

Palm Sunday – Mar. 28, 2021

On this day, we are reminded that Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem by the multitude using what was readily available to them – branches, coats, and voices. Today we are encouraged to be equally creative as we celebrate the triumphal entry. As you worship, consider including a branch from your spring pruning. Grab what you have available and proclaim Jesus as Lord.

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

Dear friends in Christ, during Lent we have been preparing for the celebration of our Lord's paschal mystery. On this day our Lord Jesus Christ entered the holy city of Jerusalem in triumph. The people welcomed him with palms and shouts of praise, but the path before him led to self-giving, suffering, and death. Today we greet him as our King, although we know his crown is thorns and his throne a cross. We follow him this week from the glory of the palms to the glory of the resurrection by way of the dark road of suffering and death. United with him in his suffering on the cross may we share his resurrection and new life.

Let us pray: Assist us mercifully with your help, Lord God of our salvation, that we may enter with joy into the celebration of those mighty acts whereby you give us life and immortality; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (BAS p. 297)

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark (11:1-11)

The Gospel of Christ.

Reflection: '...others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields.' It may feel strange not holding palms in our hands on this day, after all it is generally called 'Palm Sunday'. The fact is, however, those who celebrated the triumphal entry grabbed what was available. Mark describes these as leafy branches from the fields. These were meant to be a sign of respect and celebration. A sign of hope for new life.

As the weather warms, many are beginning to turn to their yards and care for the plants. Part of this process can include pruning. The point of pruning is to let go of one part of the plant to create space for new life. To what extent can we view the Holy Week journey in this same vein – an opportunity to let go of Jesus the human being who walked this earth and taught those who would listen to create space for new life, resurrection, hope? How might this perspective influence our understanding of what we celebrate in the triumphal entry today? What can you grab that is handy to help you proclaim Hosanna?

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right to praise you, almighty God, for the acts of love by which you have redeemed us through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Hebrews acclaimed Jesus and Messiah and King, with branches in their hands crying, Hosanna in the highest.

May we also, carrying these emblems, go forth to meet Christ and follow him in the way that leads to eternal life; who lives and reigns in glory with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen. (BAS p. 298)

Let us bless the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Monday – Wednesday in Holy Week

Opening Prayer:

Christ Jesus, by nature divine, did not grasp for himself a rank as equal with God. He chose to empty himself, becoming a humble slave, and living the life of a man. And human in every way, he abased himself still more, obedient to death on a cross. So God has exalted him on high, and given to him the name, the greatest of all names; So that at Jesus' name every knee should bend low in heaven, on earth, in the depths, And every tongue proclaim: Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father! (BAS p. 91-92)

Reading & Reflection (see daily information)

Prayers (see daily information)

Lord's Prayer: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen. (BAS p. 211)

Collect (see daily information)

Closing: Let us bless the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Monday – Mar. 29, 2021

Reading: John 12:1-11

Reflection: *We don't often think much about our feet, that is, unless they are hurting. Take this time to care for your feet. Wash and dry them. Apply lotion. Engage in this process intentionally. Open yourself to the experience of your hands as you massage the lotion around each part of each foot. Mindfully consider the gift of feet. Reflect on what it feels like to care for this part of your body. Imagine what it would be like to be Mary, expressing her gratitude to Jesus in this way.*

Prayers: *Lord, you have gifted us with feet that carry our bodies on this journey of life. Help us to be grateful for this gift even though we don't think much about our feet. As we acknowledge the gift of feet today, may we also recognise the many other gifts in this world that often go unnoticed and underappreciated: insects that serve the balance of nature, plants that provide us with oxygen, the working poor who do jobs no one else wants to do just so they can survive. May we also be grateful and offer care for all of these gifts with the love and care God showed the world in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.*

Gathering our prayers into one, let us pray as Jesus taught us (Lord's Prayer)

Collect: *Almighty God, whose Son was crucified yet entered into glory, may we, walking in the way of the cross, find it is for us the way of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (BAS p. 301)*

Tuesday – Mar. 30, 2021

Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Reflection: *The author of this letter is speaking directly to a worshipping community, a church family. Notice how these individuals are described beginning in verse 26. This community is filled with*

unremarkable (by social standards) people. Individuals who don't have a lot of power and influence and yet their presence and faith are acknowledged through this letter almost two millennia later. What does this teach us about our call to live as people of faith? How might our ministry today become a beacon for those who come after? To what extent are we transformed by our experiences of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus now?

Prayers: Lord, we may not think of ourselves as particularly special. We may not see ourselves as saints and there is comfort in that because we don't have to hold ourselves to the same standard. And yet we continue to pray – Glory to God, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. May we trust the gifts you have given us and use these generously for your work in our world today. In so doing, may we boast in you.

