

An Order for Worship Online
Palm Sunday, April 5, 2020
Being the Sixth Sunday of Lent

I. CENTERING OUR HEARTS & MINDS FOR WORSHIP

Blessed is the King, who comes in the Name of the LORD.
Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heaven!

Help us in your mercy, O LORD, God of our salvation, that we may enter this Holy Week with solemn expectation in the contemplation of those mighty acts whereby you have given us life and immortality through Jesus Christ, who, in the power of the Spirit, withheld not even his body from the eternal purpose of your Love. **Amen.**

Observe a moment of silence.

A Hymn of Invocation

1 Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou dost love,
And do what Thou wouldst do.

3 Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Till I am wholly Thine,
Until this earthly part of me
Glows with Thy fire divine.

2 Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Until my heart is pure,
Until with Thee I will one will,
To do and to endure.

4 Breathe on me, Breath of God,
So shall I never die,
But live with Thee the perfect life
Of Thine eternity.

Collect¹ for Palm Sunday:

God of Infinite Strength, who holds the power of life and death, in your tender mercy for humankind you sent the Living Word, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take upon himself our nature and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, that by the power of the Holy Spirit working in us both his faith and his love, we might also share in his resurrection. **Amen.**

¹ COLLECT: noun (in church use). A short, communal prayer, especially one assigned to a particular day or season. Origin: Middle English: from Old French *collecte*, from Latin *collecta* ‘gathering’, feminine past participle of *colligere* ‘gather together’. (New Oxford English Dictionary) The liturgical use of the word indicates a kind of prayer which unites – or “collects” together – the hearts and minds of those who are present for worship in a shared spiritual feeling and focus. (JBC)

The Confession and Absolution of our Sins

Beloved in Christ, in the unity of heart and mind, we have come together to set forth God's praise, to receive the Living Word, and to be sanctified by the blessing of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, let us enter into silence and, with penitent and fervent hearts, think on our sins and brokenness:

All enter into silent confession.

Most merciful God... we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry, and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

The Almighty God have mercy upon you, forgive all your sins through our Lord, Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness by the power of the Holy Spirit, and keep you in eternal life. Amen.

May the Peace of Christ, which the world cannot give, keep your hearts and minds, now and always. Thanks be to God!

*Think on your enemies, loved ones, and those who are strangers,
and pray their peace to God.*

II. THE SERVICE OF THE WORD

O Lord, open our lips,
And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be:
world without end. Amen.

Most merciful God, out of all the words that will now be spoken and heard, may it be your Living Word that stays in our hearts. Give us the grace to receive it, and give us the charity to let all the other words slip away. We pray this in the Name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Prophecy of Zechariah, 9: 9-13

Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!
Lo, your king comes to you;
triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the war-horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and he shall command peace to the nations;
his dominion shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you,
I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.
Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope;
today I declare that I will restore to you double.
For I have bent Judah as my bow;
I have made Ephraim its arrow.

Here ends the reading.

Observe a moment of silence.

Of David, A Psalm, 24: 1-8

The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof,
the world, and those who live in it;
for he has founded it upon the seas,
and established it on the rivers.

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?
And who shall stand in his holy place?
Those who have clean hands and pure hearts,
who do not lift up their souls to what is false,
and do not swear deceitfully.
They will receive blessing from the Lord,
and vindication from the God of their salvation.
Such is the company of those who seek him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

Lift up your heads, O gates!
and be lifted up, O ancient doors!
that the King of glory may come in.
Who is the King of glory?
The Lord, strong and mighty,
the Lord, mighty in battle!

Observe a moment of silence.

Creator and Sovereign over all, whose victory against all Evil is sure, lift up the gates of our weary hearts, that the King of Glory may enter and bring us in joy to your holy city, where you live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

The Epistle to the Hebrews, 2: 5-18

Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels, but someone has testified somewhere,

“What are human beings that you are mindful of them,
or mortals, that you care for them?
You have made them for a little while lower than the angels;
you have crowned them with glory and honor,
subjecting all things under their feet.”

Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, saying,

“I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters,
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.”

And again, “I will put my trust in him.”

And again, “Here am I and the children whom God has given me.”

Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

Here ends the reading.

Observe a moment of silence.

Hymn of Preparation, "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence"

1 Let all mortal flesh keep silence,
and with fear and trembling stand;
ponder nothing earthly-minded,
for with blessing in his hand,
Christ our God to earth descendeth,
our full homage to demand.

