

◆ MELROSE UNITED CHURCH ◆

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◆ Sunday, April 5, 2020 ◆

Palm Sunday

MELROSE UNITED CHURCH

* indicates a time to stand, if you are able
congregational responses are in **boldface type**

◆ GATHERING ◆

PRELUDE - Pastorella

J.S. Bach

* OPENING HYMN – *All Glory, Laud and Honour*

VU 122

[Refrain:]

*All glory, laud and honour
to you, Redeemer, King,
to whom the lips of children
made sweet hosannas ring.*

*1 You are the King of Israel,
and David's royal Son,
now in the Lord's name coming,
our King and blessed one. [Refrain]*

*2 The multitude of pilgrims
with palms before you went;
our praise and prayer and anthems
before you we present: [Refrain]*

*3 To you, before your passion,
they sang their hymns of praise;
to you, now high exalted,
our melody we raise: [Refrain]*

*4 Their praises you accepted,
accept the prayers we bring,
great author of all goodness,
O good and gracious king. [Refrain]*

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

One: Can you hear the excitement build? There is such a joyous noise. I can see him coming. That's our King. He is riding on a donkey. Move over. I need to see.

All: **All glory, laud and honour are due our glorious King. He brings the light of the world to those of us who are languishing in darkness. What a joyous moment.**

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Hey! What is going on?

All: **There is such commotion!**

One: Listen to the clippity-clop of the donkeys' and horses hooves. What a sight!

All: **The food vendors are shouting over the din of the crowd.**

One: Falafels. Get your falafels. Bread for sale. Get your honey. Get your fish here!

All: **There is such commotion!**

One: Pee-ew – what a smell!

All: **All the crowds of people and their animals are just too much!**

One: There is such commotion!

All: **Listen to the excited crowd. Why are they saying "hosanna"?**

One: The one who we hope will be king soon is in the parade. Where is he?

All: **There is a group of travellers huddled around that man riding on a donkey. Who is that man?**

One: There is such commotion!

All: **Cloaks and blankets are thrown across the road. That must be someone special on that donkey!**

One: It is that man from Nazareth. Jesus, Mary's son.

All: "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!"
Hosanna in the highest!

One: Let us pray: God of wonder, the drama of this day fills us with awe. We marvel at its intensity. We share in the story as actors in this lifelong spectacle. Inspired, may we convey the story's message of hope to our trouble world. Encouraged, may we tell the timeless story of faithfulness, because of the humble Christ, who rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. Amen.

* HYMN – *When They Heard that Jesus Was Coming* MV 128

Refrain:

Sing hosanna to the chosen one! Sing hosanna, sing hosanna, sing hosanna to the chosen one!

- 1. When they heard that Jesus was coming, Sing hosanna to the chosen one! All the people went out to meet him. [Refrain]*
- 2. Spread their cloaks and branches before him, Sing hosanna to the chosen one! Children sang with palm branches waving. [Refrain]*
- 3. Blest is he, like David before him. Sing hosanna to the chosen one! Blest is he, God's blessing upon him. [Refrain]*
- 4. Guiding cloud and pillar of fire, Sing hosanna to the chosen one! Satan's foe and friend of the sinner. [Refrain]*
- 5. Word of God, and firstborn of the people, Promise kept, the crown of creation. [Refrain]*
- 6. Vision blest, and hope for the future, Sing hosanna to the chosen one! God's beloved, radiant with glory. [Refrain]*
- 7. Wondrous bread, and stream in the desert, Sing hosanna to the chosen one! Holy thirst and God's living water. [Refrain]*
- 8. Eye of God, who see to the heart of us, Sing hosanna to the chosen one! Healing touch, the sight of our blindness. [Refrain]*

9. *Rising sun, the light of the world, Sing hosanna to the chosen one!
Word of life, who give us your Spirit. [Refrain]*
10. *Friend in death, who weep for our dying, Sing hosanna to
the chosen one! Friend in death, who roll back the stone for
us. [Refrain]*
11. *Friend in death, who wake us to new life, Sing hosanna to
the chosen one! Friend in life, we sing glad hosannas.
[Refrain]*

OPENING PRAYER

One: For the message of the palm parade, a message declaring
that might has no power over righteousness, we give thanks
to you, O God.

