



'Worship at Home' Sunday April 5th 2020

Before you sit down
and make yourself comfortable,
find a piece of paper and a
pen/pencil. Then take a walk
outside and collect a few leaves.



As you come to worship, **light a candle** and place it in a safe place. We are reminded of the presence of Christ with us, even when we are not able to gather together to worship.

In many congregations, this Sunday is a celebration of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It seems hard to imagine, in our current social climate. No palm branches and celebratory processions today; just some leaves.

Psalm 118: Place your leaves alongside your candle, then prepare your heart for worship by reading these verses.

*Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.*

Let us rejoice today and be glad.

*You are my God, and I will praise you;
you are my God, and I will exalt you.*

*Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.* *New International Version*

Prayer: Reflect on the things you are thankful for today. Write them on a piece of paper and read over your list several times. Spend some time giving thanks to God for these things. Place your list alongside your candle.



Read these verses from **Psalm 118** again out loud.
Give thanks for God's constant love,
which endures even through difficult times.

Matthew 21:1-11: *As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." This took place to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet: "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.' "*
The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them.

They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

New International Version

Reflection: *"Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!"*

This was a joyful time in Jerusalem, where God's people had gathered for the Passover festival. A time for great feasting and joyous celebration. As Jesus rode in, the crowds cheered, hailing him as king. Hosanna, "Save us", they cried.'



Jesus must have been an unlikely king, riding on a donkey. He had no crown, no wealth, no power, no political authority.



The celebration of Palm Sunday quickly turned to the sombre events of Holy week. It appears that Jesus' grand and glorious parade made the religious officials, and the Romans, nervous. Jesus' fall from favour was rapid, and within a few days the cheering crowd were instead calling for his crucifixion.

We can be so fickle. It is too easy to get caught up in the crowd, to follow the mass hysteria of whatever is claiming our attention at the time. When one stockpiles toilet paper and handwash, others follow. We are so easily influenced by what those around us do and say. At this time, there is rapidly changing and sometimes unclear information. The media, social networking, family and friends, each overwhelming our minds and our hearts with confusion and commotion.

This Palm Sunday might be a time for you to stop and consider, whose voice do you listen to? It is easy enough to trust when things are going well, in times of joy and celebration. But we can find it more difficult when the going gets tough, we are afraid, and the world seems to be collapsing around us.

We are about to enter Holy Week and reflect more deeply on the events of Jesus' last week, his suffering and death. During that week, each of Jesus' followers were challenged to consider for themselves the question: To whom do you give your allegiance? In whom do you trust?

Through this last week of Jesus, we see his trust. We see his commitment, his ordering of his life and priorities as he seeks first the kingdom of God. We see him stand firm. Most of all, we see his peace in a time of confusion, his compassion in the depths of despair, and his love in the face of hatred.

When life is confusing and fearful, when you don't know where to turn, in whom do you trust?

Response: What are you most fearful of at this time?
What are you confused about?
Whose voice do you give priority to?
How might you trust God more fully at this time?

Prayer: In this time of COVID-19, we pray:
When we aren't sure, God: help us be calm;
when information comes from all sides,
sometimes correct and sometimes not: help us to discern;
when fear makes it hard to breathe,
and anxiety is the order of the day: slow us down, God;
help us to reach out with our hearts,
when we can't touch with our hands;
help us to be socially connected,
when we have to be physically apart;
help us to love as perfectly as we can,
knowing that God's love endures forever.
*Adapted from "A Prayer during times of Covid-19",
published by The United Church of Canada*

Other Prayer points:

- Health-care workers
- Those now unemployed
- Families at risk
- Our leaders and decision makers
- Your own congregation or faith community, and yourself

Closing: We are now entering Holy Week, with the feeling that events are getting out of control and there is nothing we can do to stop them. We do so trusting that God is with us in times of confusion and fear. We hold the promise of the cross before us as a symbol of hope and new life.
We give thanks for God's enduring love.

*Read the verses from **Psalm 118** again out loud.
Phone a friend and share with them three things
for which you give thanks!*

