

Order of Service for March 28, 2021 - Palm Sunday

GATHERING

Processional Gospel

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

C - Hosanna in the highest!

P - The holy Gospel according to Mark.

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and 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. If anyone says to you, “Why are you doing this?” just say this, “The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.” ’ They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, ‘What are you doing, untying the colt?’ They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

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

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!’

Then 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 gospel of the Lord.

Let us pray. We praise you, O God, for redeeming the world through our Saviour, 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 bear 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 in you; through the same Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Gathering Song - 344, All Glory, Laud and Honour

Refrain

All glory, laud, and honour to you, redeemer, king,
to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.

You are the king of Israel and David’s royal Son,
now in the Lord’s name coming, the King and Blessed One. *Refrain*

The company of angels is praising you on high;
creation and all mortals in chorus make reply. *Refrain*

The multitude of pilgrims with palms before you went;
our praise and prayer and anthems before you we present. *Refrain*

To you, before your passion, they sang their hymns of praise.
To you, now high exalted, our melody we raise. *Refrain*

Their praises you accepted; accept the prayers we bring,
great author of all goodness, O good and gracious King. *Refrain*

(Hymn lyrics printed under CCLI Licence # 11411292)

Palm Sunday Response

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

C - Hosanna in the highest!

Prayer of the Day

P - Let us pray. Sovereign God, you have established your rule in the human heart through the servanthood of Jesus Christ. By your Spirit, keep us in the joyful procession of those who with their tongues confess Jesus as Lord, and with their lives praise him as Saviour, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C - Amen.

WORD

Gospel Acclamation

P - Christ humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

C - Therefore God also highly exalted him, and gave him the name that is above every name.

Gospel

P - Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,
‘Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!’

Sermon

I try to be someone who doesn't complain. Not too much, anyway! Sometimes I even succeed. But as much as I enjoy the liturgies we use, and the prayers and the readings and the flow of Holy Week and all that, I must say that I have an issue with how we start this day, this Palm Sunday, this first day of Holy Week.

My issue is found in the prayer which we used right after hearing the story of Jesus riding into Jerusalem. It begins like this:

We praise you, O God, for redeeming the world through our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

No argument with that!

Today he entered the holy city in triumph and was proclaimed messiah and king by those who spread garments and branches along his way.

That sentence is where I have my issue, when it says Jesus entered Jerusalem “in triumph.”

Do we really think that Jesus was riding that colt with his arms in the air, both hands clenched into fists, smiling triumphantly at the crowd, and shouting “Yes!” in response to their cheers? That would be rather inconsistent with the picture of Jesus which the gospel writers give us.

If you look at how this scene has been portrayed in artwork through the ages, you will see that this is not how it has been understood! Jesus is not shown arriving in Jerusalem “triumphantly,” as if he had just won the Stanley Cup, the World Series and the Super Bowl all at the same time! The way artists have depicted this scene universally has Jesus... looking down. He almost seems more interested in looking at the *colt* he is riding than the crowds which are surrounding him.

In spite of our opening prayer which says that Jesus entered Jerusalem “in triumph,” in spite of the tradition that calls this event “The Triumphal Entry,” I don't think that's the case. We are so enamoured of being “winners” that we can't see what's actually happening in front of us.

Jesus did not enter Jerusalem “triumphally.” He entered Jerusalem humbly.

And the crowd seemed to get that, at least in part. The argument can reasonably be made that the people surrounding Jesus that day did not completely understand what Jesus was really about. They did not comprehend his purpose or his method; they did not grasp what he was really doing on that day. This is demonstrated by the fact that they turned their back on him so quickly, and by the end of the week were shouting “Crucify.”

But people are complex creations, and I think it’s unfair to paint them too simply.

They weren’t cheering Jesus as if he had just won the Stanley Cup, the World Series and the Super Bowl all at the same time. And we know this because of what they were shout: “Hosanna.”

