



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Sunday of the Passion/ Palm Sunday

April 10, 2022

ELW Holy Communion, Setting Three

Today we follow Christ from triumphal entry to the cross, each waypoint of the journey marked by Jesus' compassion for those who would betray, mock, accuse, or do violence to him. Though persecuted and beaten, Jesus the Son of God is not disgraced; instead, he asks forgiveness for those who put him to death. We have walked the Lenten pathway these forty days, each of us invited through baptism to "let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus." We enter this holy week accompanying Jesus to the cross with both grief and thanksgiving in our hearts, trusting in God's redeeming love.

A warm welcome to those who are here worshipping with us on-line! Here at Grace Lutheran we believe God is active in your life. Even you being here now is testament of God's calling and leading in your heart, which you have faithfully heeded. So we welcome you, and pray that today you will be nurtured and that the gifts that God has graciously given you will be stirred for the sake of God's mission in the world.

Grace Lutheran worships, prays, and serves on the traditional and unceded lands and territories of the hən̓q̓əmiñəm̓ (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

GATHERING

ACCLAMATION (p.256)

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

Hosanna in the highest.

PROCESSIONAL GOSPEL: Luke 19:28-40

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

²⁸After he had said this, [Jesus] went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

²⁹When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" ³²So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. ³³As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" ³⁴They said, "The Lord needs it." ³⁵Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. ³⁷As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, ³⁸saying,

"Blessed is the king
who comes in the name of the Lord!
Peace in heaven,
and glory in the highest heaven!"

³⁹Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." ⁴⁰He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

BLESSING OF PALMS (p. 256)

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

We praise you, O God,
for redeeming the world through our Savior Jesus Christ.
Today he entered the holy city in triumph
and was proclaimed messiah and king
by those who spread garments and branches along his way.
Bless these branches and those who carry them.
Grant us grace to follow our Lord in the way of the cross,
so that, joined to his death and resurrection,
we enter into life with you;
through the same Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.

Amen.

PROCESSION HYMN: All Glory, Laud, and Honor (#344)

Refrain:

All glory, laud, and honor 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.

Refrain

The company of angels are praising you on high;
creation and all mortals in chorus make reply.

Refrain

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

Refrain

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

Refrain

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

Refrain

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

Hosanna in the highest.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Gracious God, as we enter this Holy Week, strengthen us in our observance of Jesus' walk toward the cross, that we might be filled with the Spirit of your love and grace, uniting us with you and all the faithful, through the life and ministry of Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Isaiah 50:4-9a

A reading from Isaiah.

This text, the third of the four Servant Songs in Isaiah, speaks of the servant's obedience amid persecution. Though the servant has been variously understood as the prophet himself or a remnant of faithful Israel, Christians have often recognized the figure of Christ in these poems.

⁴The Lord God has given me
the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.
Morning by morning he wakens—
wakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.

⁵The Lord God has opened my ear,

and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backward.
⁶I gave my back to those who struck me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;
I did not hide my face
from insult and spitting.
⁷The Lord GOD helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to shame;
⁸he who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me?
Let us stand up together.
Who are my adversaries?
Let them confront me.
^{9a}It is the Lord GOD who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING: Philippians 2:5-11

A reading from Philippians.

Paul quotes from an early Christian hymn that describes Jesus' humble obedience in his incarnation as a human being, even to death, and his exaltation and glory as Lord of all.

⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
⁶who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
⁷but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
⁸he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.
⁹Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 142)

GOSPEL: Luke 23:1-49

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Through the teachings and events of the passion story we see and hear the great contradictions that characterize the coming of God's reign. The leader serves the followers, proud Peter is revealed in his cowardice, and Jesus—the innocent bringer of life—is arrested, beaten, executed, and buried.

¹Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. ²They began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king." ³Then Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He answered, "You say so." ⁴Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no basis for an accusation against this man." ⁵But they were insistent and said, "He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place."

⁶When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. ⁷And when he learned that he was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him off to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. ⁸When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some sign. ⁹He questioned him at some length, but Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. ¹¹Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then he put an elegant robe on him, and sent him back to Pilate. ¹²That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies.

¹³Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, ¹⁴and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him.

¹⁵Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death.

¹⁶I will therefore have him flogged and release him."

¹⁸Then they all shouted out together, "Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!"

¹⁹(This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder.) ²⁰Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again; ²¹but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" ²²A third time he said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him." ²³But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. ²⁴So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. ²⁵He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished.

²⁶As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. ²⁷A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. ²⁸But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹For the days are surely coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' ³⁰Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.'

³¹For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

³²Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. ³³When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴[[Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."]] And they cast lots to divide his clothing. ³⁵And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" ³⁶The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, ³⁷and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" ³⁸There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

³⁹One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" ⁴⁰But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?" ⁴¹And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴²Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

⁴³He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

⁴⁴It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, ⁴⁵while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. ⁴⁷When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent." ⁴⁸And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. ⁴⁹But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Eternal God, increase our humility as we seek the same mind of Christ within us, that we might follow your leading and truth to pick up our crosses as live as your servants, through Jesus our risen Lord and Saviour. **Amen.**

So this was unexpected. I had a whole sermon and stuff planned out and was so excited to be back in the space for our first Palm/Passion Sunday after the pandemic, and here we are. Ok maybe it was just the intro to the sermon written, but still. Back online only. Sigh.

