorities of the day. His teaching had angered
both the civil and religious authorities and he knew that.

The people in the streets, however, did not realize what was
coming. This man brought hope to them, the hope that they
might finally be released from the oppression of their Roman
rulers. But they would soon learn that Jesus' message, Jesus'
ministry was not about engaging in a war with the Romans. No,
his message was one of love, not violence. His message was

meant to change the hearts of every person he met and by so doing it would turn the world upside down and inside out - everything would be different but especially the way people related to each other. His message meant far more than defeating the Romans by adopting the same mentality of violence that people were used to. And more than that, his message was for everyone - even for those Roman oppressors. The people needed to learn this and it wouldn't be easy - a change of paradigm or world view never is.

Right now we are experiencing an unprecedented event. Right now we are all wondering what will the world look like when we are finally allowed to come out of our houses and greet each other with hugs again. We may be feeling disoriented and anxious and looking for something, anything, that we can do. But, besides staying home and practicing social distancing there isn't much we can 'do'. Buying toilet paper or hoarding food will not make it go away.

I said last week that this pandemic has given us the gift of time. And time is a wonderful gift to have. The gift of time can allow us to spend more quality time with our immediate family either in person if they live with us, or by phone or social media if they don't. It gives us the time to pursue long neglected hobbies or finally reading those books that have been sitting on the shelf. I know I have a few years worth of photos that need to be organized both print and digital. Spring has arrived and working on lawns and gardens can be very therapeutic. There are so many ways to fill the time that we have been given.

Another way to use this time is to reflect on life and on the things that this pandemic may be teaching us. Everything that happens has lessons to teach us. So I want to share with you a list of things that was put together by Bill Gates. I saw it on Facebook and then someone else sent it to me and asked me to share it with you. I thought that would be a good idea as his words give us much to think about. He writes:

What is the Corona/Covid-19 Virus Really Teaching us?

I'm a strong believer that there is a spiritual purpose behind everything that happens, whether that is what we perceive as being good or being bad.

As I meditate upon this, I want to share with you what I feel the Corona/ Covid-19 virus is really doing to us:

1) It is reminding us that we are all equal, regardless of our culture, religion, occupation, financial situation or how famous we are. This disease treats us all equally, perhaps we should too. If you don't believe me, just ask Tom Hanks.

2) It is reminding us that we are all connected and something that affects one person has an effect on another. It is reminding us that the false borders that we have put up have little value as this virus does not need a passport. It is reminding us, by oppressing us for a short time, of those in this world whose whole life is spent in oppression.

3) It is reminding us of how precious our health is and how we have moved to neglect it through eating nutrient poor manufactured food and drinking water that is contaminated with chemicals upon chemicals. If we don't look after our health, we will, of course, get sick.

4) It is reminding us of the shortness of life and of what is most important for us to do, which is to help each other, especially those who are old or sick. Our purpose is not to buy toilet roll.

5) It is reminding us of how materialistic our society has become and how, when in times of difficulty, we remember that it's the essentials that we need (food, water, medicine) as opposed to the luxuries that we sometimes unnecessarily give value to.

6) It is reminding us of how important our family and home life

is and how much we have neglected this. It is forcing us back into our houses so we can rebuild them into our home and to strengthen our family unit.

7) It is reminding us that our true work is not our job, that is what we do, not what we were created to do. Our true work is to look after each other, to protect each other and to be of benefit to one another.

8) It is reminding us to keep our egos in check. It is reminding us that no matter how great we think we are or how great others think we are, a virus can bring our world to a standstill.

9) It is reminding us that the power of freewill is in our hands. We can choose to cooperate and help each other, to share, to give, to help and to support each other or we can choose to be selfish, to hoard, to look after only our self. Indeed, it is difficulties that bring out our true colors.

10) It is reminding us that we can be patient, or we can panic. We can either understand that this type of situation has happened many times before in history and will pass, or we can panic and see it as the end of the world and, consequently, cause ourselves more harm than good.

11) It is reminding us that this can either be an end or a new beginning. This can be a time of reflection and understanding, where we learn from our mistakes, or it can be the start of a cycle which will continue until we finally learn the lesson we are meant to.

12) It is reminding us that this Earth is sick. It is reminding us that we need to look at the rate of deforestation just as urgently as we look at the speed at which toilet rolls are disappearing off of shelves. We are sick because our home is sick.

13) It is reminding us that after every difficulty, there is always ease. Life is cyclical, and this is just a phase in this great cycle. We do not need to panic; this too shall pass.