Gathering our prayers into one, let us pray as Jesus taught us (Lord's Prayer)

Collect: O God, by the passion of your blessed Son, you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life. May our lives be so transformed by his passion that we may witness to his grace; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (BAS p. 302)

Wednesday – Mar. 31, 2021

Reading: John 13:21-32

Reflection: There was a time when people referred to the Wednesday of Holy Week as 'Spy Wednesday' in reference to this Gospel reading: 'Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.' So often we focus on the role of Judas in enabling Jesus to be arrested. Notice that the other disciples also function like bystanders. At their prodding, Jesus makes clear that Judas will betray him and yet, when Jesus sends him out, they claim to not understand.

They say hindsight is 20-20 vision. When have you been party to a situation where something has happened and you realise after the fact that you should have known better? What have you done to make amends for this situation? How are you working to be more aware of the various ways we betray one another?

Prayers: "Now no one at the table knew why (Jesus) said this to (Judas)". Lord, we know there are times we are happy to be oblivious. We don't want to know and don't try to hard to pay attention. Open our hearts to the truths you continue to reveal in our world. May we recognise the betrayals of systems that keep people marginalised. May we recognise the ways in which people are mistreated due to skin pigment, gender, race, country of origin, economic status, and any other difference social might impose. May we move beyond such betrayals so that we can better love as Jesus loved.

Gathering our prayers into one, let us pray as Jesus taught us (Lord's Prayer)

Collect: Lord God, your Son our Saviour gave his body to be whipped and turned his face for men to spit upon. Give your servants grace to accept suffering for his sake, confident of the glory that will be revealed, through Jesus Christ our Lord who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (BAS p. 303)

Maundy Thursday – Apr. 1, 2021

Opening prayer: This is the day that Christ the Lamb of God gave himself into the hands of those who would slay him. This is the day that Christ gathered with his disciples in the upper room. This is the

day that Christ took a towel and washed the disciples' feet, giving us an example that we should do to others as he has done to us. This is the day that Christ our God gave us the holy feast, that we who eat the bread and drink the cup may proclaim his Holy Sacrifice and be partakers of his resurrection, and at the last day may reign with him in heaven. (BAS p. 304)

Reading: John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Reflection: *Below you will find a recipe for unleavened bread. This bread has been used in our context and others as Eucharistic or Communion bread. As such, this bread offers us a reminder of the gathered community celebrating food and fellowship in worship and other contexts. You are encouraged to make at least two loaves of this bread. As you do so, make note of each ingredient: what story can be told by each ingredient? How do the ingredients, separately, remind us of community? How does the act of making this bread connect us to our family of faith past, present, and future? Be mindful and prayerful as you engage in this task remembering that Jesus once took bread, blessed it, and shared it as a reminder of the gift he is to the world.*

When you are finished, enjoy one loaf for you and your family. Give the extra loaf/loaves away as a sign of our continued efforts to love as Jesus loved through the washing of feet, the humble service he illustrated in this Gospel story.

Unleavened Bread

½ cup whole wheat flour	2 tbsp cooking oil
2 cups white, all purpose flour	3 tbsp honey
½ tsp baking powder	¾ cup cold water
½ tsp baking soda	½ tsp salt

1. Mix and sift flours, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Add oil and blend well. Add water and honey. Knead until ingredients are mixed well but not too long. It is important to work quickly. Too much kneading or too long of a delay produces a hard flat bread. Roll the dough with a rolling pin until it is about one centimeter thick.
2. Bake 10-12 minutes on an ungreased cookie sheet in a preheated 350°F oven. When bread is done, allow it to cool and then wrap tightly in plastic wrap.

Prayers:

United by the servant love of God in Christ, we pray this holy night for the needs of the world.

You call your people to hand on what we receive from you, Form all the baptized into teachers of faith. From one generation to the next, give your church hunger for your promises in the sacraments and joy in receiving and sharing your word. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Your creation provides all that we need. Cleanse and protect the water you have given for washing and drinking, water on which all life depends. Sustain crops and herds that provide food; teach us how to live so that there is enough for all. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

You redeemed your people from slavery. Preserve people through the world who flee violence and oppressions. Establish just leadership in place of tyranny and peace in place of war. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Jesus loved his followers to the end. Grant assurance of that love to all who need it: those living with guilt, those struggling to forgive, those who are lonely or overlooked. Heal the sick and embrace the dying. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Jesus washed the feet of the one who betrayed him. Inspire this congregation's ministries of service especially the clothing cupboard, fidget blankets, and outreach to marginalised communities, that we love as Jesus loved us. Give us renewed courage to serve. Bless the ministry of deacons throughout the church. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Your glory shone in the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We thank you for generations of the faithful who have proclaimed our Lord's death. Unite us with them in hope until he comes again. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

