



March 28, 2021

Melville United Church

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Melville United Church

March 28, 2021

Palm Sunday

Presiding today - Rev. Marion Loree

Welcome

My name is Marion Loree and I am the minister here at Melville United Church in Fergus, Ontario. We gather in community today - March 28, 2021 virtually. BUT because of Covid-19 restrictions in our area there are no worshipers here with me. BUT - we are now in code orange which means next week we will be open for in-person worship. There will be a live service here at 11:00 am Good Friday and 11:00 am Easter Sunday. On-line services will continue for those who are not comfortable joining in person but the recordings will not be available before hand. We are hoping to live-stream which means you will be able to watch from home at the same time as the service is actually happening.

So today is what is known as Palm Sunday on our church calendar. The day we mark Jesus' entry into the city of Jerusalem. He arrived in triumph to the cheers of the crowds who had heard of his good work throughout the land and who were hoping he was the one who would save them from the oppressive rule of Roman.

Palm Sunday also marks the beginning of what we know as Passion Week. A week in which we follow the events that led up to Jesus' crucifixion. But all that is to come. Today the people were cheering on the one who came in the name of God.

So I invite you to join us now for this time of worship. Perhaps in our sharing you will glean something that might help you in your spiritual journey.

Announcements:

- 1. Opening for in-person worship beginning Friday - April 2 - for Good Friday service at 11:00 am. Easter Sunday - 11:00 am.*
- 2. Annual Reports are available for pick-up or on-line. For paper copy - available at the side door of the church - just write your name and take one or ask someone to get it for you. For on-line - let Lynda know and she will be sure to send you one.*

Acknowledgment:

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.

Sharing the Light: *(If you are watching this on-line or reading it from a page I invite you to take a moment to light a candle, centre yourself and prepare to enter in to a time of worship and prayer. As you light your candle repeat the following words)*

We light a candle today to remind us

*that there is a mysterious power or presence that connects us all -
we call it God.*

that this mysterious presence dwells within each of us -

as it did in the person of Jesus whom we call the Christ.

that we cannot be separated from this presence that is

the Spirit of love which created us and that is part of us always.

Call to Worship:

Rejoicing with the followers of Jesus, we wave palms.
 We welcome Jesus, riding in humility,
 raising our hopes for renewal!
 Hosanna in the highest,
 blessed is the one who comes in the name of God.
 Come, let us worship together.

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!

Words of Wisdom: F.D. Huntington

While reason is puzzling itself about mystery,
 faith is turning it to daily bread,
 and feeding on it thankfully in her heart of hearts.

Opening Prayer/Prayer of Confession:

Deep Spirit, present within all things, we gather as a people, alive with hopes, fears, longings, joy and weariness. We come in worship, we come in community, we come in vulnerability. In peace, may we continue our journey from Lent into Holy Week. May our worship be filled with a sense of what it means to be part of your sacred story as we prepare for the difficult days ahead.

Humbly Jesus showed a way, God, a way of giving, serving, loving, sacrificing. Humbly he set an example for us to follow, a holy way, a perfected way, an achievable way of living. Humble us this day, that hearing again of his life's work, we might be encouraged to follow.

We offer now, in a moment of silence, the confessions of our hearts ...(silence)... In the depth of our being we know that you hear us; you love us; and you forgive us. Turn us again in your direction, Holy Presence, so that what we know in our hearts might be lived out in our lives. Amen

Words of Assurance:

Know this - you are loved! You are a beloved child of the Universe, loved beyond measure by the One who Created you and all that is! Hear it, believe it, and live this good news! Look, listen, watch, follow and know that you are forgiven.

Thanks be to God. Amen

Ministry of Music: Hosanna!

Scripture: Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 (Everyday Psalms - James Taylor, pg 148)

(In times of terror)

Sometimes life is a bowl of cherries. Sometimes, it's more like a trip to the emergency ward.

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 our hand.

In a time of terror, you hover over us;
you give us 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 tears 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: Mark 11:1-11 (The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Edition)

(Jesus' joyful entry into Jerusalem)

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent off two of the disciples with this instruction: "Go to the village straight ahead of you, and as soon as you enter it you will find tethered there a colt on which no one has ridden. Untie it and bring it back. If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing that?' say, 'The Rabbi needs it, but will send it back very soon.'"

So they went off, and finding a colt tethered out on the street near a gate, they untied it. Some of the bystanders said to them, "What do you mean by untying that colt?" They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them take it.

They brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks across its back, and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. And everyone around Jesus, in front or in back of him, cried out, "Hosanna!" Blessed is the One who comes in the name of our God! Blessed is the coming reign of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest!"

Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple precincts. He inspected everything there, but since it was already late in the afternoon, he went out to Bethany accompanied by the Twelve.

Kids Church Skit: Children's Ministry Skit by Faith Scott

This is a short skit about Palm Sunday and Jesus coming into Jerusalem. There are several children and one adult lady in the group.

