

# Unsettled But Unafraid: A Liturgy For Worshipping At Home

Week of April 5, 2020

St. Simons Presbyterian Church

*Although we are not able to gather in-person for worship, we are able to gather in spirit. This simple resource is designed to help us worship together around a common liturgy and theme during this time of disruption from our normal routines and places. Use this liturgy individually or as a family. If you are using it in a family setting, consider giving each person one part to "lead". Take some time to consider the reflection questions. If using individually, try to carve out 10-minutes to quietly read, reflect, and pray through. **Liturgy this week was compiled by Rev. Annie Franklin Arvin. Reflection by Nat Scott, Director of Congregational Life.***

## **Opening Sentences:**

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.  
**Hosanna in the highest!**

## **Psalm 118:1-2, 1-29**

Give thanks to the Lord because he is good,  
because his faithful love lasts forever.

**Let Israel say it:**

**"God's faithful love lasts forever!"**

Open the gates of righteousness for me  
so I can come in and give thanks to the Lord!

**This is the Lord's gate;**

**those who are righteous enter through it.**

I thank you because you answered me,  
because you were my saving help.

The stone rejected by the builders  
is now the main foundation stone!

This has happened because of the Lord;  
it is astounding in our sight!

**This is the day the Lord acted;**

**we will rejoice and celebrate in it!**

Lord, please save us!

Lord, please let us succeed!

The one who enters in the Lord's name is blessed;  
we bless all of you from the Lord's house.

**The Lord is God!**

**He has shined a light on us!**

So lead the festival offering with ropes  
all the way to the horns of the altar.

**You are my God—I will give thanks to you!**

**You are my God—I will lift you up high!**

**Give thanks to the Lord because he is good,  
because his faithful love lasts forever.**

## Scripture - 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 fulfill 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."

## Reflection Questions

- For a moment, close your eyes and step into narrative. Where do you find yourself in this story? Jesus? The disciples? The donkey? The crowd?
- Jesus instructs two disciples to go into the village and bring back the donkey and the colt. What might Jesus be instructing us to do?
- Why do you think the disciples laid their cloaks down on the path? Why did they wave palm branches? How can we lay our own cloaks down?
- As Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey, the crowds shout "Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest!" What causes you to shout "Hosanna" this day?
- When Jesus enters Jerusalem, the crowd asks "Who is this?" Who is Jesus to you?

## Closing Prayer

God with us, we come to you this morning some with weary hearts and some with filled with steadfast faith trusting you hear our prayers and continue to journey alongside your people:

For the Church, we pray for wisdom as we attempt to reimagine what church looks like when we should not gather together in our sacred space. Keep us connected to one another.

For this world you made from dust, we pray for the sun to continue to rise, for the birds to keep chirping, and for the flowers to keep blooming. Open our eyes to the beauty of your creation.

For those who govern, we pray for insight and leadership. Guide our leaders to act swiftly and justly to care for your people and your creation.

For those who are sick with any sickness and those who are gasping for air because of COVID-19, provide healing and comfort. Remind them that although they may be separated from their families, they are not alone.

For those who continue to get dressed and go to work as doctors, nurses, delivery truck drivers, grocery store clerks and so forth, give them divine strength and protection as they continue to bring about healing and stability in your world.

God, we trust in you. Keep leading us along your path as you give us a well of abundant grace. In your holy name we pray. **Amen.**

A Prayer for the Week:

God of life,  
there are days when the burdens we carry  
are heavy on our shoulders and weigh us down,  
when the road seems dreary and endless,  
the skies gray and threatening,  
when our lives have no music in them,  
and our hearts are lonely,  
and our souls have lost their courage.

Flood the path with light,  
turn our eyes to where the skies are full of promise;  
tune our hearts to brave music;  
give us the sense of comradeship  
with heroes and saints of every age;  
and so quicken our spirits  
that we may be able to encourage  
the souls of all who journey with us on the road of life,  
to your honor and glory. Amen.

(a prayer from St. Augustine of Hippo, 354-430 AD)

## **Hosanna, in the Highest!**

A Reflection by Nat Scott

**What do you think of when you think of Palm Sunday?** For me, it has always been a bright and celebratory beginning to Holy Week colored by a procession of joyful children waving palm branches as they enter the sanctuary from the Narthex. Palm Sunday acts as a preface to Easter Sunday's joy which is a short seven days away. But in the lives of many Christians, these are also some of the most difficult days as we journey with Jesus in humility toward the cross. Here our Lenten journey makes the final turn towards home.

This journey began just over five weeks ago with Ash Wednesday and our annual reminder that this is a season of humility. Many of us began our personal Lenten journeys by either abstaining from certain foods or practices or by adding something positive and inspirational to our daily activities in an effort to grow closer to Christ. These are our “steps” toward Jerusalem. Never in my wildest imaginings did I consider that I would be sent home to work and shut away from you, the people that I know and love in our community.

In light of the COVID-19 crisis, someone on Facebook humorously posted, *“This is the Lentiest Lent I ever Lented.”* Did you think at the outset of our journey that this is where we would arrive and these are the things that we would be asked to give up? In a recent message, Pope Francis noted that the COVID-19 crisis, *“exposed our vulnerability and uncovered those false and superfluous certainties around which we have constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities. It shows us how we have allowed to become dull and feeble the very things that nourish, sustain and strengthen our lives and our communities.”*

Take another glance at the Palm Sunday tableau. What is it that the people are shouting at Jesus as he arrives on the donkey? *“Hosanna!”*, which has two distinct meanings at different places in Scripture. The first meaning is, *“Save, please!”*, a cry of desperation from the people of God. The second is, *“Thank you, for saving us!”*, a cry of gratitude from the thankful people of God! Both are adequate expressions of our faith in Christ. Right now, I find myself torn between these same two expressions throughout each day. *“Please, Lord!” “Thank you, Lord!”*

It is my deepest hope that we all experience *“Hosanna, in the highest!”* this Palm Sunday and throughout Holy Week. Even as we find ourselves sequestered, may we be God’s grateful people. As an exercise this week, take the time each day to make a gratitude list, even if you are not feeling it. Start small. Something I’ve learned about gratitude is that if you give it a tiny toehold, it wells up and springs forth like a fountain! At the same time, don’t be afraid to cry out to God and his children, *“Save, please!”* Sometimes we find ourselves in unexpected and dire straits. In these times, it is right and good to cry out for help! Please, don’t suffer in silence! Please know that you have friends that are praying for you and desire to serve as God’s hands and feet in these most trying times. *“Hosanna!”*

To return to the statement from Pope Francis, we have been given this time, as a gift, that we might remember Christ, his life, death and resurrection, and those things that he showed us to nourish, sustain and strengthen us along our journey together. May we also feel compelled through our gratitude to nourish, sustain and strengthen one another. *“Hosanna, in the highest!”*