

## Presbyterian Church of Henderson

Liturgy for the Service We Never Had

Palm Sunday

April 5, 2020

### \*Call to Worship

Awake to the day of triumph for our Savior!

**Give thanks for this day that leads to the cross!**

Come with your branches, hosannas, and songs!

**Fill the air with welcome to the Lord!**

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

### \*Hymn     Presbyterian Hymnal 89 "Hosanna, Loud, Hosanna"

Hosanna, loud hosanna the little children sang;

through pillared court and temple the lovely anthem rang.

To Jesus, who had blessed them, close folded to his breast,  
the children sang their praises, the simplest and the best.

From Olivet they followed mid an exultant crowd,  
the victory palm branch waving, and chanting clear and loud.  
The Lord of earth and heaven rode on in lowly state,  
nor scorned that little children should on his bidding wait.

"Hosanna in the highest!" That ancient song we sing,  
for Christ is our Redeemer, the Lord of heaven, our King.  
O may we ever praise him with heart and life and voice,  
and in his blissful presence eternally rejoice.

### \*Call to Confession

Let us face this day of palms and Jesus' passion with honesty, confessing our sin before God.

### \*Prayer of Confession     (unison)

**Holy God, sure of your faithfulness even in your dying, comforted by your compassion toward your people in every age, we beg your mercy for our imperfect gratitude. We have looked to you for paltry favors, when you have given everything. We have withheld from your people and our neighbors, and the care and tending they deserve. We have rejected the cornerstone you sent to build a people of righteousness even here, today. Forgive our failings. Heal what we have broken, nurture what we have neglected, and lead us to your vision, so that we may know the peace of wholeness in you; in Jesus' name. Amen.**

### \*Assurance of Pardon

Your God has come to you, humble, in the form of a slave, to free you from the weight of sin and death. Jesus' obedient suffering has released you. Your sins are forgiven, in the name of the one who is exalted beyond what we can comprehend: Christ, our Savior and Lord.

### **\*Passing the Peace**

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you!

#### **And also with you!**

Let us share with one another a sign of Christ's Peace.

### **\*Gloria Patri (PH 579)**

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

### **Prayer for Illumination**

Let your Word, O God, break open our hearts this day through the power of the Holy Spirit, that we may enter into the coming Holy Week with the same mind that was in Christ Jesus. Amen.

### **First Reading**      Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

(vv. 1-2) O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever! Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever."

(vv. 19-29) Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it. I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Save us, we beseech you, O LORD! O LORD, we beseech you, give us success!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD. We bless you from the house of the LORD. The LORD is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, I will extol you. O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

### **Second Reading**      Matthew 21:1-11

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, and 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."

## **SERMON** "Palm Sunday Expectations"

Matthew 21:1-11

April 5, 2020

- Our expectations often shape our experience.
- Back in November, I heard that the Popeyes new chicken sandwich was so popular that people were standing in line to try it.
- Maybe you heard this, according to TV station Fox 5 DC, a fight over cutting in line at a Popeyes location in the suburbs of Washington D.C. ended with a person being stabbed and dying of his injuries.
- Since we had our new Popeyes in Henderson, I had to try the infamous chicken sandwich that was to die for.
- When I bit into the sandwich, I thought it was a decent, meaty, crispy, sandwich, but nothing to lose my life over.
- My expectations were too high!
- However, on another occasion, I ordered the sandwich again, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I remember commenting that I enjoyed it better than the Chick-Fil-A chicken sandwich. (Please don't hurt me, Chick-Fil-A fans!)
- Generally speaking, if one has too high expectations, there is always the possibility of great disappointment.
- In lectionary text from Matthew 21, the classic Palm Sunday text, is filled with all kinds of expectations.
- N.T. Wright says this text "Is an object lesson in the mismatch between our expectations and God's answer."
- Today I wanted to look at the expectations surrounding this text so that we can find God's answer in the midst of this Palm Sunday text.