In case you missed the announcements at the beginning of this service or are just reading or listening to this sermon by itself without any context, we're back online only this Sunday because one of our kids tested positive for COVID-19 this past Thursday night. While for now the rest of us feel fine, we thought it best to play it safe and move worship online so none of you would have the chance to catch any of the lingering germs that I might be exuding.

Funny enough though, this exact child, the one who caught COVID, was born on the Thursday before Palm/Passion Sunday, my first one here in fact, making that Sunday a little difficult. And now on the Thursday before the first Palm/Passion Sunday back from pandemic, he is tested positive for COVID, making this Sunday a little difficult. I don't blame him at all, mind you, I just wonder what he has against Palm/Passion Sunday.

While it's probably nothing as all of that was completely out of his control, Palm/Passion Sunday has always been a hard one for me, even without a kid being born or that same kid catching the bug that is going around the entire world. I've mentioned my difficulties with this day before, in fact every year if my memory serves me correctly: it's too convoluted with its opposing themes of the Triumphal Entry to the Passion Narrative, it's too confusing to squish so much of this very large story into one day, and it's too enabling for the people to skip out on the Good Friday service, which might have to be online only again this year, if even that. But the one thing that really gets me this time around, is just how long these texts are for this day. Like seriously, I even chose the shorter option and it still feels like I've been reading forever because we have not one but two gospel readings, and the passion narrative is always pretty lengthy to catch all those fine details that we might just gloss over.

Actually, we probably do gloss over them. I know I do. It's not hard as there are just so many things going on that we ignore because we know the point: Jesus is crucified, and Jesus is crucified because of us and our sin and our own selfish wrongdoing and wanting him out of our lives. And if that isn't guilt inducing, I don't know what is. So I don't blame people for knowing the story but not really knowing the story. I don't blame people who would rather skip the "crucify him" part and just go from the "Hosanna" to the "Alleluia". I don't blame people for not liking this day because I don't really like this day. Mix all that with my track record of things happening around Palm/Passion Sunday to make it even harder, and you have this disgusting cocktail of difficulty, stress, and guilt. Not really something to look forward to.

And so this time around something different caught my eyes in these texts. This guy, Simon of Cyrene, who might be better known as "who from where?". We don't know much about this Simon guy, I mean he only gets like one line in each of the first three gospels. So all we know is that he's from Cyrene and he was forced to help Jesus carry his cross. Actually, he carried it solo to give Jesus a break. This was common practice in those days as the condemned could be beaten so badly that they wouldn't be able to make that walk of shame on their own with a cross on their back, so some unexpected bystander would be voluntold to carry the cross with them so the execution could carry on without further delay.

It's pretty sad if you think about it, the condemned being so messed up that they can't carry this heavy cross by themselves so they need to force someone against their will to help, but also in a way it's kind of beautiful. I mean, it might not beautiful be for the ones who were forced to carry this heavy, splintered, and untreated log on their back, but it's beautiful for the condemned to experience, perhaps for the last time, some grace, and for those watching to see two people side by side, perhaps strangers, sharing in the burden and helping each other through the unexpected difficulty that they have found themselves in.

And I guess this is why this part of the story struck me so much this time around, because I'm feeling really burdened right now. I'm feeling a lot of weight on my shoulders, what with this pandemic, with everything that is going on in the world, and what is happening in my own home, it is a lot. And I'm not saying that I'm Jesus in this story and that someone needs to be Simon to help me with it all, but I'm saying that I feel like I'm Simon and was unexpectedly thrown into this situation where I'm holding up this heavy cross that I didn't want or ask for.

And perhaps some if not all of you have felt the same. Perhaps you too, have found yourself unexpectedly carrying these burdens that you didn't want or ask for. Perhaps you feel like you're buckling under the weight and pressures of life, and that you don't know how much

longer you'll last. Perhaps this story of Simon from Cyrene speaks to you too, as much as it speaks to me right now.

Because this burden isn't ours, is it? At least it shouldn't be. We didn't ask for it. We didn't sign up for it. We don't own it. Why should we carry the Son of God's burdens when they're really his burdens to begin with? I mean if God is in control then God should deal with it. If God is so sovereign then God should take the blame. If God wants us to love God back then maybe we shouldn't have to bear all this stuff that isn't our fault to begin with. It's just not fair.

And that's right, it's not fair. It's not fair that we have to go through this, it's not fair that we get beat up and harmed, it's not fair that we don't get what we want because the powers that be say otherwise. It's not fair that we are found carrying Jesus' cross from time to time.

