

Sunday, March 29th, 2015

The liturgist and pastor will meet in the hall outside the choir room a couple of minutes prior to the start of the service at 10:45am.

After a short prayer with the choir, the liturgist, choir, and organist will enter and take their seats. Following them, the pastor will step into the pulpit, welcome everyone, and make announcements....

The preacher will then ask...

“Are there any other announcements or concerns of the church that need to be made known at this time?..... Thank you.”

The preacher will take a seat.

PRELUDE "Hosanna, Loud Hosanna!" - Jason D. Payne Dr. Elizabeth Davis

After the Prelude, the liturgist should step to the lectern and say,

“Would you join me in reading the responsive call to worship adapted from Psalm 118 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP (adapted from Psalm 118)

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever!

Let Israel say, “His steadfast love endures forever.”

Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord.

This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter thru it.

I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord.

The Lord is God, and he has given us light.

Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... Loving God, whose gift of salvation in Jesus Christ is so often ridiculed and rejected, we pray that you would help us to empty ourselves and be filled with your Word and Spirit. Free us, we pray, to enter fully into the joy and gladness of welcoming the One who comes in your name, and equip us to carry that good news to a waiting world. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, "All Glory, Laud, and Honor", number 88 in our *Hymnals*.

The liturgist should step back from the microphone for the hymn.

*HYMN OF PRAISE "All Glory, Laud, and Honor" *The Hymnal #88*

After the hymn, the preacher will step into the pulpit and say...

*CALL TO CONFESSION

Will we wave our branches today only to hide them tomorrow? Will our hosannas melt into cries of anger? Let us admit the truth about ourselves so that we may be forgiven and find

new faith and courage to glorify Christ regardless of our circumstances. Let us pray together the prayer of confession as it is printed in our bulletins, pausing at its end for a moment of silent prayer or meditation. Let us pray...

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

(In Unison)

Sovereign God, we confess that we are as fickle as the crowds in Jerusalem. When everything seems to be going well, we join the hosanna chorus, but in times of weariness or fear, our praise turns to insults. We hide our faith when it is under attack and join the ranks of the scoffers. When there is opportunity to speak a good word for Jesus Christ, we are too often silent. We are the ones for whom Jesus suffered and died and yet we have been ungrateful and unfaithful. We need the strength of your forgiving love today. Hear our prayer, and restore us to wholeness and faithfulness. Amen.

***SILENT CONFESSION**

(Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.)

***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Though in the form of God, Jesus emptied himself, and took on the role of a servant and remained faithful even unto death for our sakes, so that we might be forgiven and know that He is Lord... Friends believe the Good News!

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

***GLORIA PATRI**

The Hymnal #579

***Glory be to the Father, & to the Son, & to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,
World without end. Amen, Amen.***

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

God sent his Son, not to condemn the world but that we might be saved through him and know His peace. Let us share that peace with one another. The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Share the peace of Christ with others as you will.

After a few moments, the liturgist will step into the lectern and say...

“At this time I want to invite all of our younger friends to come forward for a Word from the Lord brought to them by Ms. Karen.”

The liturgist will take a seat.

CHILDREN’S SERMON

(All Singing)

***Jesus friend so kind and gentle, little ones we bring to thee;
Grant to them thy dearest blessing. Let thine arms around them be;
Now enfold them in thy goodness, from all danger keep them free.
As the children leave, the Preacher will return to the lectern and say...***

A MINUTE FOR MISSION

The One Great Hour of Sharing

Imagine walking 11 hours every day, just so your family can have water to cook, clean, and drink, the path so arduous that every drop carried must be used for only the very basic necessities. Little, if any, remains for hygiene for yourself or your children. Life was almost impossible for these Kenyan people when Presbyterian Disaster Assistance showed up to deal with the suffering brought about by a prolonged drought.

First came a well, and then the construction of a dam supported by PDA and its partner, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), who worked with a local church with a congregation of less than 30 people. As the projects neared completion, things began to change.

After the water came, the community grew in number and in hope. The water eased the life of the people and drew newcomers to the congregation. The women and children no longer travel hours for water. Instead, it takes just 30 minutes. An area that was once barren is now dotted with small trees, vegetables, and fruit.

Your gifts through the One Great Hour of Sharing support small and collaborative projects like this one. But their work is not done. Your support means we'll complete our work there and leave families in a place where they are self-reliant within a resilient community.

Please give generously, using one of the envelopes in the pew racks or marking your check with an "OGHOS" in the lower left hand corner.

The Preacher will take a seat.

When he leaves the microphone, the Liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

What shall we give in the name of One who gave everything for us? What do we offer to carry the good news into the centers of power and need in our world today? Let us give with open hands and thankful hearts as we continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings...

The liturgist will sit down until the Doxology begins to play.