### **1. Expectations of Jesus** (vv. 1-3)

*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."*

- The focal point is Jerusalem where pilgrims from neighboring communities had been traveling on foot to Jerusalem celebrate the Passover festival.
- The disciples approach Jerusalem with Jesus, and Jesus turns to two of his disciples and becomes very directive with them.
- He gave explicit instructions to go ahead, find a colt and donkey, and bring them back to Jesus.
- He said to tell those that question their motives, "The Lord needs them."
- Jesus expected these unnamed disciples to everything that he told them to do.
- In one sense, Jesus is securing whatever he needs for the fulfillment of his task to go to the cross to be the sacrifice for all humanity.
- The Lord's directives in our lives must be our first priority.
- This is the first expectation we must hear above all the other competing expectations in our lives.

- *2 John 1:6 And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment just as you have heard it from the beginning—you must walk in it.*
- The first and foremost expectation that must be on our hearts and minds is the Lord's expectations of us.
- This is where we find God's peace, salvation, assurance, and hope.
- EX: In this season of Lent we have been using a devotional by Sarah Young, where she has been writing her devotionals that are based upon Scripture as if Jesus is speaking directly to us. This has been a great tool to help us focus on how God thinks of us.
- In the midst of the distractions of our day, we must take the time to hear what Jesus expects of us.
- *Colossians 2:6-9 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ.*

## **2. Expectations from Scripture** (vv. 4-7)

*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, and 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.*

- The quote is from Zechariah 9:9 about 500 years earlier to show the fulfillment of another messianic prophesy.
- In this text, the "daughter of Zion" refers to Jerusalem.
- The writer is communicating that Jesus was fulfilling what the prophets foretold several hundred years ago and that Jesus was the person intended by that prophesy.
- Because of the obedience of Jesus to the fulfillment of prophesy, Scripture can be trusted.
- What is amazing is the fact that the Old Testament points to Jesus in the New Testament.
- Scripture does not contradict the teachings of Jesus because Jesus' life was a fulfillment of it.
- Because the Scripture was the source book for Jesus' actions, the expectations of how we are to live our lives gives us an understanding of God's expectations for us.
- Sometimes people get confused when two different gospel accounts give different details to the incident.
- In Luke 19, the parallel account, he mentions only a colt, whereas in Matthew, a colt and a donkey to fulfill the Zechariah 9:9 prophesy.
- The Zechariah quote is actually two descriptions of one animal, but Matthew uses the two descriptions to emphasize how Jesus fulfills the prophesy. We are not sure if there was actually one animal or two. My guess would be two to illustrate the prophesy and one animal simply accompanied the other

- When the text says “put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them,” is not that Jesus rode two animals, but cloaks were placed on the animals and Jesus sat on one animal with (multiple) cloaks.
- At first glance Scripture seems like it contradicts, but under closer examination, there is a logical explanation.
- We must be able to trust the Word of God as a reliable expectations on how we are to live our lives.

### **3. Expectations from the Crowds (vv. 8-9)**

*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 Jesus rode on a colt, he was riding a humble animal as a king did in a time of peace rather than a giant horse with full armor during times of war.
- The large crowd that was traveling to Jerusalem, who probably had heard of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee, lined the roadway with palms and cloaks to give Jesus the “red carpet” experience.
- When a person takes off their cloak and lays it on the ground, since it is the only one they got, it communicates that if the need arose they will give anything in loyalty and devotion to the king.
- This was a picture of a royal procession.
- As the crowd moved along, they shouted words of praise celebrating the arrival of Israel’s Messiah-King.
- The word “Hosanna” literally is a plea to save, but by the time it was used it had become an expression of God’s salvation.
- The song everyone sang was Psalm 118 which was a traditional song of ascent as people ascended toward the temple in Jerusalem for worship.
- The identity of Jesus as the promised royal Son of David was proclaimed with praise.
- In one sense, the people were right in acknowledging Jesus’ true identity as the Sovereign Son of David.
- However their expectations of an earthly king who was to rule Israel forever was far from the plan that God intended.
- The crowds who were lining the road to Jerusalem were celebrating the sovereignty of Jesus but failed to identify him as the sacrificial lamb for humanity.
- They knew Jesus had come to restore his kingdom, but they missed the fact that Jesus came to redeem his people.
- They anticipated the sovereignty but overlooked the sacrifice.
- They wanted a Messiah, but this Messiah was going to be enthroned on a cross.
- Jesus would not exercise His rule without the redemption of his own life first.
- The crowd’s false expectations was the leading cause for the crowd’s reversal from praise to “crucify him” one week later before the Roman governor, Pilate.

