

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

Palm Sunday – March 24th, 2024

Prelude: – Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

Good morning!

Today is Palm Sunday.

Thank you to Christie Coatsworth for our music this morning. Thank you to Tracey Major for putting together the Power Point slides.

Lighting of the Christ Candle:

Opening Hymn: VU 123 “Hosanna, Loud Hosanna” (verse 1)

- 1 Hosanna, loud hosanna
the happy children sang;
through pillared court and temple
the joyful anthem rang;
to Jesus, who had blessed them
close folded to his breast,
the children sang their praises,
the simplest and the best.

Call To Worship:

Eric: There is no power like the power of the people to bring change, because the power of the people won't stop!

People: **There is no power like the power of the people to bring change, because the power of the people won't stop!**

Eric: Which side are you on?

People: **Justice for our children - is justice for all and we will strive for justice until freedom is one.**

Eric: Save us, O God, have mercy and save us.

People: **Open to us the gates of righteousness. Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest heaven!**

Eric: Hosanna in the highest. Come let us worship.

Opening Hymn: VU 123 “Hosanna, Loud Hosanna” (verses 2 & 3)

- 2 From Olivet they followed
'mid an exultant crowd,
the victory palm branch waving,
and singing clear and loud;
the Lord of earth and heaven

rode on in lowly state,
content that little children
should on his bidding wait.

- 3 'Hosanna in the highest!'
That ancient song we sing,
for Christ is our Redeemer;
earth, let your anthems ring.
O may we ever praise him
with heart and life and voice,
and in his humble presence
eternally rejoice!

Opening Prayer:

We want to be respectful tenants of your beautiful garden, God, marveling at the beauty and complexity of your creation and our relationship to it. Forgive us for all the ways that we have hurt your good creation, and guide us as we strive for a healed world. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.

Children's Story:

Children's Hymn: VU 122 "All Glory, Laud and Honour"

*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,
our King and blessed one.

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

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

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

Responsive Psalm: Psalm 31: 9 - 16

Have pity, Lord! I am hurting and almost blind. My whole body aches.

I have known only sorrow all my life long, and I suffer year after year. I am weak from sin, and my bones are limp.

My enemies insult me. Neighbors are even worse, and I disgust my friends. People meet me on the street, and they turn and run.

I am completely forgotten like someone dead. I am merely a broken dish.

I hear the crowds whisper, "Everyone is afraid!" They are plotting and scheming to murder me.

But I trust you, Lord, and I claim you as my God.

My life is in your hands. Save me from enemies who hunt me down.

Smile on me, your servant. Have pity and rescue me.

Scripture: Mark 11: 1 - 11 - by

Jesus Enters Jerusalem

Jesus and his disciples reached Bethany near the Mount of Olives. When they were getting close to Jerusalem, Jesus sent two of them on ahead. He told them, "Go into the next village. As soon as you enter it, you will find a young donkey that has never been ridden. Untie the donkey and bring it here. If anyone asks why you are doing this, say, 'The Lord needs it and will soon bring it back.'" The disciples left and found the donkey tied near a door that faced the street. While they were untying it, some of the people standing there asked, "Why are you untying the donkey?" They told them what Jesus had said, and the people let them take it. The disciples led the donkey to Jesus. They put some of their clothes on its back, and Jesus got on. Many people spread clothes on the road, while others spread branches they had cut from the fields. In front of Jesus and behind him, people went along shouting, "Hooray! God bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord! God bless the coming kingdom of our ancestor David. Hooray for God in heaven above!" After Jesus had gone to Jerusalem, he went into the temple and looked around at everything. But since it was already late in the day, he went back to Bethany with the twelve disciples.

