

**Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge of the United Church**  
**At Home Worship**  
**April 5, 2020 Palm Sunday**  
**Minister: Rev. Tammy Allan**

*We gratefully acknowledge that we are on the ancient and traditional lands of The Blackfoot Nation, the people of the Treaty 7, and of Metis Region 3. May we cherish and care for the land and the people, as those who came before us did.*

**Your Worship Space**

As you worship at home, try to create a space for that. It could be as simple as lighting a candle (either flame or battery); or placing a small cross or a symbol that has meaning for you in front of you. If you are alone, perhaps start a journal, as you reflect on the worship experience. Or, perhaps call a friend and share this time with them over the phone. If you are with one or two others, enjoy the conversation that arises...as you practise safe distancing. ☺

**An Opening Prayer**

God of love and compassion, we welcome the Spirit of Christ into our midst, as we remember this day as Palm Sunday, as we remember days of waving palm branches and singing hosannas, in celebration and hope. Walk with us this day, and throughout the week ahead – Holy Week. Give us courage and strength to serve you in new ways in these uncertain times, even if that service means staying home, staying well, and doing our part in love. Amen.

**Readings**

**Matthew 21: 1-11**

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>If anyone says anything to you, just say this, ‘The Lord needs them.’ And he will send them immediately.” <sup>4</sup>This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, <sup>5</sup>“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.” <sup>6</sup>The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them;<sup>7</sup>they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. <sup>8</sup>A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup>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!” <sup>10</sup>When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, “Who is this?” <sup>11</sup>The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”



## Reflection



If we were together in worship, we would have held a Palm Sunday Parade. We would have been singing loud Hosannas with the children, as we marched around the church waving our palm branches. Hosanna. It means “Save us, we pray.” Kind of appropriate words for the times, aren’t they. As the enormity of COVID 19’s impact on the world becomes clearer with each day, those words, “Save us, we pray” take on a whole new meaning.

If we were gathered together for worship, that is what we would have said, and sung. Hosanna. But we are not gathered for worship. I lament that we are not able to be together in person, not able to greet one another with a warm hug or handshake. I do miss seeing your faces as we worship together, and as we visit over coffee after church.

I miss seeing the children, too. I miss their smiles, and their energy. This Sunday, in Olds, with Christina, and maybe with Brad too, they would have been decorating Easter Eggs, and having all sorts of fun. I imagine they miss that too.

I miss preaching. Writing it out and putting it on the website or emailing it to you just isn’t the same. Partly because I know that some don’t have access to that technology. I have colleagues who are on a steep learning curve, so that they can do on line worship, like they never have before, and although I’m slow to take that up, I am exploring whether I can make that work for next week. But for now, I miss the face to face church.

Yet I am finding moments of peace – when I pick up the phone and call members...I’m doing that each week, a few a day...and it’s good to hear your voices, your stories, and know that you are taking care of yourselves, and carefully doing your part to “flatten the curve.” I am finding moments of peace as I read my Lenten devotions...a book written long before COVID 19, yet as I read and reflect, so much of the writing has meaning for what we are living now.

I wonder if Jesus travelled to Jerusalem with any sense of loss or lament? The scriptures make it clear that he had a sense of what his world would bring his way, that this triumphal parade would end, and the mood would soon drastically change.

Jesus entered Jerusalem with a parade, with people praising him and acknowledging the power he had. It was a different kind of power than what some expected. It was a power that invited others to walk with him, to follow his lead, and learn from his gentle, yet compelling wisdom. It was a power that said that all people were worthy of God’s love – all people – and especially the poor, the bereaved, the sick, the littlest and the least.

It was, we know, a power that the religious authorities couldn’t – or wouldn’t – understand. It was power, we know, that was so threatening to their oppressive, controlling power, that they – those religious authorities - wanted to put to an end to it all.

Jesus is aware of this threat to his very life – yet his calling is to stand up to those oppressive forces, to turn the tables on that kind of power, by his very refusal not to run and hide away from what lies ahead.

As we enter into Holy Week, the stories within scripture become very dramatic, filled with emotion. I wonder, in these days that already are filled with emotion, how we will read those words as we journey through this week.

I do invite you to spend some time, if you are able, this week, with the Word, the Story. Let it touch your hearts. Perhaps spend some time journaling or drawing, and time in prayer, as you journey through this week.

We may not be able to gather in person, and as we approach Easter, the most important day in the Christian year, that is hard...but it does give us an opportunity to experience the story in a more contemplative way. You may be able to reach out and share that experience with others in your household, or over the phone, perhaps even 'facetime' with others. Trust that when we are able to gather again in person, we will celebrate resurrection with a whole new sense of joy!

Until then, may God walk with us, holding us in love and compassion. Amen.

### **Prayers for this day**

Loving God, once again, we prepare to experience the events of Jesus' last days.

May the stories of our faith bring meaning to us this week, in new, life-giving ways.

May we hear the cries of Hosanna, as a call to stand in solidarity with those who are on the margins in our world, and especially those who are struggling with the realities of these times.

May we seek, and embrace the challenges that come with that kind of solidarity. May we recognize anew the difference that even small acts of compassion make in the world.

May the ministry we share help to satisfy our longing for community, and make us more open to each other's joys and sorrows. As we live carefully distancing ourselves, may we trust that you, God, are with us. May we live in hope for a day when we can gather in community again, physically. And for now, may we give thanks for the sense of community we are finding in new and creative ways, in phone calls, in social media, in love lived out.

As the shadows of Good Friday draw near, may we know your presence with us still, and trust that we are not alone.

Then as we look toward the empty tomb of Easter morning, may the mystery and joy of that day inspire us to tell the stories of our faith with a renewed sense of hope.

As we move into this Holy Week, we lift up to you the prayers of the world, the country, our communities, our families and friends.

We hold in prayer all those affected by the COVID 19 Pandemic, by the economic and social implications. We pray for those struggling with lost wages, with isolation, with stress and anxiety, with fear. O God, hear these are prayers, and in your love, give us hope and comfort.

Be with us we pray, as we continue to walk this journey to the cross and beyond it to Easter joy. Amen.

### **A Palm Sunday Blessing**

Let us remember that even though we are apart, the love of the Spirit draws us close to one another. Let us remember that we are not alone, God is with us. Thanks be. Amen.



### **Readings for this week:**

#### **Maunder Thursday April 9<sup>th</sup>**

Exodus 12:1-4 and 11-14; Psalm 116:1-2 and 12-19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26;  
John 13:1-7 and 31b-35

#### **Good Friday April 10**

Isaiah 52:13—53:12 Psalm 22 Hebrews 10:16—25 or Hebrews 4:14—16; 5:7—9 John 18:1—  
19:42

#### **Easter Sunday April 12**

Acts 10:34—43 or Jeremiah 31:1—6 Psalm 118:1—2, 14—24 Colossians 3:1—4 or Acts 10:34—43  
John 20:1—18 or Matthew 28:1—10