### **4. Expectations from Jerusalem (vv. 10-11)**

*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.”*

- What caused the turmoil in the whole city of Jerusalem?

- The word word “turmoil” is where we get our word “seismic”
- Matthew uses the word “turmoil” towards the end of his gospel in a different grammatical form to describe the earthquakes at Jesus’ final breath upon the cross.
- *Matt. 27:51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth **shook**, and the rocks were split.*
- *Matt. 27:54 Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the **earthquake** and what took place, they were terrified and said, “Truly this man was God’s Son!”*
- *Matt. 28:2 And suddenly there was a great **earthquake**; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.*
- The shaking of the earth is associated with the “day of the Lord” and with the presence of God.
- The inhabitants of Jerusalem saw all the fanfare. They recognized the arrival of a royal procession, but they did not understand why Jesus was in the midst of all the fanfare.
- They were confused because they understood the Messianic implications of Jesus’ arrival but was this something they expected?
- Their reaction is appropriate—when the Messiah comes, it is an earthshaking event.
- However, the Galileans in the crowd asserted their claim that Jesus was their prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.
- In the very walls of Jerusalem, there were mixed reviews of Jesus based upon differing expectations of Jesus.
- The crowds are ultimately going to be disappointed because Jesus never claims the throne and becomes the ruler of Jerusalem.
- But deep down, Jesus’ arrival at the great city is indeed the moment when salvation is dawning because of God’s greater plan.
- What are your expectations of Jesus?
- Do we culturally or mentally place a certain image upon our understanding of Jesus?
- As we have seen today, God plans are bigger than our plans for Jesus.
- The key is to be able to filter out all the other expectations (noises) and listen for God’s answer and seek first His Kingdom. Amen.

\***Hymn**      Presbyterian Hymnal 90 “Ride On! Ride On in Majesty”

Ride on, ride on in majesty!  
Hark! all the tribes hosanna cry;  
O Savior meek, pursue your road  
with palms and scattered garments strowed.

Ride on, ride on in majesty!  
In lowly pomp ride on to die:  
O Christ, your triumphs now begin  
o'er captive death and conquered sin.

Ride on, ride on in majesty!  
The winged squadrons of the sky

look down with sad and wond'ring eyes  
to see th'approaching sacrifice.

Ride on, ride on in majesty!  
In lowly pomp ride on to die;  
bow your meek head to mortal pain,  
then take, O God, your pow'r and reign.

**\*Affirmation of Faith** (Apostle's Creed)

I BELIEVE in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; 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**

Our Savior comes to us humbly, riding a donkey and proclaiming a message of peace. Let us pray for the church, all its creatures, and for all people in need, saying, God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

That Christians hear and share the word of God as true disciples,  
God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

That all ends of the earth receive the words of the king of peace.  
God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

That all leaders, of church and of state, prefer humble service to empty power.  
God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

That all people live with gratitude for the gifts of nourishment, friendship, family, trust, patience, and hope with the courage and wisdom to change whatever fails to be life-giving.  
God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

That those who see the cross starkly revealed in their lives draw strength from the name that is above every other name.  
God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

That we might live with gratitude for our ancestors whose faith and witness have nourished our own, that all who mourn today will be comforted, and that we, who hope to greet Jesus when he comes again, will be ready and filled with joy.  
God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God our creator, you show your sons and daughters the way to freedom through the gentle obedience of your Son, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, and now, with confidence as children of God, let us pray:

## **Lord's Prayer**

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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory forever. Amen.

## **\*Hymn**     Presbyterian Hymnal 88 "All Glory, Laud, and Honor"

Refrain:

All glory, laud and honor  
To Thee, Redeemer, King!  
To whom the lips of children  
Made sweet hosannas ring.

Thou art the King of Israel,  
Thou David's royal Son,  
Who in the Lord's name comest,  
The King and blessed One. (Refrain)

The people of the Hebrews  
With palms before Thee went;  
Our praise and prayers and anthems  
Before Thee we present. (Refrain)

To Thee, before Thy passion,  
They sang their hymns of praise;  
To Thee, now high exalted,  
Our melody we raise. (Refrain)

Thou didst accept their praises;  
Accept the prayers we bring,  
Who in all good delightest,  
Thou good and gracious King! (Refrain)

## **\*Benediction**

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace both now and evermore.