*14) Whereas many see the Corona/Covid-19 virus as a great disaster, I prefer to see it as a *great corrector**

*It is sent to remind us of the important lessons that we seem to have forgotten and it is up to us if we will learn them or not.
- Bill Gates.*

Wise words I think. May we all use some of the time we have been given to think on these things, to think on the lessons we might learn from this time of challenge so that we may come out the other side as better people. There is hope. With God there is always hope. The people of Jesus' day had lessons to learn and so do we. Jesus comes to teach us. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Preparation for Prayer: *As we prepare our hearts and minds to enter into a time of prayer I invite you to sit comfortably and quietly for a moment. Breathe deeply a few times paying particular attention to your breath as it moves in through your nostrils and fills your lungs. Picture your breath as a light entering your body and filling it with love and relaxation. Then when you exhale imagine the breath taking all your tensions and worries with it as it leaves your body. Do this a few times until you feel relaxed then move on into the prayer time.*

Prayers: beginning with Cheering on Wisdom (Bruce Sanguin in If Darwin Prayed, pg 55)

O Holy One,
we come prepared to cheer on
our holy leader and hallowed child of Wisdom,
Jesus, the anointed one.

Our need is as great today
as it was for those ancient pilgrims

to honour and salute the presence
of truth and beauty and goodness.

For we have wandered far from Wisdom,
and we find ourselves cheering
for all the wrong things and all the wrong people.

Now we join in with this holy procession of hope,
that we might look into the heart of Christ
and see our own sacred heart reflected back,
empowering us to stay with Him,
and stay with our own deep integrity,
when the forces of chaos conspire to shake our conviction
and make peace with an unholy convention.

...Our prayers continue as we pray today for all those who are
on the front-lines of the battle against Covid-19 - the health care
workers, grocery store workers, first responders and so many
more. We pray for governments who are trying to figure out on
the fly what procedures and policies will work the best for the
most people. We pray for all of us as we work and wait at home -
give us patience, give us courage, give us a sense of humour to
help to see us through.

We pray for those who can no longer visit elders in homes or
sick loved-ones in hospitals. The pain of separation is hard for
both sides of the situation.

We also offer our gratitude today - gratitude for those willing
to put themselves at risk for the good of others; gratitude for the
ways many people are reaching out through social media to
maintain connection; gratitude for many using technology to
share their talents of music and laughter to bring a spark of joy
and encouragement to others.

It is at the most difficult of times that we see the best of
humanity come forth - people helping people, people offering
their care, people wanting to do what is right. This is what gives us
hope, Holy Presence, for it is in these actions that we see your
love at work in the world. It is in and through these actions that

Jesus' comes.

Bless our brothers and sisters of Atwood United church and all
those who work on our behalf in other parts of our country and
the world.

And bless us as we take a moment of silence now to offer the
prayers of our own hearts. We pray today for _____.

With you all things are possible. In your love we find our
hope. Through your presence we are enabled to do, to endure, to
thrive. We know we are not alone.

We offer these and all of our prayers in the name of our
brother, Jesus the Christ, who rode triumphantly into Jerusalem
so long ago bringing a message of love and of hope, and we pray
together the words he taught us saying...

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, the power, and the glory

forever and ever. Amen.

Offering:

I want to end with an appeal. Right now we are being told to step
up and do our part to stop the spread of this virus. We are being
told to step up and do our part by staying home and keeping our
distance. And it is our civil duty to do that.

The church needs us to step up at this time, too. God's work
through our church can only continue if we step up to do what we
can to keep it going. The church building may be closed right now
but the work of the church continues. Remember, the church is

not a building - the church is the people of God who meet there.

We all have gifts to give - gifts of time, of talent, of finances. How will you step up? With your gifts of time to call someone you know is alone? With your skills that can be used to bring comfort to someone? With your gift of prayer which is very needed at this time. Or with your gifts of financial resources? All of our gifts are needed at this time. You are invited to step up and give what ever you can in whatever way you can.

If you would like to do your part by making a monetary donation there are a number of ways to do that.

1. Cheque (post-dated cheques are welcome) made payable to: Melville United Church - which can be mailed to the church at P.O. Box 41 , Fergus, ON N1M 2W7 or put in the mail slot beside the parking lot door.
2. Donate online through the Canada Helps web-site <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/melville-united-church/>
3. Call Lynda, to arrange Pre-Authorized Remittance payments (PAR)
4. E-transfer directly from your bank. E-mail to secretary@melvilleunited.com

Thanks to all of you who contribute so much to make Melville the caring community of faith that it is. May you be blessed.

Blessing:

We are called to carry blessing into the world.

At this time of social isolation that can still be done through social media, through a simple phone call.

We belong to one another and when we move together in spirit we are reminded that we are never alone.

God is with us now and always! Amen.

Prayer of the Week:

Infinite Wisdom, you hear our words, you hear our hearts. Keep us in the grace of knowing we are known and heard, so deeply, so graciously, so constantly. Amen.