2 King of kings, yet born of Mary,
as of old on earth he stood,
Lord of lords, in human vesture,
in the body and the blood,
he will give to all the faithful
his own self for heav'nly food.

3 Rank on rank the host of heaven
spreads its vanguard on the way,
as the Light of light descendeth
from the realms of endless day,
that the pow'rs of hell may vanish
as the darkness clears away.

4 At his feet the six-winged seraph,
cherubim, with sleepless eye,
veil their faces to the presence,
as with ceaseless voice they cry,
"Alleluia, alleluia,
alleluia, Lord Most High!"

The Holy Gospel, according to Matthew, 21:1-17

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. He said to them, "It is written,

‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’;
but you are making it a den of robbers.”

The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he cured them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the amazing things that he did, and heard the children crying out in the temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they became angry and said to him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read,

‘Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies
you have prepared praise for yourself?’”

He left them, went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.

These are the words of Eternal Life.
Thanks be to God.

Observe a moment of silence.

Reflecting on the Scriptures: “He Will Show You”

When I think about the prophecies of Israel’s wise women and men, I usually think of the end times, those promises about the veil of death being lifted from all creation, and the tears being wiped from our eyes, and the Son of Man coming on clouds of great glory with the holy angels to put Death to death for ever. As I said last Sunday, I’m a whole lot like Martha: I believe God’s promises, but I don’t always understand their significance for today.

So when Jesus offers a simple prophecy about a young donkey, and the willingness of its owners to let it be borrowed for a little while, it’s easy to take Jesus for granted. After calming the wind on the Sea of Galilee, and feeding the thousands, and raising Lazarus from the dead... and so many other incredible things... this prophecy about finding, claiming, riding, and returning a donkey seems like small potatoes. But it’s not small potatoes, is it?

In fact, this moment – which is recorded in every gospel – has significance that must not be missed. As the theologian, John Shea, points out: “...if Jesus is right about the colt and the people who own it, and what the disciples should say, maybe he is right about the prediction of his suffering, death, and resurrection.”² This insight unlocks the whole passage of the gospel reading today. Jesus gives this simple sign so that when the ultimate sign of his death and resurrection come about, all who look upon that sign may see the fulness of God’s love, rather than something merely excruciating and incomprehensible. Jesus calls his followers to *see* God at work in both big ways and small, and

² Shea, John. *Following Love Into Mystery: the Spiritual Wisdom of the Gospels for Christian Preachers and Teachers* (Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN: 1996), p. 81 (altered for readability in context).

wants his disciples to know that more is happening in his crucifixion than a violent rejection of him by the Jewish and Roman officials. Jesus wants his disciples to understand that he orchestrates the entire thing – that his death will come in a way and at a time of his own choosing. And because it's orchestrated by Jesus, his death at the hands of human greed and violence will be made to serve the purposes of Divine Love: his death will reveal God's gift of eternal life.

Given the difficulty of understanding what good God might be able to draw out of this global crisis we're in, these insights are welcome. These insights allow us to trust Jesus enough to do the little things he asks, in order to make some sense out of our big questions:

- ❖ Love your neighbor, and you will understand God's love for you.
- ❖ Call someone to offer them encouragement and hope, and you will experience the same.
- ❖ Write a note to offer condolences in someone else's anxiety and grief, and you will be consoled in yours.
- ❖ Pray for the lives of others, and you will find you are not alone, but surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses.
- ❖ Send what resources you may to the places where they are needed, and you will find that you are not alone in your need.
- ❖ Cooperate with God in proclaiming the kingdom of Heaven, and you will begin to understand all the ways God is with you.

God means to bring us up into the full stature of the Divine Image, and Jesus is the teacher. Jesus offers the means for a more innocent obedience in order to soften our hard hearts and strengthen our fearful minds until we're ready to live the full significance of his love: until we're ready to take up crosses of our own. As a parent now myself, I begin to understand this way of doing things. My wife, Jessica, and I have been working on the idea of cooperation with our son, Elliott, trying to mitigate the pitched battles in which one can become entrenched with a toddler. If a toddler does not want his diaper changed, forcing him to do it – even when it's for his own good – isn't going to go very well... Oh yes... I've tried... But unless you've got three hands, or maybe four, it's nigh on impossible to hold a thrashing child and, at the same time, exchange the soiled undergarment for the clean. So we've been teaching Elliott (and ourselves) the joy of cooperation. And the way into Elliott's imagination with a word like "cooperation" has to do with comparisons to smaller ideas he already understands:

"Do you like playing cars and trucks with daddy?" I'll say.

