

# First Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

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**Palm Sunday – March 28, 2021**

**Note:** Due to copyright restrictions only the opening scripture reading is printed in the bulletin. To fully appreciate the story, please open a Bible and read the suggested scriptures if you are only using the print version of the service.

## Introit

*Filled with excitement*

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1. Filled with excitement, all the happy throng  
spread cloaks and branches on the city streets.  
There in the distance they begin to see,  
riding on a donkey, comes the Son of God.

*Refrain:*

*From every corner a thousand voices sing  
praises to him who comes in the name of God.  
With one great shout of acclamation loud  
triumphant songs break forth:  
“Hosanna! hosanna to the King!  
Hosanna! hosanna to the King!”*

2. As in that entrance to Jerusalem,  
we sing hosannas to the Christ, our King,  
to the living Saviour who still calls today,  
asking us to follow him with love and faith.

*Refrain*

“Filled with excitement,” words Spanish, Rubén Ruíz Ávila; translation, Gertrude C. Suppe. Music: Rubén Ruíz Ávila; arrangement, Alvin Schutmaat. © 2000 1972, 1989, The United Methodist Publishing House. All rights reserved. Annual License with podcasting OneLicense.net A-723877

## Welcome

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

It has often been the case that the Sunday before Easter has a focus either on the Triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, which is how we have come to name this Sunday Palm Sunday, or the focus is on the events between that entry and the cross, a narrative known as the Passion.

Today I invite you to listen to the whole story, from the entry of Jesus to Jerusalem to the moment the stone was rolled against the door of the tomb after Jesus' crucifixion. So often we jump from the Hallelujahs of Palm Sunday to the “He is risen of Easter Sunday” forgetting that there was a week of activity in between. We also prefer the joy and celebration from the grief, sorrow, and pain of the betrayal of friends and the horror of the cross.

So, I invite you into the story. There is so much to pay attention to. Power and politics, prestige and privilege, intrigue and conspiracies, all threads in the story. You may find yourself drawn to particular characters or scenes. If so, stop and pay attention to that. What is it about that moment, certain words, or other piece that has moved you? What emotions are you feeling and thoughts that may lead you into a deeper understanding? Hear now the journey to the cross, and may God add a blessing to the reading of the Word.

### **Scripture Reading John 12:12-19**

<sup>12</sup>The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup>So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel!” <sup>14</sup>Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it; as it is written: <sup>15</sup>“Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion. Look, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!” <sup>16</sup>His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him. <sup>17</sup>So the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify. <sup>18</sup>It was also because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to meet him. <sup>19</sup>The Pharisees then said to one another, “You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!”

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### **Prayer of Adoration and Confession**

Illuminating God whose story and presence has accompanied your people in all times and places, we come before you today to hear words of scripture, sing songs of praise, and to pray. We give thanks for this day of celebration but know that because of our sinfulness and that of the world, the story of Jesus’ suffering and death still has meaning and purpose for our lives, redeeming our relationships with one another, with God, and with ourselves. Forgive that which keeps us from living full and abundant lives in, for, and with you.

As we listen to the scriptures, open our hearts and minds that we can hear the story with new understanding, meaning, and purpose. Through Christ our Lord who taught us to pray...

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### **Lord’s Prayer**

**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.**

## Assurance of Pardon

St. John records Jesus' words: I do not call you servants any longer, but I have called you friends. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. Dear friends, Christ has laid down his life for us and invites us to love one another as he has loved us. Rejoice in his redeeming love and share it with each other day by day.

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## Hymn

Hosanna, *loud hosanna*

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1. Hosanna, loud hosanna,  
the little children sang;  
through pillared court and temple  
the joyful anthem rang.  
To Jesus, who had held them  
close folded to his breast,  
the children sang their praises,  
the simplest and the best.
2. From Olivet they followed  
amid the shouting crowd,  
the victor palm branch waving  
and chanting clear and loud;  
Messiah, God's anointed,  
rode there in humble state,  
"Hosanna in the highest!"  
rang out their praises great.
3. "Hosanna in the highest!"  
that ancient song we sing,  
for Christ is our Redeemer,  
the Lord of heaven our King.  
Oh may we ever praise him  
with heart and life and voice,  
and in God's joyful presence  
eternally rejoice!

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## Scripture Reading

The Gospel according to John: Chapter 14 verse 1 through Chapter 15 verse 47  
The reading of the Passion, taken from the Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language as paraphrased by Eugene Peterson.

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## Scripture Reading John 12:12-19

## Hymn

*When I survey the wondrous cross*

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1. When I survey the wondrous cross  
on which the Prince of glory died,  
my richest gain I count but loss,  
and pour contempt on all my pride.
2. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
save in the death of Christ my God;  
all the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to his blood.

3. See from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?
4. Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a offering far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

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## Reflection

Today you have heard (or read) the story that has made a difference in lives of generations of people for over 2000 years. It is a story of God's love. It is our story. When you wonder if God understands, trust that in Jesus' living and dying, God came to understand and live the full extent of the human experience, joy, triumph, love, friendship, grief, betrayal, despair, and pain. Today we stop with the death of Jesus, but Easter is coming! In the meantime, we wait and wonder, hope, and ponder, knowing that the story is not over, more will be revealed, and the reason for our joy as Christians is knowing that in the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ our lives are forever changed. Glory be to God, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Invitation to make an offering

There are people from different churches and places following this service. In presenting your offering to God this day to your church community, together we declare our love and loyalty to Jesus and his ministry in the world God loves. Let us show our faithfulness to him in the gifts we offer today.

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If you would like to learn more about First Presbyterian, get involved in our ministry and work, or make a donation toward the life and ministry of First Presbyterian Church in Thunder Bay, visit our website at <https://fpresbyterian.ca> for more information.

## Prayers of the People

God, whose gracious love for us embraced that long and lonely journey to the cross, gather us close to you in these days when again we make that journey in meditation and recollection.

Help us to contemplate again the way taken by our Savior: the false charges against him, the fear and flight of the disciples, the kiss of betrayal, the crown of thorns, the purple robe—and in such contemplation give us courage to face those times in our own lives when he received the same at our hands. Yet help us also remember that you have gone before us, so we look to you for compassion and forgiveness, knowing you are able to save.

When we are weak, make us strong; when hurt and resentful, make us forgiving; when defeated and discouraged, make us hopeful. Keep us from asking for mercy without giving it ourselves, from praying for your kingdom but never working for it.

In this week, deepen our faith by your matchless grace. Deepen the measure of our gratitude and Christian obedience. Move us, who have so much, to share with others who have so little. Uphold us when we summon our courage to speak out for the alien and stranger within our gates and for those long denied dignity and freedom.

Guard and guide us through these days of meditation and remembrance. Guard and guide us through all our days until we come at last to that day when all our days and journeys will be gathered into your eternity, and we shall be with you forever.

Glory be to you, O God. Amen.

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## **Benediction**

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,  
guard your hearts and minds  
in the knowledge and love of God,  
and of God's Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
remain with you always. Amen.

—based on Philippians 4:7, NRSV

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