Message: "March into The City of God"

Last week, we shared the story of Taylor Branch, who as a civil rights historian who once expressed his surprise that Montgomery, Alabama, became the nucleus of the civil rights movement: "There weren't many real activists in Montgomery at the time." Branch did not think that the people in Montgomery had "a heart" for activism. Yet everything changed the Monday morning that the bus boycott started (initiated by Rosa Park's arrest); suddenly, for the Black Folk of Montgomery Alabama, their time had come to act – and despite the personal risk, they acted together as a united community. Montgomery might not have been filled with the type of people we often label as activists; still, it was filled with people who were ready to do what was right. We also shared that we as the Church want to create this type of community; a community with a heart for Christ's mission, ready to act together for Christ's sake in the world.

This is exactly what is happening today on Palm Sunday as Jesus and his followers, along with their many supporters and the crowd in the street at the Gate entering into Jerusalem. They are not the ones we would label as activists – because to be an activist against the Roman Government meant death. Yet for this crowd the time had come to do the right thing – to take a stand – and they did.

The book “The Last Week”, written by Modern Day New Testament scholars Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan, offers an account of what the gospels say about Jesus’ last days in Jerusalem. We actually did a Faith Talk on this book about 14 years ago. Borg and Crossan note that at the same time Jesus was entering the city of Jerusalem by one gate, Pilate was entering from another gate in another part of the city. There is a definite display of two kinds of power in each of these processions into the City of God.

Pilate’s procession was a striking display of state and military power. He entered with warhorses and Roman soldiers. It is Passover, a festival when the people remember their time of enslavement in Egypt and celebrate their freedom from tyranny. Part of their history of remembrance includes their ancestors challenging and fleeing from Egypt’s Pharaoh. For Pilate, his way of reminding the people of Israel not to resist the Roman ruling authority, is to stately display his power over them. Pilate does this in the midst of the Israelites’ major festival, The Passover.

The Passover is a time when the Israelites remember they protested in the past and God helped them. Pilate reminds them they should not do so today. Pilate’s processional was all about the power of the Roman Empire.

Jesus’ processional, on the other hand (and on the other side of the city), was a simple one where he rode a donkey. “According to the prophet Zechariah, the king entering Jerusalem on a donkey was to banish weapons of war from the land and speak peace to the nations”. This is a quote from Marcus Borg.

The Israelite people who shouted “Hosanna” (which means “save us”) are those people who did not hold power in their society of that day. They are a part of Jesus’ community who were part of a peripheral religious group that was led by an unusual leader. One way of describing this processional is as a counter-protest that resisted the status quo. The time had come for them to act on what they believed was right. The time was right to protest for what is right!

What might we protest today to make changes in our country or world? How might we as church goers and believers protest? One way is offering financial resources to be the church in our very community. It may be a silent protest, but we

are a reminder to our community that we care and we will be there to help if and when help is needed. Churches have protested silently like this for the 2,000 years since Jesus. When the going gets tough, government leaders have been reaching out to Church Leaders to “help”. Church Leaders lead their flocks every week, and their help in keeping folks “cautious” versus “reckless” is a public and community advantage. We as the church have a part to play in today’s tribulations. The Church’s response can help keep society as a whole, calm and peaceful.

Our financial resources sent around the world, allow groups in other countries to peacefully challenge the powers of their day to make changes in their society. The Canadian Foodgrains Bank offers a presentation on events happening in Bangladesh and India. Offerings of new farming practices, and families can change communities. In India, one woman asked her husband for a plot of land to try her training on. He ended up giving her about ¼ of what she asked for. She was not deterred. That year he did not get a crop off the rest of the farm. The wife with just a small piece of land, got enough food to feed her family that year. Her husband said, “Now, you will make all the farming decisions with me next year”. They had a wonderful crop, and were able to grow 2 crops that year – just using the Canadian Foodgrains Bank’s farming practices for drought areas. Our money helps these silent protests to take roots and change the lives of women, of families and of communities. Not all protests need to be violent or power against authority. “Seeing” is believing. That is Jesus’ way.

Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem is in contrast to Pilate’s procession of power. Did it make a difference? It sure did – so much that we celebrate the Palm Sunday March every year for the past 2,000 years. The Sunday march before Holy Week reminds us that changes are coming! Big Changes! Changes that we are a part of.