It's not fair... to him either, actually. We might say that these burdens aren't ours and they're his, but who gave it to him to begin with? Who got Jesus to be tried by the officials? Who stood in the crowds yelling "crucify him"? Who hated him and his teachings so much that they just wanted him dead and out of their lives?

As much as these burdens might be Jesus', we are the ones that put him there to begin with.

But the good news in this very long and glossed over text is that while we carry Jesus' burdens for a while and it's really tough and heavy, Jesus does eventually take back his cross and he obliterates it. He takes the hurts and pains that we go through and he somehow heals them and restores us to wholeness. He takes the anger, the hatred, and the death, and he abolishes them with grace, love, and (spoiler alert) resurrection.

This isn't to belittle the burdens that we have gone through or are going through, or the crosses that we feel we're nailed to or are carrying, believe me I know that it's tough. But it is to remind us of the hope that we have in the resurrection, that while life can be darn near impossible, there is healing, there is redemption, and there is Jesus, walking alongside us and ready to graciously and lovingly take that weight off our shoulders and give us peace.

So as our "hosannas" of Palm Sunday, which mean "save us, we pray", are turned into the shouts of "crucify him" out of anger and misunderstanding of what Jesus is about of Passion Sunday, may we look forward to the "alleluias" of Easter and the Resurrection, as we are filled with love, hope, and relief. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: O Sacred Head, Now Wounded (#351)

CREED

Together with all of God's beloved entering this Holy Week, let us confess the Christian faith with the Apostle's Creed:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;**

he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Led into reflection and repentance by the Spirit, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "Lord, by your consoling mercy," and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**. Lord, by your consoling mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Holy God, you have mercy on us when we are in trouble, and you save us from ourselves. Strengthen us in our faith and devotion to you and your ways, and open our eyes to see your grace in the world more clearly. Lord, by your consoling mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Resurrecting God, you lift us up when we are weighed down with grief and sighing, and you shine your light through us for the sake of the world. Be with us in our ministries and service, that all people might see the depth of your grace. We pray especially for our neighbouring faith communities; our partner Anglican Church of Canada; our bishop Kathy and national bishop Susan; and our companion congregations of the BC Synod. In particular, we pray for Dunbar Lutheran Church in Vancouver and their pastor Thomas Keeley; and for all the staff supporting our Synod office. Lord, by your consoling mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Creator God, you strengthen us with your love and care and reassure us of your presence through all that you have made and entrusted to us. Help us in our stewardship of this planet, that it might continue to house us for generations. Lord, by your consoling mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Just God, the world without you has become judgmental, casting shame and disgrace on those who are different. Give all citizens of the world's nations and all their leaders and politicians your gift of patience and understanding, that we might be able to work together toward peace. We pray especially for Ukraine and the other areas of the world facing violence and turmoil; and for those that we've sponsored to come into our country: Solyana Amanuel; and Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children. Lord, by your consoling mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Caring God, we trust in you and you are our God and you bring to us your grace and healing. Be with those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your compassionate love might shine through our community and lives. Especially we pray for Diana; Paula; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Beulah; Bev and family; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; Linda; Charlotte; William; Jenny; Chris; Mr. Cifuentes; Min; Katherine and family; Jessica; Lynn and Marie; Amika; those who have been affected by COVID 19; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...
Lord, by your consoling mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Eternal God, our time is in your hands and your face shines upon us and all the saints into your kingdom for eternity. Remind us always of the lives of faith that we are connected to, and may their example of love and service inform us in our own faith. Lord, by your consoling mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the grace and peace given to us through the passion of Jesus Christ, our risen Saviour. Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

MEAL

DIALOGUE (p. 144)

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

It is indeed right, our duty, and our joy, that we should at all times and places give thanks and praise to you, O God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who reveals to us our true selves but also takes away all our shame and guilt, showing us how we have been recreated and reformed as your people serving your people in the world.

For on the night that he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus sat with his friends for a meal, where he took some bread, gave thanks, broke and shared it saying, "Take and eat, this is my body broken for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

Then after they ate, he took the common cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them to drink from saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

It is in this food that we share that we see how connected we are in and through God's providing love, even as we declare this mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

It is to you, O God, that all honour and glory belong, through our crucified Saviour Jesus Christ, who has been resurrected and lives with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered together to journey to the cross of Christ, let us pray as he taught us.

**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.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Taste and see God's grace freely given.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMN: Lamb of God (p. 146)

Eat This Bread, Drink This Cup (#492)

Jesus, Remember Me (#616)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, you have given us this heavenly food and nourished us with your loving Word. Strengthen us for this holiest of weeks, that as we look forward to the glorious resurrection of our Lord, we might remember and repent from the sin that got him there. In Christ we pray.
Amen.

SENDING

BLESSING

May you know the love of God our Shepherd, the mercy of God our Saviour, and the fire of God the Spirit, in your living, loving, and serving, now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING SONG: I Know That My Redeemer Lives (#619) verses 1, 2, 4, 5, 8

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, be of the same mind as Christ.

Thanks be to God.