



Celebrate

Sunday of the Passion / Palm Sunday
March 28, 2021

This week, the center of the church's year, is one of striking contrasts: Jesus rides into Jerusalem surrounded by shouts of glory, only to be left alone to die on the cross, abandoned by even his closest friends. Mark's gospel presents Jesus in his complete human vulnerability: agitated, grieved, scared, forsaken. Though we lament Christ's suffering and all human suffering, we also expect God's salvation: in the wine and bread, Jesus promises that his death will mark a new covenant with all people. We enter this holy week thirsty for the completion of God's astonishing work.

Procession with Palms Mark 11:1-11 or John 12:12-16 [not printed]

If possible, the assembly gathers at a designated place outside the usual worship space, so that all may enter in procession. Palm branches, or branches of other trees and shrubs, are distributed before the service begins.

The presiding minister begins (repeated one or more times).

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, [Jesus] sent two of his disciples ²and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. ³If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.'" ⁴They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, ⁵some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" ⁶They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. ⁷Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. ⁸Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. ⁹Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

"Hosanna!

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

¹⁰Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

¹¹Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

The presiding minister and the assembly greet each other.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

We praise you, O God, for redeeming the world through our Savior Jesus Christ. Today he entered the holy city in triumph and was proclaimed messiah and king by those who spread garments and branches along his way. Bless these branches and those who carry them. Grant us grace to follow our Lord in the way of the cross, so that, joined to his death and resurrection, we enter into life with you; through the same Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

continued

Procession with Palms, continued

The assisting minister addresses the assembly.

Let us go forth in peace,
in the name of Christ. Amen.

The assembly follows the ministers into the church. "All glory, laud, and honor" (ELW #344) and other suitable hymns, psalms, or anthems may be sung as the people process into the church or once they have taken their places.

The presiding minister concludes the procession.

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

Prayer of the Day

Everlasting God, in your endless love for the human race you sent our Lord Jesus Christ to take on our nature and to suffer death on the cross. In your mercy enable us to share in his obedience to your will and in the glorious victory of his resurrection, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Psalm

Psalm 31:9-16; refrain, Ps. 31:5



In - to your hands, O LORD, I com - mend my spir - it.

Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I¹ am in trouble;

my eye is consumed with sorrow, and also my throat¹ and my belly.

¹⁰For my life is wasted with grief, and my¹ years with sighing;

my strength fails me because of affliction, and my bones¹ are consumed.

¹¹I am the scorn of my enemies, a disgrace to my neighbors,
a dismay to¹ my acquaintances;

when they see me in the street¹ they avoid me.

¹²Like the dead I am forgotten,¹ out of mind;

I am as useless as a¹ broken pot. **R**

¹³For I have heard the whispering of the crowd; fear is¹ all around;

they put their heads together against me; they plot to¹ take my life.

¹⁴But as for me, I have trusted in¹ you, O LORD.

I have said, "You¹ are my God.

¹⁵My times are¹ in your hand;

rescue me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who¹ persecute me.

¹⁶Let your face shine up-¹ on your servant;

save me in your¹ steadfast love." **R**

First Reading

Isaiah 50:4-9a

The image of the servant of God is one of the notable motifs in the book of Isaiah. Today's reading describes the mission of the servant, whom early Christians associated with Jesus. Like Jesus, the servant does not strike back at his detractors but trusts in God's steadfast love.

The Lord God has given me
the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.
Morning by morning he wakens—
wakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.
⁵The Lord God has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backward.
⁶I gave my back to those who struck me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled
out the beard;

I did not hide my face
from insult and spitting.

⁷The Lord God helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to
shame;

⁸he who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me?
Let us stand up together.
Who are my adversaries?
Let them confront me.

⁹It is the Lord God who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?

Second Reading

Philippians 2:5-11

Christ did not act to attain status and glory but was obedient to God even to the point of death. Following Christ's example, we do not seek personal status or glory but care for others as God cared for us in Christ's death.

Let the same mind be in you that was in
Christ Jesus,
⁶who, though he was in the form of
God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
⁷but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
⁸he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of
death—
even death on a cross.

⁹Therefore God also highly exalted
him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under
the earth,
¹¹and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Gospel

Mark 14:1—15:47 or Mark 15:1-39 [40-47] [not printed]

The passion story in Mark's gospel presents Jesus as one who dies abandoned by all. He shows himself to be the true Son of God by giving his life for those who have forsaken him.

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

In Jesus you came among us as a suffering servant. Give your church humility. Redeem your people from pride and the certainty that we always know your will. Heal us and empower us to confess Christ crucified. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

In creation, life springs from death. Redeem your creation awaiting resurrection: restore lost habitats and endangered species. Create new possibilities for areas affected by climate change (*especially*), grant relief from natural disasters (*especially*), and nurture new growth. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Jesus was handed over to the powers of this world. In all nations, instruct the powerful, that they would not exploit their power but maintain justice. Sustain soldiers, and guide those who command them, that they serve those in greatest need. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

On the cross Jesus joined all who feel forsaken. Abide with those who are condemned to death. Defend those who are falsely accused. Console and strengthen those who are mocked or bullied. Accompany all who suffer (*especially*); grant respite and renewal. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

You called followers to tend Jesus' body in death. Sustain hospice workers and funeral directors. Bless this congregation's ministries at times of death: those who plan and lead funerals, those who prepare meals, all who offer support in grief. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

You inspired the centurion to confess Jesus as your Son. We praise you for the faith you have given to people of all places and times. Give us also such faith to trust the promises of baptism and, with them, to look for the resurrection of the dead. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday (commemoration of Hans Nielsen Hauge, renewer of the church, 1824) Psalm 36:5-11. **Tuesday** 1 Corinthians 1:18-31. **Wednesday** (commemoration of John Donne, poet, 1631) Isaiah 50:4-9a. **Maundy Thursday** 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. **Good Friday** John 18:1—19:42. **Resurrection of Our Lord/Vigil of Easter** Romans 6:3-11. **Resurrection of Our Lord/Easter Day** (commemoration of Benedict the African, confessor, 1589) Acts 10:34-43 or Isaiah 25:6-9; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 or Acts 10:34-43; Mark 16:1-8 or John 20:1-18.

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