"Yeah!" Elliott will reply.

"Do you like building towers together with your blocks?"

"I build tower with daddy!" Elliott will say with anticipation.

"Ooooooh, can't wait!" I'll agree.

“Can you help daddy with your diaper so we can go play blocks?”

Elliott will think about this question for a moment and then cooperate... or look at me with his cheeky little bright eyed smile and say, “No!” But no matter what happens, whether Elliott gets a time out or whether I do, Jessica and I must try to cooperate with God in making our home a place where our son can experience the joy of being together. The invitation of the King is the same. The joy is in being together, of living life with and for each other. All the little acts of love we do for one another in the Name of Christ are signs of the Kingdom of Heaven. The hard thing we still don’t understand is why the Kingdom of Heaven does not simply come in all its fullness. So we have to follow the pioneer of our faith and learn a life of faithfulness in the midst of suffering, confident in God’s ability by these means to make us holy.

Two other signs reinforce this call to trust that the Cross and Resurrection are no accident forced upon God by the exercise of human freedom. The first is the sign of cleansing the temple. The second is the sign of the joyful praise of the children. Both moments recall prophecies from Israel’s ancient past that find their fulfillment in the person of Jesus. And both moments highlight the corruption and ignorance of the temple priests in a way that is sure to get Jesus killed. If this seems like an infinitely terrible way to accomplish God’s purpose, we should remember that as mature as we may have become in our faith, we still see “in a mirror darkly.” These two signs, the cleansing of the temple and the kingly praise of the children, tell us that Jesus’ suffering will not be meaningless. Rather, they are two links in a longer chain of events that is meant to establish once and for all that human suffering is something God understands.

Jesus gives these signs on the day he enters Jerusalem to make a way for us to be certain that God is present even in the Cross. Jesus gives these signs to show that through his suffering, death, and resurrection, God will take the initiative to show us that we will not be left alone in the times of our testing. From the fulfillment of simpler signs, the disciple learns that the Son of God gives himself to the shame and agony of the Cross on purpose, so that the Resurrection can point us to the fulfillment of our need. As Jesus says in John’s Gospel: “...the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father” (10: 17-18). We *need* to know God is with us. We *need* to know that all is not lost. And so we trust the teacher, as the writer to the Hebrews says:

It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters...

Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

As I reflected on this text, especially the notion of God as a teaching parent, my mind went back to the chapter called “Behaving” in Diana Butler Bass’ book, *Christianity After Religion*. In this particular chapter, Bass has an interesting segment on teaching and learning in which physical training figures as a central metaphor. She says this:

...if you want to learn yoga, how do you learn it? You might go and buy a yoga DVD and pop it into your DVD player. But it will not be easy. It is hard to watch the DVD and form your body in those poses at the same time. Some yoga poses are impossible to learn without an instructor. So you go find a yoga class. There, a teacher will show you. But she will not only show you. She will come up next to you, she will demonstrate it for you, and then she will shape your limbs into the correct position. You watch her. You watch your classmates. You will experience the position in your own body. (164)

So it was, is now, and will continue to be forever with the Almighty God, who by the power of the Living Word and the Spirit of Life, comes along side human beings to *show* us, to demonstrate to us what it means to be alive in the midst of our suffering, our uncertainty, our misplaced expectations, and our deep yearning to be free of our sin and sadness. The Jesus who rides into Jerusalem to the cheers and adulation of a crowd, who cures and cleanses and sings with the children, signals to anyone willing to notice that a Divine Plan is in motion. And by the time we get around to celebrating with each other the Sign of Eternal Life – the sending of the Spirit to raise Jesus from the dead – I hope we will have walked with Christ through his agony and death, which he foretold not once, not twice, but three times. For only in the abandonment of Jesus on the Cross can we see and understand God’s willingness to enter our abandonment. Only by taking our sin and sadness into himself can Jesus draw all people to himself. He is the resurrection and the life, the fulfillment of God’s act of creation and the hope of all people. Let us put our trust in him; and let us go with him in heart and mind through this Holy Week, that we who sow in tears might reap a harvest of joy.

In the Name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit:
Amen.

Observe a time of silence.

III. PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION & THANKSGIVING

The Offering: The Revelation of John, 14: 4-5 (KJV)

These are they which follow the Lamb
whithersoever he goeth.
These were redeemed from among men,
being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.
And in their mouth was found no guile:
for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Music: John Goss (1800-1880)
Recording: "Treasures of English Church Music" (Collegium Records, 1995)
Artists: The Cambridge Singers, directed by John Rutter.