BEGIN...

Narrator 1: Jesus was returning to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. As He came closer to the city, he asked two of his disciples to go ahead of Him. He said,

Jesus: "When you get to town, you will see a donkey tied up. Untie it and bring it to me. If anyone asks you about taking the donkey, just tell them I will bring it back as soon as I am done with it."

Narrator 1: When they brought the donkey to Jesus, some of the disciples took off their coats and laid them on the donkey's back. They did this out of respect for Jesus. Jesus rode the donkey into Jerusalem. As He was traveling, some children saw Jesus coming and came running towards Him. They had heard He might be coming, and they wanted to see Him.

1st child: "What is everyone doing?"

2nd child: "We are waiting for Jesus to come by."

1st child: "Who is Jesus?"

2nd child: "You don't know who Jesus is?"

3rd child: "They say he is going to be our King. He is the son of God and he will free us from the Romans."

1st child: "Boy, that would be great, he must be a big and powerful man."

Narrator 2: People knew that Jesus was special. As Jesus and His disciples got closer to town, more and more people watched Jesus. The crowd that surrounded Him started to shout praises to Him for all the miracles He had done.

4th child: "Get a branch and you can wave it at him when he comes. He is coming to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover." (Child 4 waves her branch)
(Everyone starts waving branches)

2nd child: "I can't see anything, I can't see Jesus, but I hear some shouting."

3rd child: "What are they shouting?"

Lady: "They are shouting. Hosanna, blessed is the king of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna means save us."

Lady: "HOSANNA!"

Everyone (Not Jesus): "Hosanna. Hosanna"

Narrator 2: The people thought Jesus was going to save them from the people that ruled over them...(pause) and he was, just not exactly in the way they thought.

4th Child: "I can see him, I can see him, He is riding on a donkey."
(We see Jesus and the donkey)

1st child: "Why is he riding on a donkey, don't kings usually ride on a horse?"

4th child: "Here he comes, here he comes!"
(Everyone acts like Jesus is right in front of them, while waving their branches. Smile and look surprised)

3rd child: "Jesus is so kind and happy, but today he looks so sad."
(Everyone puts their branches down.)

Everyone: "Hail to our King! ...Jesus! ...Jesus!"
(Then everyone acts like Jesus has passed by.)

4th child: "There he goes, bye Jesus...bye Jesus."

1st child: "When do you think Jesus will be made king? Where are his soldiers? All kings

have soldiers!"
(Everyone looks like they are thinking)

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Message: The Meaning of Palm Sunday Mark 1:1-11

I hope you enjoyed the children's version of the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

The story of Palm Sunday is an interesting one and has many levels to it. So, let's take a closer look at the reading from Mark's gospel we just heard.

Throughout all the gospels, up until this point Jesus has been making his way toward Jerusalem. His ministry began in the rural areas of Galilee, but he has continually alluded to the time when he needed "to go up to Jerusalem." There, he would confront the powers, there his reign, begun out in Galilee, would reach its glorious consummation. His followers thought this meant the overthrow of Roman rule.

Imagine the excitement of those around him - his disciples, his followers, the crowds that followed him believing him to be the long-awaited Messiah who would deliver them from the clutches of the Romans. Such an exciting day - a parade, a charismatic leader, a deliverer has come.

Then Mark expends nearly half of his verses about Palm Sunday in a rather detailed description (at least for the Gospel of Mark) of acquiring a donkey colt for Jesus to ride on. When it comes to reading scripture an uncharacteristic passage such as this indicates that we need to look more closely at it because chances are the author wrote it for a specific reason.

First, the appointment of the two disciples who were dispatched to find the colt. Writer Thomas G. Long speculates that these two may have been the same two (namely James and John) who had very recently been asking Jesus to seat them at his right and left hands in glory. You may remember - James and John had provoked the anger of the rest of the disciples when they came to Jesus to ask him for this favour. Perhaps in telling about them receiving this mundane task Mark was trying to emphasize what Jesus had told them about needing to be a servant to all.

Second, the fact that Mark has Jesus instructing them exactly on where they would find the colt is Mark's way of suggesting that everything is happening under the guidance of an unseen hand with whose purposes Jesus is in perfect harmony. The hint is that he knows what is to come. That he knows what he is doing.

Thirdly, when Jesus seats himself on the donkey he is, in a way, claiming a higher status than that of ordinary pilgrims to Jerusalem, who would enter the city on foot, and as Jesus rides many people strew his way with greenery (only John specifies palm branches) and some throw their coats and garments down for his donkey to walk on as they would do for royalty. They shout their praises of "hosanna" and the whole scene is highly charged with royal undertones. Even the description of the colt as one that has never been ridden indicates that it is fit for

ceremonial purposes.