THE OFFERTORY "They Sang, 'Hosanna!'" - Richard A. Williamson Dr. Elizabeth Davis
*DOXOLOGY (In Unison) *The Hymnal #592*

***Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below;
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.***

After the Doxology, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

*OFFERTORY PRAYER

Gracious God, what you have done for us is marvelous in our eyes. Our gifts can never equal your goodness toward us. Your saving grace, your healing light, your personal sacrifice are so far beyond our imagining! We can only offer ourselves, all we have and all we are, in response to the coming of Christ Jesus. Receive, O God, our gifts and our humble service and bless them to the glory of Christ our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Let us remain standing and reaffirm our Christian faith as it is expressed in the second chapter of Paul's letter to the Philippians and printed in our bulletins. Let us say what we believe. . .

*THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Based on Philippians 2

I believe in God, who in gracious mercy sent His son Jesus. I believe that in coming to save us, Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, took the form of a slave, and was born in human likeness; and being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross. Therefore God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Invite the congregation to... "Be seated," and take a seat.

SPECIAL MUSIC "The Palms" - Jean-Baptiste Fauré Joanna Smith, soprano

After the Anthem, the liturgist will step into the lectern and say....

Each Sunday of Lent we are using a short video by "The Skit Guys" to help introduce the morning message. This morning we will hear one witness's account of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday.

LENTEN VIDEO

"Palm Sunday"

After the video, the Liturgist will return to the lectern & say....

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson this morning is taken from the Prophet Zechariah, the ninth chapter, beginning at the ninth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page 824 in your pew bibles. Listen now for the word of God...

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!

Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!

Lo, your king comes to you;

triumphant and victorious is he,

humble and riding on an ass,

on a colt the foal of an ass.

I will cut off the chariot from E'phraim

and the war horse from Jerusalem;

and the battle bow shall be cut off,

and he shall command peace to the nations;

his dominion shall be from sea to sea,

and from the River to the ends of the earth.

As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you,

I will set your captives free from the waterless pit."

The liturgist will return to his/her seat either on the chancel or with his family or friends in the congregation. Thanks for your help!

When the liturgist finishes, the preacher will step into the pulpit & say...

Our Gospel lesson this morning is taken from Mark, the eleventh chapter, beginning at the first verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #879 in your pew bibles.

Listen once more for the word of God...

And when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Beth'phage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, and said to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat; untie it and bring it. If any one says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'"

And they went away, and found a colt tied at the door out in the open street; and they untied it. And those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?"

And they told them what Jesus had said; and they let them go.

And they brought the colt to Jesus, and threw their garments on it; and he sat upon it. And many spread their garments on the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields.

And those who went before and those who followed cried out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

“The Difference”

We hear cheering and sounds of victory a lot. Graduations. The elementary school play. We hear that all the time at ballgames and sporting events don't we? Thousands of people cheering on their team. Now I want you to imagine it during a parade...but NOT the parade you are thinking of.

During the Festival of the Passover the city of Jerusalem would have been filled with Jews from all over the country. Thousands upon thousands of people all in one city, all ready to celebrate their history and their God.

It was a time when the Jews in the city would have vastly outnumbered the Romans.

Pilate had to keep order and show the people who was in charge. So, about the same time as a couple of Jesus disciples are looking for a random donkey tied to a post minding it's own business, Pilate would have been aboard powerful war horse. The Roman army would have been there with swords and shields banging and clanging and making as much noise as possible. It would have been a show of force designed to keep the rabble cowed and quiet and in their place.

On the other side of the city, people would have gathered at the gate to see what the commotion was, only to see a rabbi riding on a donkey. No armies. No floats. No marching band. No pop-star dressed in bright colors and lip-synching to pre-recorded music. Just a guy on a donkey. People waving palm branches and shouting “Hosanna”, “Save us!”

The prophet Zechariah, whose words every self respecting Jew under Roman occupation had heard and knew by heart, had said, “Behold your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey.”

Jesus is saying. The one you've been waiting for...he's here. I'm the one.

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus was asked to preach in his hometown church. The ushers would have carried the scroll to him and laid it out on a table. Jesus could have read from anywhere in it, but you know what he chose don't you: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” Then he sat down and said, “Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing,” or more plainly, “The one you've been waiting for? He's here. I am he.”

So we have two parades, both accompanied by cheering throngs. One is intended to reinforce the subjugation of one people to another, The other is to free the oppressed and release the captives. Pilate's parade is a display of political power. That of Jesus a complete surrender of earthly power. On one side of the city, the populace cheers because they fear the

consequences of not doing so. On the other, the crowds cheer Jesus because the fulfillment of all their hopes and dreams is in sight.

On Pilate's side of the city, folks cheer Pilate on Sunday, and will cheer him again on Friday. But the cheer's from Jesus' supporters will give way to hate and spit and loneliness and death.

Why? How does Jesus last week on earth start off so triumphantly with a young donkey carrying the Messiah through the streets to the cheers of the crowd, and end so tragically days later with Jesus carrying a cross through the very same streets to the jeers of the very same people?