Hear these and all our prayers, O God, in the name of the one who loves us to the end, Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen. (From *Sundays and Seasons*, copyright © 2020 Augsburg Fortress)

Gathering our prayers into one, let us pray as Jesus taught us (Lord's Prayer)

Closing: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34)

Good Friday – Apr. 2, 2021

Opening Prayer: *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Christ the Lord became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.*

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we have sinned in thought and word and deed; we have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. We pray you of your mercy, forgive us all that is past, and grant that we may serve you in newness of life to the glory of your name. Amen. (BAS p. 308)

Invitation to reading the passion: *Years ago, the young people asked to include their various puppets they had made in the Good Friday Family Service. This resulted in a puppet show in which a conversation about the story of the Passion led each character to reflect on the choices and behaviours they exhibited for which Jesus' death on the cross provided forgiveness. The baseball player admitted to getting angry when striking out. The top hat wearer admitted to judging others. The rabbit admitted to being jealous when a race was lost. In the end, all the characters (and the young people) came to recognise that it is 'good' Friday, because the goodness of God leads to forgiveness and grace.*

As you read through the passion narrative, consider all the characters in this 'play'. To what extent does each contribute to the weight of the cross carried by Jesus? What does this tell us about the extent to which we continue to contribute to the weight of the cross? How, then, does the sacrifice of Jesus become 'good' for us? How do we understand the victory of the cross?

Reading: John 18:1-19:42

Prayer: Almighty God, look graciously, we pray, on your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (BAS p. 308-309)

Closing: Chris became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name. (Philippians 2:8-9)

Holy Saturday – Apr. 3, 2021

On this day we live as though in a fog. We stand between death and resurrection. This creates an opportunity for us to remember those whom we have lost. We trust that they have found new life. We know this only by faith.

Reading: John 19:38-42

Reflection: *How do we care for those we have lost? How do we hold our loved ones dear? What can we do to transform the grief that comes in death to the hope of new life?*

Prayers: *Consider lighting candles for loved ones who we remember and no longer see. With each candle say the following:*

Rest eternal grant to him/her/them, O Lord. And let light perpetual shine upon him/her/them.

End with: May these souls, and the souls of all the departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen. (BAS, p. 597)

Gathering our prayers into one, let us pray as our Saviour has taught us (Lord's Prayer)

Collect: *O God, creator of heaven and earth, as the crucified body of your dear Son was laid in the tomb and rested on this holy Sabbath, so may we await with him the coming of the third day, and rise with him to newness of life; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.* (BAS, p. 320)

Easter Sunday – Apr. 3, 2021

Opening: *Alleluia! Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hidden. Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name: through Christ our Lord. Amen. (BAS p. 185)

Reading: Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Mark 16:1-8

Reflection: *'...and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.' Women were the first witnesses of the resurrection. This is a truth told in all four Gospels. Notice, however, that the voices of these women are missing from the Acts account and the letter to the Corinthians. These are reminders of the marginalisation of women's voices in that time. Still, we know that the women did, in fact, say something. How else would we have this story? How else would we have the stories conveyed in all four Gospels?*

In the resurrection, Jesus revealed how God's love triumphs over sin and death. Through this message we are invited into new life. We are called to a transformation that creates spaces for all voices to be heard and valued. As we celebrate today and in the 50 days that follow, how might we embrace newness? How might we create spaces for new stories to be heard? How might we open doors to welcome voices that are still silenced? How might we honour the love of God for all people?

Let us profess our faith:

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first and the great commandment. The second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these. (BAS p. 53)

Let us pray:

In joy and hope let us pray to the source of all life...

That our risen Saviour may fill us with the joy of his holy and life-giving resurrection. Hear us, Lord of glory!

That isolated and persecuted churches may find fresh strength in the Easter gospel. Hear us, Lord of glory!

That God may grant us humility to be subject to one another in Christian love. Hear us, Lord of glory!

That God's love on the cross may work in us to provide for those who lack food, work, or shelter. Hear us, Lord of glory!

That by God's power working in us wars and famine may cease through all the earth. Hear us, Lord of glory!

That God may reveal the light of God's presence to the sick, the weak, and the dying, that they may be comforted and strengthened. Hear us, Lord of glory!

That God may send the fire of the Holy Spirit upon God's people, that we may bear faithful witness to God's resurrection. Hear us, Lord of glory! (BAS p. 122-123)

Gathering our prayers into one let us pray as our Saviour has taught us. (Lord's Prayer)

Lord of life and power, through the mighty resurrection of your Son, you have overcome the old order of sin and death and have made all things new in him. May we, being dead to sin and alive to you in Jesus Christ, reign with him in glory, who with you and the Holy Spirit is alive, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (BAS p. 335)

Closing: May the God of peace enable us to do God's will in every kind of goodness, working in us what pleases God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen. (BAS p. 55)