Hosanna does not mean, “Yippee!” Hosanna does not mean, “We won!” Or even, “We’re *going* to win!”

Hosanna means, “Save us.”

As rambunctious as the crowd was, as eager and as excited, they, too had some level of humility about it all. They recognized that they needed to be pulled out of their impossible situation. They recognized that they needed to be rescued. So their cry was, “Hosanna.” “Save us.”

Triumphalism has been a very big problem in the church for a very long time. We have given in to the desire to be one of history’s winners. And in spite of our often stated desire to faithfully follow Jesus, we have allowed triumphalism to hang around, so that it even infects our prayers. “Today Jesus entered the holy city in triumph....”

Well, maybe this year, we can do it differently. Maybe this year we open our eyes to what is actually happening in front of us, instead of interpreting everything through the lenses of what we *want* to be happening in front of us. Maybe this year we can allow ourselves to be confronted by the humility of Jesus, and join the crowd in praying the prayer of people who are beginning to recognize their need.

Maybe this year, instead of praying “Yippee,” we can, with *humility*, pray the *other* prayer with which we started our service.

Sovereign God, you have established your rule in the human heart through the servanthood of Jesus Christ. By your Spirit, keep us in the joyful procession of those who with their tongues confess Jesus as Lord, and with their lives praise him as Saviour, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

Hymn of the Day - 335, Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross

Jesus, keep me near the cross, there's a precious fountain;
free to all, a healing stream flows from Calv'ry's mountain.

Refrain

In the cross, in the cross be my glory ever;
till my ransomed soul shall find rest beyond the river.

Near the cross, a trembling soul, love and mercy found me;
there the bright and morning star sheds its beams around me. *Refrain*

Near the cross! O Lamb of God, bring its scenes before me;
help me walk from day to day with its shadow o'er me. *Refrain*

Near the cross I'll watch and wait, hoping, trusting ever,
till I reach the golden strand just beyond the river. *Refrain*

(Hymn lyrics printed under CCLI Licence # 11411292)

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of the People

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

[Short pause]

A - Gracious God, in the humility of Jesus we see a true picture of your glory: not overwhelming, but inviting; not overpowering, but serving. Give us the grace to follow in the same way.

[Silence]

In your unbounded mercy,

C - Hear our prayer.

A - Gracious God, in the humility of Jesus we encounter your patience with the misunderstanding crowd. Open us to our own misconceptions, that we may change direction.

[Silence]

In your unbounded mercy,

C - Hear our prayer.

A - Gracious God, in the humility of Jesus we catch a glimpse of suffering love beyond comprehension. Pour this same love into *our* hearts, that we may share your compassion with our suffering world.

[Silence]

In your unbounded mercy,

C - Hear our prayer.

A - Gracious God, in the humility of Jesus we hear your call to follow, to serve, and even to die. Strengthen the faith of your church, that we may embrace the opportunities which surround us.

[Silence]

In your unbounded mercy,

C - Hear our prayer.

A - Gracious God, in the humility of Jesus we experience your willingness to join us in our pain, our illness, and our distress. Give us the willingness to do the same for those who suffer around us, especially those we name before you.

[Silence]

In your unbounded mercy,

C - Hear our prayer.

A - Gracious God, in the humility of Jesus we are challenged to let go of all things for the sake of the cross. Give us the humble faith we need, to go where you call us to go.

[*Silence*]

In your unbounded mercy,
C - Hear our prayer.

P - Into your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,

Lord's Prayer

C - 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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

SENDING

Benediction

P - You are what you were made to be:
created in Christ Jesus for good works,
chosen to be holy and beloved,
freed to serve your neighbour.
God so bless you that you may be a blessing,
in the name of the holy and (†) life-giving Trinity.

C - Amen.

Dismissal

P - Go in peace. Following the humble Jesus.

C - Thanks be to God!

Palm Sunday Response

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

C - Hosanna in the highest!

Remember to visit our Facebook page and our Website, <https://zionlutheranlunenburg.ca>