For the exuberance of those early followers of Jesus, we give
thanks to you, O God.

For the love of God expressed in community, we give
thanks to you, O God.

For justice proclaimed with the margins of society, we give
thanks to you, O God.

For the light of wisdom and compassion that shines in the
shadows of our souls, we give thanks to you, O God.

For those who provide care and compassion within our
community, we give thanks to you, O God.

For the gathering of this community of faith, we give thanks
to you, O God.

For those who seek justice, love kindness, and walk humbly
with the Divine, we give thanks to you, O God.

**All: For this coming Holy Week in which the mysteries and
the meanings of life are proclaimed, we give thanks to
you, O God. Amen.**

WELCOME AND LIFE AND WORK OF THE CONGREGATION

A TIME FOR CHILDREN AND THE CHILD WITHIN US

◆ **SERVICE OF THE WORD** ◆

Reader: Ian Brisbin

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

One: Holy God. Let us hear the substance of your Word above
the noise of our worldly din.

Let us feel again the excitement of the frenzied crowd

Welcoming their saviour with joy and thanksgiving.

May you inspire our hearts to experience your presence in
the mundane as well as the extraordinary.

Amen.

Psalm 118

PSALTER 837

Refrain

Albert Ham ca. 1900

Hal - le - lu - jahl hal - le - lu - jahl

Part One (1-4)

Let Israel now say:

"God's love endures for ever."

Let the house of Aaron say:

"God's love endures for ever."

Let those who fear God say:

"God's love endures for ever." R

Part Three (19-24)

Open to me the gates of the temple, that I may enter and give thanks to God.

This is the gate of God; through it the righteous shall enter.

I thank you for you have answered me; you have become my salvation.

The stone which the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.

This is God's doing, marvellous in our eyes.

This is the day that God has made,
let us rejoice and be glad in it! R

REFLECTION: "A Psalm of Praise!"

Psalm 118

Today's Psalm is a psalm of praise and it holds a wealth of familiar biblical phrases. A number of them have spawned lovely hymns. Its themes also naturally flow right into Palm Sunday, with the triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

We have just finished the forty days of Lent, a period of self-evaluation, made altogether more relevant with our current world crisis. I'm finding many more reflective type articles on Facebook than is usual. People are searching for deeper meaning and finding ways to share their thoughts as well as the musings of sages who have gone before.

"O Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, his steadfast love endures forever!" This statement blankets both the beginning and the ending of the psalm. It is a powerful opening statement and a central theme to our relationship with God. Likewise, the repeat at the end further emphasizes its importance in our ongoing relationship with God.

We worship God, the God whose love we never doubt. We can rely on God's love being new every morning, secure in the knowledge that God's love carries us through our day in whatever circumstances we find ourselves, and confident that God's love tucks us in at night.

"The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone." This cornerstone, sometimes called the capstone or keystone is the last stone to be placed in the construction of a building. It is the most important and often specially decorated. God chose Jesus to be the cornerstone of God's spiritual house.

God's design brings salvation to us through the incarnation of Jesus. There are 5 separate references in the New Testament to Jesus as cornerstone, in addition to today's Psalm 118. The Gospel writers obviously felt it was a key point worthy of repetition.

"This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it." Each day we wake up to new life is indeed the day that the Lord has made. We are new every morning, open and awaiting new possibilities, new discoveries, new attitudes, and new experiences. God has made our days so that they can all be start overs, mini New Years, just as each and every Sunday is a mini re-creation of Resurrection Sunday. We have no need to wait to turn around and start over until some artificial date like the beginning of the calendar year or the school or church year. This is the day God has made. Seize it here and now.

"Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord." These words were featured in the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, fitting for a king. This passage also features in many of our Communion liturgies. On this and every Palm Sunday, we wave palms in praise and recognition of the one who came that we might know the heart of God. Praise be to our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE GOSPEL: 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."

One: This is the Good News of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

All: Praise to you, O Christ.

REFLECTION - "Jesus Speaks!"

This monologue was written by me based on various scriptures and what I think may have been in Jesus' thoughts as he made this historic entry into Jerusalem.

Jesus Speaks...

This has always been my favourite time of year since I was a child. The excitement is mounting as the caravans of men, women and children fill the roads leading up to Jerusalem for the celebration of the annual Passover. I am surrounded by joyful and noisy travellers. People are lined up along the route. Children perched on their father's shoulders. Some are sitting on blankets on the small hills. Children are running with their kites, bits of string and colourful fabric waving in the slight breeze.

It is with great nostalgia that I am looking back on my life - the consuming belief that I was destined for great things by God. I

am remembering the days I travelled as a child with my mother and father, Mary and Joseph. They worried about keeping track of me when we did our traditional visit to the synagogue.

Perhaps, I was too full of myself that year when I was twelve and so infused with doing the work of my Heavenly Father. I may have been a bit too hard on them. They were just being good and responsible parents. They had no idea when they held me as a helpless, tiny baby, the hardships I would put them through.

We've come a long way since that day. My twelve closest friends have faithfully stood by my side. I don't suppose I have thanked them enough for stepping outside their comfort zone, putting their lives on hold and following me. It has not been an easy road for them, but my work, the work of God, would not be possible without their help. And dear Mary, my truest confidant, has supported, encouraged and loved me on this important journey. She helped keep me sane through frustration and rage, misunderstanding and sorrow.

Just last night, I was talking to her about the events that are to come. I feel she more than the others understands what is to happen. There is a sense my time is near. I feel this heavy cloud hanging over me. This trip in to Jerusalem for Passover will be my last.

I pray I will be able to do the will of my Father, but I sense it will be difficult and I may feel very alone.

My teachings have been very controversial. I know that I have spoken out against our established religious leaders and that has made them very angry. There are those on the fringes who have

felt included and hail me as their savior, but there are many more who want to see me dead. I fear for my life, but I must speak out against injustice and the rigidity of observance of laws that do not put people first. How could anyone think that Abba, my Father, who is a God of immeasurable compassion, would not want the Sabbath to serve humankind, nor want to hinder and prevent them being given aid when they desperately need it.

I have sought to make people aware of the Kingdom of God right here, and now, in their midst and of God's immense mercy, love and forgiveness. How well that has taken hold, only time will tell. I have spent my life in preparation for what I know must come.

We are nearing the outskirts of the city. I can see the dust of the legions of Roman soldiers coming out of the Jaffa Gate. It is the main gate on the west side, one of the eight gates to the city. When we stopped at the last well to draw water, I asked James and John, I like to call them the Sons of Thunder, if they would go on ahead to the home of an old friend of my mother's. They are to ask for a donkey and its colt, tied up in the yard, saying Jesus has need of it. When they arrive I will ride on its back into the city.

This fulfills the prophecy from the Scroll of Isaiah which says "Don't be afraid people of Jerusalem - "Look your King is coming riding on a donkey."

Last night we spent the night with Mary, Martha and Lazarus. They made my favourite meal, a wonderful celebratory dinner. It is great to have good friends.

Look, here is my donkey now long with its colt. We are on our way. It is a bitter-sweet journey. Nearing the city, I see people lining the roadway, they are waving palm branches and laying some on the ground on which we will pass.

I'm hearing voices raised in shouts all around us. I can make out the words "Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hail to the King of Israel." This is sure to cause trouble for me as Herod the Great is a very jealous king.

Word spread of Lazarus being raised from the dead and I'm told the people were coming out to see me because of this miraculous sign.

My heart is heavy, in spite of the joy around me. I alone know what is coming. When I was about to speak to my Father, I was wondering if I should ask to be saved the trial of this hour to come, but I know now with certainty, it is the reason I have come!