So what is going on here? Up until now, Jesus has preached loving and ministering to others and becoming a servant of all. He has stressed that the least shall be first and the powerful shall be brought low. Why, now, is he riding into the city of Jerusalem imitating the trappings of a great military procession for a triumphant national hero? The people participating in the event do everything a victorious military leader would expect. And Jesus rides through the midst of the adoring crowds. It seems we are getting mixed messages.

More than one Biblical scholar suggests that this event is a critical one in Jesus' ministry. It is suggested that such a focus on the entry into Jerusalem is important because this story relates one of the wildest and most politically explosive acts of Jesus' ministry. This story is a reminder of the political challenge that Jesus was to those in power in his day. This means that it is also a reminder to us that our faith has political implications.

This story relates the care with which Jesus made arrangements for this event. It indicates that he was 'staging' the whole thing. He is enacting a carnival-like parody of kingship. It is a charade, a spoof. It is his way of mocking the political powers of the day. In today's language, it was a planned political demonstration.

He begins at the Mount of Olives which was the traditional location from which people expected the final battle for Jerusalem's liberation to begin. He sends out for provisions, except the provisions are not weapons but simply a colt. You see the parody - Jesus goes to take possession of Jerusalem unarmed and riding on a colt.

When he does finally enter the city, he enjoys all the trappings of a great military procession for a triumphant national hero. The people do everything as it would be done for a victorious military leader. To spread branches and cloaks before Jesus as a symbol of honour would have been considered treasonous by the Roman empire. On top of that they shout "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of our God." "God saves." "Long live the King!" in other words. A dangerous thing to shout at anyone but the Roman Emperor.

The irony of the situation is that the same people who were shouting and praising him on his entry into Jerusalem were the same ones who would be crying "Crucify him!" a week later. He comes not as one who lords it over others, but as one who humbly rejects domination. He comes not with pomp and wealth, but as one identified with the poor. He comes not as a mighty warrior, but as one who is vulnerable and refuses to rely on violence. He comes as one who invites people to see and live in the world in a new way. This entry into Jerusalem is comical, dramatic, and political and Jesus knew that. In fact, Jesus planned it that way. So mixed messages? I think not.

Jesus' message is still one of love, still one of turning the world upside down, still one of God's way not being our way, still one of getting our own needs and egos out of the way so that the Spirit can work through and in us in order to bring about God's kingdom here on earth. And that is the meaning of Palm Sunday.

Jesus was a radical who brought the radical love of God to life. He came and still comes every time we stand up to injustice and say “No, that is not God’s way.” He comes every time we open our heart to be there in a caring way for someone else. He comes every time someone, anyone, risks standing up to corrupt authority in spite of personal danger.

Palm Sunday - a radical, political protest. Jesus comes. Are you ready to follow?

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.

Silent Preparation:

Prayers: (beginning with Cheering on Wisdom -Bruce Sanguin, *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 for our brothers and sisters of Rockwood-Stone Pastoral Charge and for all those who work on our behalf in other parts of our country and the world.

And we pray for ourselves as we offer the concerns, the thanksgivings, the joys and sorrows that we hold deep within our hearts. Hear us as we pray in silence.....(silence)....

Let us feel your presence near as we head into Holy Week, Eternal One. Help us to remember that we cannot appreciate the dawn without first experiencing the night. Remind us that after the dark night of the soul your wondrous light and love await with the gift of a new day filled with the offer of wonder, new life and joy.

We offer these and all of our prayers in the name of our brother, Jesus the Christ, who stands among us as we pray together saying...

Lord's Prayer:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kindom 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 kindom, the power, and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.

Offering:

If you would like to do your part by making a monetary donation to Melville United Church 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 website
<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*

Offering Prayer:

Holy One, we are so very generously blessed. Let us be intentional with how we use the gifts of time, skills and talents creatively and with good intent. Let us use the gift of income and resources to share generously with those in need. We have received so much let the gifts we share be used to help build your kin-dom in our world. Amen.

Hymn: To Show By Touch and Word VU 427

- 1 To show by touch and word devotion to the earth,
to hold in full regard all life that comes to birth,
we need, O God, the will to find
the good you had of old in mind.

- 2 Renew our minds to choose the things that matter most,
our hearts to long for truth till pride of self is lost.
For every challenge that we face
we need your guidance and your grace.
- 3 Let love from day to day be yardstick, rule, and norm,
and let our lives portray your word in human form.
Now come with us that we may have
your wits about us where we live.

Blessing/Sending Forth:

Go into the world, empowered and encouraged
by the presence of the Holy spirit to shout,
“Hosanna in the highest!”
May God protect you in your days
and guide you in your ways.
Go in peace, knowing God goes with you.
Amen.

Postlude:**Prayer of the Week:**

When we celebrate, and when we protest, we are thankful that you are present with us, O God.
Help us discern when to challenge authority, and when to use power for good. May we
continue to follow in the way of Jesus. Amen.