

3/29/26

Palm Sunday

For Group Meetings from March 22nd – March 28th

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: Sovereign God, you have established your rule in the human heart through the servanthood of Jesus Christ. By your Spirit, keep us in the joyful procession of those who with their tongues confess Jesus as Lord and with their lives praise him as Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER:

Share: How did last week's scripture (John 11:1-45) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

Hear: Matthew 21:1-11

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What specific instructions does Jesus give to the disciples about the donkey and colt?
2. What is the crowd's reaction to Jesus' entry into Jerusalem?
3. How does the city of Jerusalem react to Jesus' arrival?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What would you march for?
2. When have you been welcomed in a way that made you feel special?
3. What parts of your life are easy to offer to Jesus? What parts are harder to surrender?

Memorize this verse: "When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?'" (Matthew 21:10) How would you answer, "Who is Jesus?"

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 31:9-16. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

The crowds expect one kind of Messiah and get another. Their disappointment is heartfelt and, truth be told, understandable. As is ours. Don't we also long for a God who is strong, someone who will come into whatever challenging or dire situation we face light a knight astride a horse to save the day? Would we, I wonder, have reacted any differently than the crowds who hail Jesus' entrance as the one who will rescue them and who later reject Jesus' offer not to rescue but instead to redeem them through his own and complete identification with their suffering? I'm not sure we're all that more faithful, all that much less fickle, than the crowds who play a significant role in the Palm Sunday reading. Which is not to condemn us, particularly, but rather simply to remind us that God chooses another way. God chooses to meet us in our vulnerability, to accept us in our weakness, to love us in our un-lovability, to redeem us amid our sin.

Which is perhaps why one detail in the Matthew 21 reading, repeated again in Matthew's record of the Last Supper (26:17-35), stands out to me. And that's that Jesus knows what is going to happen. He prepares the disciples for what to say to the one holding the donkey and colt, and his words are "my hour is near" (21:18). And he prepares them for what to say to the keeper of the room in which they'll share the Passover. These passing references reinforce that Jesus has predicted his betrayal and crucifixion multiple times across the Matthew's Gospel. He knows what is coming and is undeterred by it. Why? Because he is the emissary and embodiment of God's profound love for the world. All the world. The righteous and unrighteous, the repentant and unrepentant, the religious and irreligious, those who greet him as Messiah and those who reject him as criminal. In short, Jesus comes for the good, the bad, and everyone in between.

The irony between the jubilant cries on Palm Sunday and the bloodthirsty screams a few days later is poignant, even bitter. But perhaps the greater irony is that Jesus still came, embracing their shifting character and faithless temperament, reaching out for those who were about to do all kinds of harm out of fear, those who hailed him as Messiah until the requirement was too great and then denounced him as overly demanding or at least ignored him as well-intentioned but hopelessly idealistic. Jesus came for them. And he comes for us. Indeed, shift the verbs of the preceding sentence from past to present-tense and you have described us uncomfortably well. God comes to us in vulnerability and weakness to identify with and embrace us rather than in might to rescue us. And that is rarely what we would desire. But the greater irony is that God comes anyway, committed to loving us and redeeming us no matter what the cost.

Thanks be to God,
Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

Traditional version:
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, the power,
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Contemporary version:
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 sins 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 and forever. Amen