Please send in your offering each week (or month) through the mail.
Contact the church if you need assistance with your offering.

Prayers of Intercession

May the Lord be with you as we pray:
Silence.

In peace, we pray to you, Lord God:

For all people in their daily life and work, especially those in harm's way;
For our families, friends, and neighbors, and for those who are alone:
Silence.

For our communities, this nation, and the world;
For all who work for healing, justice, freedom, and peace:
Silence.

For the just and proper use of your creation;
For the equal sharing of its resources:
Silence.

For the victims of war, injustice, and oppression;
For the refugee, the immigrant, and the stranger:
Silence.

For all who are in danger, sorrow, or any kind of trouble;
For those who minister to the sick, the friendless, and the needy:
Silence.

For the peace and unity of the Church of God;
For all who proclaim the Gospel, and all who seek the Truth:
Silence.

For David, our bishop, and all other ministers;
For all who serve Christ by the offering of their lives to his service:
Silence.

For our own special needs and concerns, and those of our congregation:
Silence.
Receive our prayers, O Lord, for your mercy is from everlasting.

We pray for those whose faith is known to you alone,
that they may have a place in your eternal kingdom.
Silence.

Prayers of Thanksgiving

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life:
Silence.

We return your love, O Christ our King, and praise your Name for ever and ever.
We proclaim and bless you, O Spirit of Truth, and praise your Name for ever and ever.
We worship and adore you, O merciful Creator, and praise your Name for ever and ever.

Holy Trinity of light and life, hasten the fullness of your reign of justice and peace; and grant that we your children, who live now by faith, may with joy behold the Son at his coming in glorious majesty: even Jesus Christ, who reconciles all things by the blood of the eternal covenant. For you formed us in your Image, and breathed into us the breath of life, so that we might be with you forever. Now, therefore, come upon us and overshadow us in the power of your Holy Spirit: to bless and sanctify your people in the remembrance that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. For his sake, and the sake of your Holy Name, burn away the dross of our regret, and sin, and sadness; that we might enter into the fullness of your love.

You come to us in our captivity:
We receive you, O God!

You make a covenant to be with us forever:
We receive you, O God!

You speak to us through your prophets:

We receive you, O God!

You call us to join your people on earth, and all the company of heaven
in their unending hymn of praise:

We sing to you, O God!

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of hosts!

Heaven and earth are full of your glory; glory be to thee, O Lord most high!

Blessèd is He who comes in the Name of the LORD!

Hosanna in the highest. Amen.

Holy are you, Source of All Being, and blessed is the One eternally begotten of your Love, Jesus Christ. Your Spirit anointed him to preach Good News to the poor, to proclaim release to the captive and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people. Jesus healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners; and by the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection, you gave birth to your Church and spoke peace to all creation. You delivered us from slavery to sin and death and made with us a New Covenant by water and the Spirit; and when the Lord Jesus ascended, to reclaim the glory that was eternally his, he promised to be with us always in the power of your Word and Holy Spirit. Now, therefore, we claim his promise by the invocation of the same, praying that prayer which he gave to his disciples:

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, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
grant us thy peace.

Fill the emptiness in our lives with the bread of your love.

Silence.

Wash away the wounds left by Evil and Sin with the wine of your grace.

Silence.

1 Here, O my Lord, I see thee face to face;
here would I touch and handle things unseen,
here grasp with firmer hand th'eternal grace,
and all my weariness upon thee lean.

2 Here would I feed upon the bread of God,
here drink with thee the royal wine of heav'n;
here would I lay aside each earthly load,
here taste afresh the calm of sin forgiv'n.

3 This is the hour of banquet and of song;
this is the heav'nly table spread for me:
here let me feast, and, feasting, still prolong
the brief, bright hour of fellowship with thee.

4 I have no help but thine, nor do I need
another arm save thine to lean upon:
it is enough, my Lord, enough indeed;
my strength is in thy might, thy might alone.

5 Mine is the sin, but thine the righteousness;
mine is the guilt, but thine the cleansing blood;
here is my robe, my refuge, and my peace:
thy blood, thy righteousness, O Lord my God.

Hymn: Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)
Tune: *Morecambe*, Federick Atkinson (1841-1896)

Observe a time of silence.

IV. THE BLESSING & DISMISSAL

Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common and private prayers to you; and you have promised, through your well-beloved Son, that when two or three gather in your Name, you will be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and prayers of your servants as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. **Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Go now in peace to love and serve God and your neighbor in all that you do.
Amen.