I tell the crowd - "My light will shine for each of you for just a little while longer. Walk in the light while you can so the darkness will not overtake you." "If you trust me, you are trusting not only me, but also God who sent me."

Tomorrow, we will share the Passover meal. Oh how I have loved our traditions. I will eat with my friends this one last time. I will continue to instruct them in how to care for one another when I am gone. I am all too aware there is a hard road ahead of me, Father, I pray, I will not let you down.

I am encouraged by the welcome and accolades, and now I must leave these heavy thoughts of what is to come and enjoy the moment. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Unable to gather in person, and understanding the limitations and fluctuations of incomes, we would ask that you continue to give as you are able to support the ongoing work of our church. Please consider making your donations through PAR, or post dated cheques. Please speak to our office administrator, Michelle, or our treasurer, Ralph Moulton, how to work this out.

OFFERING

- ★ OFFERING HYMN – *Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow*
VU 541

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
praise God, all creatures high and low;
give thanks to God in love made known:
Creator, Word and Spirit, One.*

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (said together)

Are we crowd-pleasers, crowd-joiners? Holy God, we do join the throngs who gather to honour you this day. We take our place with followers of ages past, seeking a glimpse of your amazing act of redemptive love in Jesus. Yet, truthfully, all we need to do is look to our neighbour and we see life-giving grace. May our offerings continue to enable blessings to be revealed in this world. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

(concluded by the Prayer of Jesus)

One: Dear God who walked among us:

With joy we see in our mind's eye how the crowds cheered at the arrival of their Saviour and we instinctively know that the Temple and military leadership will not be pleased.

We pray for the powerless in our world: the hungry, the intimidated, and the exploited here and in countries around the world.

We pray for the homeless in Hamilton and we wonder how we might support them.

(quiet reflection)

All: Among the crowd are persons who have been helped and healed in body, mind and spirit by God's Chosen One. There is joy in their hearts! But there are also those who realize Jesus is going to his death.

One: We pray for those who are working to prevent disease – the many heroes today who, in spite of great risk put their own lives on the line to help our ill and dying from COVID-19. We pray for those who everyday receive an unexpected and disturbing diagnosis whether it be from the current pandemic or the natural course of their lives; those who are suffering at home or in hospitals and those who are dying or bereaved.

All: Many in the crowd watched as outsiders, wondering how this would affect their faith.

One: We pray for other religions, for tolerance and understanding.

We pray for those outside our church community who are searching out their spiritual needs. Please direct us Lord as to how we might reach them and help in their learning and discovery.

We pray for our leaders in the United Church, for our mission funds and the work of our congregations in the world.

All : Amongst the crowd on Palm Sunday many heard Jesus preach and teach, and changed their lifestyle and direction. Their witness to us leads us to follow in his Way.

One: We pray for ourselves

As we consider our life's direction again and again

We ponder our life's work, our relationships, our social activities, our life in family and community.

We think about our limited life span.

And we think about how our Christian faith affects all of our lives.

We pray for our church community – for Loretta, Flo, Fred, Vic, Cheryl's mother. We pray for those outside our church community who are impacted in many ways by our current situation. Lord, we ask that you be with them in the ways that each one needs.

For all those that we hold in our hearts we raise up to you for their safe keeping.

(quiet reflection)

**All: 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 sin 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 for for ever. Amen.**

*1 Hosanna, loud hosanna
the happy 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.*

*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!*

COMISSIONING & BENEDICTION

One: We have come through the self-reflection of the forty days of Lent to the final celebration in recognition of our glorious King. Stay the course as we go through the emotional upheaval of this coming Holy Week, the evening

of The Last Supper, the events leading up to the
Crucifixion, and the glorious morning of Resurrection.

May God keep us
In our going out and our coming in
In our lying down and our rising up,
In our work and in our leisure,
In our laughter and in our tears,
Until we meet again. Amen.

POSTLUDE - Allegro moderato, from *Sonata #10, KV 330*,
W.A. Mozart