Jesus’ processional took place during Passover, which is a time when the people remembered protesting and challenging authority under the Pharaoh of Egypt, and when God saved the people from tyranny. Moses did not violently protest outside the Pharaoh’s palace. No, Moses went right up to the Pharaoh and said, “Let my people go”. The Pharaoh may have laughed at him, but Moses came back and said, “Let my people go”. The Pharaoh did not arrest Moses, or have him killed. Eventually the Pharaoh did “let the people go”. Each year the Israelites celebrate “Passover” a week after the Spring Equinox. Today’s protest of Jesus’ processional into Jerusalem coincided with the Passover festival. Jesus like Moses, did not use physical force. Jesus used people power!

The crowds that create a parade of honour for Jesus as he enters Jerusalem call out for salvation. In their understanding of how the world worked, this had to come

from a king. But Jesus was not a royal king. Jesus' salvation comes without glitz and glamour. Although they are looking to the right person, the crowd is looking for the wrong thing.

“In the Last Week”, the book of Borg and Crossan, they speak of today's palm parade as a social commentary on the big pompous fanfares that powers and principalities would use to enter a city. The parade could be seen as a protest. Today's worship liturgy is based on their ideas. May we look to the right person for the right things - because we are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Reflection Hymn: VU 127 “Ride On! Ride On In Majesty!”

- 1 Ride on! Ride on in majesty!
Hark! All the tribes hosanna cry:
O Saviour meek, pursue thy road
with palms and scattered garments strowed.
- 2 Ride on! Ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die;
O Christ, thy triumphs now begin
o'er captive death and conquered sin.
- 3 Ride on! Ride on in majesty!
The winged squadrons of the sky
look down with sad and wondering eyes
to see the approaching sacrifice.
- 4 Ride on! Ride on in majesty!
In lowly pomp ride on to die;
bow thy meek head to mortal pain,
then take, O God, thy power, and reign.

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: We wish to march with Jesus' and have a hand in his ministry. We want to experience God's reign on Earth. The sharing of gifts is one way we can catch a glimpse of the reign of God. Let us give in love!

Offertory: VU 542 “We Give You But Your Own”

We give you but your own,
whate'er the gift may be;
all that we have is yours alone,
we give it gratefully.

Offertory Prayer:

Holy God, you come to us in Jesus, a poor man, riding a donkey; we thank you for this witness of the power of love, despite the powers of this world. We thank you for all who have withstood evil, who have suffered the jeers and worse of the crowds, who have been tormented, even put to death, and still refused to use the weapons of hatred. We trust that our offerings have made a difference in this world. We thank you with “hosannas!”, with joy in our hearts, in the name of Jesus, our leader. Amen.

Chorus to Prayer: VU 371 “Open My Eyes That I May See” Chorus

*Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!*

Pastoral Prayer & Lord’s Prayer:

Closing Hymn: VU 334 “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name”

All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
bring forth the royal diadem,
*and crown him, crown him, crown him,
crown him Lord of all.*

O seed of Israel's chosen race
now ransomed from the fall,
hail him who saves you by his grace
*and crown him, crown him, crown him,
crown him Lord of all.*

Crown him, you martyrs of your God,
who from his altar call;
praise him whose way of pain you trod,
*and crown him, crown him, crown him,
crown him Lord of all.*

Let every tongue and every tribe,
responsive to the call,
to him all majesty ascribe
*and crown him, crown him, crown him,
crown him Lord of all.*

O that, with all the sacred throng,
we at his feet may fall,
join in the everlasting song,
*and crown him, crown him, crown him,
crown him Lord of all..*

Blessing:

Eric: As we go, may we never rest until all are at peace. May it be so, now and forever more.

Closing Chorus: VU 108 “Throughout These Lenten Days and Nights” (verse 6)

Rejoice, O sons and daughters! Sing
and shout hosannas! Raise the strain!
For Christ, whose death Good Friday brings
on Easter Day will rise again!

Amen, Amen, Amen.

Postlude: – Christie Coatsworth