Part of the difference may be laid at the feet of human nature. We all want things, and some of them we earn or are given, and others, for whatever reason, are just not destined to be ours. And when we don't get what we want, our disappointment and frustration drives us to anger. There is something in us that believes that we have a right to what we want. Just this week, Indiana passed a law guaranteeing the religious freedom of all its citizens, and the press, politicians, and special interest groups, and deep thinkers like former basket baller Charles Barkley see it as an instrument of perpetuating hate. There will always be those who seek to do God's will and those who seek their own ends, and the difference will almost always result in violent conflict.

Pilate is a politician and he will give the people what they want, even if it is wrong, to keep them from rising up against them.

Jesus is God, motivated by love for the very people who cheer today and jeer tomorrow. Willing to not just tolerate their rejection of him, but to embrace it so that he can save them from themselves.

Jesus is not concerned with satisfying every desire of our all greedy little human hearts. He did not come so that we might be rich in worldly goods, or wield great power, or even to be sexually fulfilled. He came that we might have life, eternal and abundant.

Jesus did not come to meet our expectations of what a king should be like. He came to meet our need, to bring us peace we could not have on our own. He came to meet our deepest needs-- our need for a means to God that is not self-devised, our need for salvation that is more than a political solution, our need for the truth about who God really is rather than who we hoped God would be."

In our opening video, our disciple remembers how proud he was to see Jesus ride into Jerusalem on the foal of an ass to the cheers of God's people. But the real difference in our lives was when he did what no man would ever do, love and forgive so completely, that he would be willing to die for their very ones who wielded the whips, who screamed for his crucifixion, who spit in his swollen and bleeding face, who drove the nails into his wrists and feet, who cried for him to save himself. That was what we wanted on that day, and he gave it to us. And that gift has made all the difference in our lives.

May I tell you a story I have told you before? It was told originally by a priest in a church in Paris, about three young students who were walking along a country road in France. The students fancied themselves intellectuals and philosophers, and they were discussing the power of human thought.

One of the subjects they deplored, as they spoke, was religion. Religion, they agreed with Karl Marx, is the opiate of the people: it drugs people into acceptance and compliance with a world order that is inferior. As they walked, they passed a little church. One of the boys dared another to go into the church and tell the priest what they had been saying -- to tell him that religion is really passe and has no place in the modern world.

Unable to refuse a dare, the young man went in. He found the priest and said his piece.

As he turned to leave, the priest said, "My son, why have you told me this?"

The boy admitted he had been dared to do it.

"Ah," said the priest, "then you would accept a dare from me as well?" And the priest dared the young man to go into the chancel and stare for a moment at the crucifix and say, "Jesus Christ died for me, and I don't give a damn."

Embarrassed, but unable to avoid the dare, the boy went into the chancel. He looked up at the old crucifix, blackened by years of incense and candlelight. The face of Jesus was still visible. It was filled with pain and agony.

"Jesus Christ died for me, and I don't care a damn."

Again he turned to go.

"One more time, my son," said the priest, "and I'll not ask again."

A final time the boy looked up at the pathetic face, twisted in the torture of death. He started to say the words but they would not come. He looked and tried again, but no sound would come out.

At last, slowly, he turned around and approached the priest. "Father," he said, "I want to confess my sin."

And at this point the priest who was telling the story to a sophisticated congregation in Paris leaned across the pulpit and said, "I know this story is true, my friends. You see, I was that boy."

Our disciple in the video was right, when Jesus shows up there is nothing better. Nothing makes a bigger difference in our lives.

There is nothing better than when Jesus shows up.

...in our world.

...in our church.

...in our homes.

It all starts here.

With us.

THE PASTORAL PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER

O Lord, look with mercy upon all of us gathered here, both young and old. We give you thanks for the difference that Jesus has made and will continue to make in our lives. Help us to follow his example, forgetting ourselves, setting our hope on you, and trusting you with a faith that is constant and steadfast as your own love for us. We have sought guidance and wisdom in many places; we have looked to the arm of man to protect us, but in disappointment we always return to You, our refuge and strength.

If we are young, guide us through our perplexities that decisions made today may not poison the future you have for us.

If we have reached middle age and our fallen dreams lie accusingly upon our hearts, renew our self-confidence and help us to know that you still have things to be done that only we can do.

If we are old, gird us with the assurance that our labors, though humble, have not been in vain.

If we are working at unpopular tasks in the midst of indifference or hostility, grant us the courage of your Son. And if we are ashamed because we have failed where we intended to be great, heal us with your forgiveness and strengthen us against our own weakness; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who taught us to pray as your own dear children, saying...

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Let all of us who are able stand and join in one voice to sing our hymn of dedication, "Hosanna, Loud Hosanna", # 89 in our *Hymnals*.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"Hosanna, Loud Hosanna"

The Hymnal #89

THE BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face to shine upon you and give you His peace-- in your coming in and your going out; in your lying down and in your rising up; in your labor and in your leisure; in your laughter and in your tears; until you come to stand before Jesus in that day in which there is no sunset & no dawning. Amen.

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

"He Is Lord!"

He is Lord! He is Lord! He is risen from the dead and He is Lord!

Ev'ry knee shall bow, ev'ry tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis