

Worship resources
The Sixth Sunday of Lent -
Palm Sunday -
13th April, 2014

And so Holy Week begins! The big challenge of this period in the Church Calendar is that the focus is so very clearly on events that happened to “Someone else” so very long ago. It can all tend to become a nice “show” or a good academic exercise, but with little impact on us as we seek to follow this Jesus. Yet, with the unique calling and nature of Jesus, and the unique character of these events, it can be a stretch to find ways to apply the truths of this week to the lives of worshipers today. But, if this isn’t what the work of liturgy is all about what is?

So, today – and throughout this week – may we journey with Christ, but may we also be challenged by Christ as we worship.



INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines
Matthew 21 : 1-11

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(Within the Liturgy of the Palms, this passage precedes the procession, which is itself a dramatic commentary. It is therefore best read without introduction.)

Isaiah 50 : 4-9a

Isaiah pictures a faithful servant of God who is deeply and unjustly humiliated, but remains dignified in suffering. As we contemplate the mystery of the cross, these words take on a profound meaning for us in the Passion of Jesus.

Philippians 2 : 5-11

It is our faith that 'Jesus Christ is Lord', because he came from God in total self-giving, and overcame the humiliation of death on a cross by rising and ascending. He is indeed worthy of our adoration and worship.

Matthew 26 : 14-27 or Matthew 27 : 11-54

Traditionally, the Gospel narrative of the passion and death of Jesus has no introduction except formal words such as: 'The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew'.

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

Almighty and everlasting God,
who, of thy tender love towards mankind,
hast sent thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ,
to take upon him our flesh,
and to suffer death upon the cross,
that all mankind should follow the example of his great humility;
Mercifully grant,
that we may both follow the example of his patience,
and also be made partakers of his resurrection;
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

Almighty and everlasting God,
who, in your tender love towards the human race,
sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ
to take upon him our flesh
and to suffer death upon the cross:
Grant that we may follow the example
of his patience and humility,
and also be made partakers of his resurrection;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

A: We are baptized into Christ's death and united by our hope in the resurrection.

In that hope, we offer our prayers for the church, ourselves, and the world in which

we live, saying, "We pray to you, O Lord," and respond, "Amen."

A: Let us pray for the suffering church.

P: Suffering God, you have called your church to a discipleship which bears the

cross. Unite the people of God with those who suffer for the sake of the gospel, that

we may support them in prayer and deed. We pray to you, O Lord, C Amen.

A: Let us pray for the sick, the marginalized, the poor, and the sorrowful.

P: Suffering God, your passion shows us that you have bound yourself to those who

suffer. Uphold those who are in pain, even as you lead us to relieve their suffering.

We pray to you, O Lord, C: Amen.

A: Let us pray for ourselves, the people of _____, that we might be open to

Christ who is among us.

P: Suffering God, we long to know and serve you fully. Make us people of vision,

that we may see the needs of our neighbors, and the possibilities of the kingdom.

Help us to make room for your triumphal entry into our midst. We pray to you, O

Lord, C: Amen.

A: Let us pray for those on the threshold of faith.

P: Suffering God, you have stirred up in all of us a longing for you. We pray for

those who do not yet know that you satisfy their yearning. May this Holy Week

touch their longing and call them to faith. We pray to you, O Lord, C: Amen.

P: Great God, through your passion you brought victory and through your death you

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offer life. Turn our lives to the mysteries of your ways and hear our prayers offered through Christ who is Lord forevermore. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

Let us pray for all people everywhere according to their needs.

O Lord, Christ and Saviour, we pray for people of every race and belief, and in every kind of need: make your ways known on earth, your saving power among nations.

We pray for the Church, and all who call themselves Christians, that they may go forward in unity and strength. We pray for courage and wisdom to appear foolish by standing up for our faith when it is challenged. Guide us all in our ministries as we journey through life, strong in the knowledge that Christ, by his Passion, conquered death that we might have life.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for people in parts of the world where life is precarious, whether through poverty, disease, oppression, or war. We pray for the British sailors who are currently suffering indignities as hostages in Iran and pray that their release will come about in a timely manner which will not cause further conflict between nations. Most of all we pray that the time may be hastened when there is peace on earth and goodwill between all men.

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who suffer in mind or body and for those who care for them. We pray for the sick; for those who mourn; for those without faith, hope or love.

We pray for any known to us who are in special need of our prayers at this time, especially those known personally to us. We remember them now in a moment of silence

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Jesus Christ is the light of the world, a light which no darkness can quench. We remember before God those who have died and light a candle to symbolise the light of Christ, which eternally shines and brings hope. We remember

You turn our darkness into light: in your light shall we see light.

Alison Holden - This is Church

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 3

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Lord, you set your face towards Jerusalem and walked alongside those who suffer.

Be our vision that we too may walk the way of the cross and extend a hand to those we meet.

**Lord, give us the gladness of your help
And support us with a willing spirit.**

Lord, you stopped to heal the sick, cure the lame and give sight to the blind. Be our vision that we too may give time to others and respond to their needs.

**Lord, give us the gladness of your help
And support us with a willing spirit.**

Lord, you said, "The first shall be last and the last first."

Be our vision that we too may work towards your kingdom when the exalted will be brought low and the lowly exalted.

**Lord, give us the gladness of your help
And support us with a willing spirit.**

Lord, you ate with tax collectors and sinners and heard their stories. Be our vision that we too may listen to the despised and rejected and value their lives.

**Lord, give us the gladness of your help
And support us with a willing spirit.**

Lord, you took time to pray and time to be silent. Be our vision that through our prayers, fasting and almsgiving we too may draw closer to you and find your way.

**Lord, give us the gladness of your help
And support us with a willing spirit.**

Lord, you entered Jerusalem with peace in your heart. Be our vision that we too may desire peace where others desire war, and may work for justice where injustice reigns.

**Lord, give us the gladness of your help
And support us with a willing spirit
For you are our hope and our salvation.**

*Annabel Shilson-Thomas, England
Let Justice Roll Down, CAFOD*

POST COMMUNION

Lord Jesus Christ,
you humbled yourself in taking the form of a servant
and in obedience died on the cross for our salvation.
Give us the mind to follow you
and to proclaim you as Lord and King,
to the glory of God the Father.

PRAYERS

It is right to praise you, Almighty God, for the acts of love by which you have redeemed us through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. On this day Jesus entered the holy city of Jerusalem in triumph, and was proclaimed as King of kings by those who spread their garments and branches of palm along his way.

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

Almighty and everliving God, in your tender love for the human race you sent your Son our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon him our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, and also share in his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. ([BCP](#))

We worship you Lord! You did not enter your holy city Jerusalem on the back of a war horse, but humbly and on a donkey. You knew that you were surrounded by murderers, yet you came in peace, and by your sacrifice you would utterly conquer death before the week had passed. You, oh Lord, are blessed and worthy of our praise. You have saved your people. We say, "You are our king!" ... We long to live in the city where you sit on the throne! Establish your Kingdom, so that your people can live in peace. Jesus, we bow before you, and we will sing your praises until your Kingdom comes and is established, and forever after.

Almighty God, on this day, your son Jesus Christ entered the holy city of Jerusalem and was proclaimed King by those who spread garments and palm branches along his way. Let those branches be for us signs of his victory, and grant that we who bear them in his name may ever hail him as our Lord, and follow him in the way that leads to eternal life. In his name we pray. Amen

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Almighty God, you sent your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take our flesh upon him and to suffer death on the cross. Grant that we may share in his obedience to your will and in the glorious victory of his resurrection; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

It is right to praise you, Almighty God, for the acts of love by which you have redeemed us through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. On this day Jesus entered the holy city of Jerusalem in triumph, and was proclaimed as King of kings by those who spread their garments and branches of palm along his way. Help us remember the palm branches as signs of his victory, to hail him as our king, and to follow him in the way that leads to eternal life. Amen

God of our Lives,
You are always calling us into the future,
Inviting us to new ventures,
New challenges,
New ways to care,
New ways to touch the hearts of all.
When we are fearful of the unknown, give us courage
When we worry that we are not up to the task,
Remind us that you would not call us
if you didn't believe in us.
Be with us, we pray; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Dear Lord, today we remember Your triumphant journey into Jerusalem, but let us not turn our backs on you in the coming days, weeks, months and years as the rejoicing crowd did after that day! Help us to stay on our journey with You day by day. Keep us ever faithful to our commitment to spend more time with you.

Almighty Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you sent your Son to be born of woman and to die on a cross, so that through the obedience of one man, estrangement might be dissolved for all men. Guide our minds by his truth, and strengthen our lives by the example of his death, that we may live in

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union with you in the kingdom of your promise. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

BLESSING

May God's blessing be yours
Encircling you round
Above you
Within you.

May the Son's blessing be yours
The wind and the water
The bread and the stories
To feed you
To remind you.

May the Spirit's blessing be yours
The wind, the fire
The still small voice
To comfort you
To challenge you.

LECTIONARY NOTES 1 - For The Liturgy of the Palms

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29: A celebration of God's goodness and faithful love, answering prayer, turning the rejected stone into the capstone, and inviting people into God's presence.

Matthew 21:1-11: Jesus instructs the disciples to bring him a donkey and its colt, then he mounts the colt and rides into Jerusalem, where a procession gathered to celebrate him, while others wondered who he was.

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

Palm Sunday is another one of those moments when it is easy to fall back on the same old ideas. But, if it is thoughtfully and carefully prepared, this celebration can be a powerful beginning to a very moving journey through Holy Week. In the light of this, it is good not to miss the connection with the rest of what is to come this week, and how this moment of entry into Jerusalem was a very definite and intentional decision by Jesus to face the suffering which lay ahead. Rather than avoid the confrontation and its consequences, Jesus faces them square on, and refuses to shy away from the suffering, or change his message or methods in order to stay safe. In a world in which pain-avoidance has become almost a religion in itself, this example is deeply challenging – as is the cause of Jesus' pain: his insistence

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on living according to God's alternative way and his refusal to bend to the demands or threats of empire and its systems.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: The attention of the world has been caught by the conflict in Syria and elsewhere. It is at times like this that we are faced with the cruelty and ruthlessness of Empire, and although this is a particularly visible manifestation of it, this same dynamic is played out every day in the world of business, politics, science, education and even in the realm of faith. As we watch Jesus ride into Jerusalem on the donkey's colt again, we cannot avoid the call to live out the alternative Kingdom that God calls us to, even when it leads us to sacrifice and confrontation with the "powers-that-be". This calls for us to search our hearts, to acknowledge that no person or group that operates within "the system" will ever lead us to God's reign, and to count the cost for ourselves of following Christ, and living in subversive ways to undermine the oppressive control of Empire. What is good news is that there are so many ways to do this today, thanks to the internet, social media and our greater awareness of what is going on in the world and our connectedness to it. All that is required is the same will that we see in Jesus.

LOCAL APPLICATION: We each face, every day, the temptation to just be part of the system. We must choose every day whether we will turn from the sacrifices of challenging the status quo, or "get on the donkey" and face the confrontations. And each day we do this in some surprising ways. When we refuse to play God in the lives of our children, friends or companions, we reject the ways of Empire. When we reject the call to accumulate as much as we can, and embrace a life of simplicity and generosity, we undermine the influence of Empire in our world. When we commit to peace and justice, even at the cost of our own safety or lives, we have turned our back on Empire. When we take the time to acknowledge the dignity and humanity of those on the fringes of the system, we have undermined the exclusionary rules of Empire. Living like this will seldom win us any awards or lead us into positions of power and wealth, but it will win us the inner joy and peace that comes from living in God's reign, and it will lead us to integrity, wholeness, and the wealth of love and being loved that Jesus demonstrated so well. So, today is a good time to evaluate where we still collude with the system and where God may be calling us to opt out.

LECTIONARY NOTES 2 - For The Liturgy of the Passion

The Liturgy of the Passion is a unique Sunday in the church year, should you choose to make this the focus of the first Sunday of Holy Week, rather than the Liturgy of the Palms. The focus of this week's worship is the extended

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Gospel reading, which can stand on its own without a sermon, and offers some amazing possibilities for creativity and reflection in the service. This year, with all the suffering that has happened on a large scale around the world, the Liturgy of the Passion can be a good time to remember God's grace and compassion in our grief, and God's call for us to be agents of God's mercy to those who suffer.

May the suffering of Christ touch our hearts again as we worship this week, and may we be those who touch the hearts of the suffering wherever we may find them.

READINGS:

Isaiah 50:4-9a: A prophecy of the obedient servant, beaten and mocked, but vindicated by God.

Psalms 31:9-16: The cry of God's servant, persecuted and beaten.

Philippians 2:5-11: Jesus' humility and obedience in his incarnate, crucified life, and God's exaltation of Christ.

Matthew 26:14 – 27:66: At the Last Supper Jesus predicts Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial, and then at Gethsemane Judas comes with the soldiers to arrest Jesus and the disciples flee. As predicted, Peter denies knowing him, and Jesus is tried before the priests and then Pilate, abused by the soldiers and crucified as mockers taunt him. Finally he dies, and Joseph of Arimathea takes his body and buries him, but the priests request that the tomb be sealed and guards be placed in watch over it.

OR **Matthew 27:11-54**: This is the shorter version of the above reading, running from Pilate's trial of Jesus to Jesus' death and the Roman officer's confession of Christ as God's Son.

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

It is only the Gospel reading that changes each year for the Liturgy of the Passion, and the essential elements of the story remain the same with the Synoptic Gospels. The invitation for this Sunday is to meditate on the passion – the self-giving – of Christ, and allow its power, its drama and its impact for our lives to confront us again. If the long reading is used, there is little need for a sermon, and the Scriptures can be allowed to speak for themselves. If a message is to be preached, though, it is probably wise to avoid being either too 'clever' – trying to find something too new and surprising here – or too familiar – just repeating old formulae. This is a tough ask, but, perhaps, the key is to create space for the hearers to make their own connections and draw out their own implications. One thing I would certainly avoid, though, is to make

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the focus of the service a simple “Jesus died for me” message. The solidarity of Christ with all who suffer, the refusal of Jesus to adopt the methods of the system, or to bow to the destructive violence of empire, and the willingness of Christ to give his life in order to live an alternative story are all powerful and exciting options for this week.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: When it comes to Jesus’ solidarity and compassion for those who suffer, this year there is much to reflect on. In recent times we have seen floods in Australia and South Africa, earthquakes in New Zealand, Argentina and off the coast of Japan, tsunami’s affecting Japan, Hawaii and the US West Coast, the threat of nuclear disaster in Japan, fires in Australia and civil uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa. The collective human suffering that this represents is heart-breaking. And what makes it worse is when Christian leaders seek to interpret these events as God’s judgement. Passion Sunday, rather offers us an opportunity to stand, as Jesus did, with those who suffer, and, if we must challenge something, to challenge the system which abuses our planet, and distributes both land and wealth unjustly and which results in far greater loss and suffering for the poor than for the wealthy. Perhaps the best response, though, is to call us to silence, and, if we must speak, to speak through actions of compassion and prayers of lament on behalf of those who grieve.

LOCAL APPLICATION: It is easy to get so overwhelmed with global suffering that the pain on our doorstep gets forgotten. This Sunday it would be good to remember that there are people sitting in our churches who are grieving, who have been abused or rejected, who are living with life-threatening diseases and who have lost homes or financial independence. It is deeply comforting to proclaim again that Jesus stands with all of these people in their pain, and that Jesus opposes any system that uses injustice, exploitation, control and coercion to achieve its ends. It can also be a gift to gently call people into service and compassion in the midst of their own grief, because it is often in serving others that we find comfort and healing for ourselves. In this way the global suffering and the personal suffering can be brought together, with the cross as the place where they and Christ meet. Finally, it may also be helpful to spend some time in confession acknowledging the ways we contribute – both globally and locally – to the suffering of others, through our thoughtless consumption, our lack of awareness of companies and industries in which fair trade practices are ignored, our apathy and our self-absorption. All of this can be a bit heavy, but it’s important that our worship does not fall into a shallow “happy” mode all the time. While there are times for celebration, there are times for grief, and this is one of them. Yet, within the darkness, even as in

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the passion of Christ, there is always the glimmer of hope – seen here in the fear of the religious leaders that resurrection will actually happen.

SERMON OUTLINE 1

Mt 21:1-11 The Triumphal Entry

There was a strong and popular Jewish belief that the Mount of Olives would be associated with the coming of Christ...

1. The Approach to Jerusalem 1-3:- We see Jesus coming over the Mount of Olives to *Bethphage* - coming in

a) humility - *you will find a donkey* - beast of burden

b) simplicity - no elaborate ceremony or staged welcome

c) majesty - as King - on his own terms in his own way

d) peace - king on donkey was symbolic of peace!

2. The Address to Jerusalem 4-5:- *spoken through the prophet - Zechariah* - 550 yrs previously & now fulfilled in X - *say to the daughter of Zion, "See, your king comes to you, gentle & riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."*

a) Welcome him - as King - long-awaited/expected Messiah;

b) Worship him - as Lord - sovereign over His people

Note the

i) Significance - of His Coming - *your king comes*

ii) Symbolism - *on a donkey* - sign of peace – in contrast to Roman armies of war & conquest – so familiar in that period of Roman supremacy..

A new era is beginning with the Prince of Peace

3. The Acclaim of Jerusalem 6-11:- joyous occasion

a) Homage - *spread their cloaks on the road while others cut branches from the trees & spread them on the road* – a royal welcome for the king!

b) Hope - *Son of David* - long-awaited Messiah/Christ *who comes in the name of the Lord* - now here in the flesh - in their very midst!

c) Hosannas - cry of praise - **Save now** - cry for deliverance - appropriate for the Saviour of the world - coming to save & cleanse human hearts

We too must welcome & worship Him in a fitting manner!

By Norman

Porteus

SERMON 1

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Today's gospel story, at the heart of the Church's faith, should be at the heart of our faith: that Jesus would live and die for us.

By the Rev. Amy Richter

**Psalm 31:9-16; Isaiah 50:4-9a ; Philipians 2:5-11; Matthew 26:14- 27:66
or Matthew 27:11-54**

Today's gospel story, at the heart of the Church's faith, should be at the heart of our faith: that Jesus would live and die for us.

That Jesus would say to our heavenly Father, "Thy will be done," even though his commitment would lead to his death.

That Jesus would have compassion on the crowds, whether they shouted praise or condemnation, whether they welcomed him as a hero or rejected him as a criminal.

That Jesus was willing to suffer excruciating pain even though he did nothing to deserve it.

That Jesus could have called down legions of angels to defend him, could have taken himself down from the cross, could have condemned his accusers and damned his betrayers; but instead, he hung there, knowing his death would mean the defeat of death, even if he had to go through hell to find out for sure.

That in God's eternal heart, you were present, and if you were the only person in the world, Jesus would have done this for you.

This should mean the world to us. This means life. This means hope and comfort. There is no suffering we can experience that is not known by God's very self. There is no heartache we can have that Jesus cannot touch; no temptation we can face that Jesus cannot strengthen us against; no hard decision we have to make that Jesus cannot prepare us for; no burden to carry that Jesus cannot remove; no wounds we have to bear that Jesus cannot heal; no injustice we can suffer that Jesus cannot conquer; no assaults can assail us that Jesus cannot help us to endure; no loneliness we can feel that Jesus cannot come to meet us in.

The cross means there is no failure we can face that Jesus cannot fix; no sin we can commit that Jesus cannot remove; no mistake, misjudgment, act of

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meanness, ignorant thoughtlessness, petty-mindedness, or selfish seeking after security in this world instead of trusting in the eternal that Jesus cannot take and transform; no hardness of heart that Jesus cannot grind down and sift through and remould and reform into something that can love and receive love.

When we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, one who went to death willingly for us walks beside us. When we know discouragement and sorrow, Jesus knows. When we know pain and grief, when the innocent suffer, when the vulnerable are wounded, Jesus knows.

And knowing wasn't enough. He didn't just want to give us divine company in grief and trouble. Jesus would actually give his own life to transform ours.

Maybe this is why you're here today. Because you love Jesus and are awed by his always faithful love for you, his unconditional outpouring of love for you, his grace and mercy and power for you, undeserved, immeasurable, unstoppable.

Maybe you, too, join the crowd that shouts "Hosanna!" one day and "Crucify him!" the next, that praises one day and forgets the next, that adores one day and ignores the next. Maybe you also join the crowd that needs a savior so badly, that hungers for a reason for hope and courage, that longs to know a purpose in life, but turns away when the Savior suffers in the course of bringing that hope and courage and purpose.

Perhaps you too know that the size of the crowd doesn't matter. That Jesus would have gone to the cross and suffered death if it were only for you. If it were only for any one of us.

If this is not why you are here today, then this is your invitation to get to know Jesus and his love more deeply. This is your invitation to spend time with our Savior here in worship, in reading his story of love for you, in talking with him and listening for his love to you in prayer and quiet, so you may know the freedom of forgiveness, the assurance of eternal life, true peace, and deep joy.

During this next week, we walk in the way of the cross. As we enter into Holy Week, joining with Jesus on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and in the lighting of the new fire, the flame of hope at the Easter Vigil, we all receive his gracious invitation to know love, to have a reason for hope, to be set free to experience joy.

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May we follow in the way of the cross, finding it to be none other than the way of life and peace.

— *The Rev. Amy E. Richter is Missioner for Lifelong Christian Formation for the Diocese of Maryland.*

SERMON 2

Crucify him!

BY THE REV. CANON FRANK S. LOGUE

**Psalm 31:9-16; Isaiah 50:4-9a; Philippians 2:5-11; Matthew 26:14- 27:66
or Matthew 27:11-54**

The crackle of dried palms crunch under the feet of the crowd. The sound is but a faint crackle lost in the din of angry voices. The meaning of the sound is lost on the mob now shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him! CRUCIFY HIM!”

That crackle of dried palm branches covered by the shouts of an angry mob is the sound of a world turned upside down. The King of Creation and Judge of All Humankind put on trial before Rome’s puppet King Herod and their governor in Palestine, Pilate.

We can’t know that any of the people are the same. One crowd could have greeted Jesus as a King when he entered Jerusalem and another crowd could have shouted for Pilate to put him to death. But in centuries of Christian preaching and teaching, the two crowds are seen as one; not because of solid historic data, but because of instinct forged in the fires of life experience.

More than once in history crowds have been known to turn even more quickly and to just such violent effect. The mob wants you as King, and then they want you dead. In the meantime, all you have to do is not live up to expectations. Jesus came to Jerusalem, *yerushalayim* [NOTE TO READER: PRONOUNCED “yeh-roo-shah-LIE-eem”] in Hebrew. Literally it means “foundation of peace,” and Jesus arrived on a donkey as the King of Peace. There were hosannas that day, but the crowd didn’t want peace. They wanted violence. Years of oppression at the hands of Rome in general and Pilate and Herod in particular had taken their toll.

Yes, Rome brought work, water projects, road projects, and Herod’s endless building projects. And with all this came the *pax Romana*, the peace of Rome. But for the Jews gathered in Jerusalem that fateful Passover, the peace was

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peace for Romans, not peace for Jews. The back-breaking tax burden contributed to the nagging feeling that the arrangement between Rome and Jews was nearing a flash point. This deal left them free to practice their faith, but there were signs of strain.

Pilate had given a small show of force by placing Roman standards, or military ensignia, within his palace so that they could be seen within the Jewish Temple. The Jewish leadership saw this as placing idols in sight of their holiest of holies. This was an affront to their faith. Jews revolted. Pilate had them put to death. More Jews rose to take their place until even Pilate had to stop killing. A governor can only put so many people to death and still govern. Pilate relented and an uneasy peace returned.

It was into this uneasy peace that Jesus rode on a donkey as the crowd shouted Hosannas and cried out, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" So much for the peace.

Whatever else we want to say about Jesus, he was put to death as a threat to Roman rule and the Jewish King Herod's control. Jesus' teaching turned the world upside down and this threat to the way things work could not be tolerated by those in power.

The specific accusation in our gospel reading is that Jesus was the, "King of the Jews." Could he be a king in place of Herod in Jerusalem and the Emperor in Rome? Not possible.

In Matthew's account of the Passion, Pilate is particularly reluctant to put Jesus to death. Perhaps this is because of his wife's dream. Or having already put quite a few Jews to death, he learned along the way that it is best not to incite the crowds during a festival. With Jerusalem's population swelled by all who came to the capital for the Passover, this is no time to get an angry mob going.

Pilate offers a choice. Following his custom of letting one prisoner go free, he asks whether that man should be Jesus, who is called the Messiah, or Jesus Barabbas. The choice in the Aramaic of the time is quite stark. "*Barabbas*" is not a name but something like a *nom de guerre*, a revolutiony's nickname. It means "Son of a Father." The dramatic irony is that we are to see the crowd choose Barabbas, the "son of a father," instead of Jesus, the "son of the father," our father in heaven.

When given this choice, the mob shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!" Pilate abdicates to mob rule, hoping that the anger of the mob will spew out

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over Jesus. Pilate literally washes his hands of the matter, hoping the mob will leave him and his palace in peace.

This is where the gospel accounts of Jesus differ from most of human history and literature up until this time. Jesus' story was not the first story of redemptive violence. It was, however, the first time the story played out like this. Usually, it was the people who knew what was best. The one outsider, the one who wanted change, was put to death and order was restored. The crowd was right. The one agitating for change was wrong. Violence against the one person restored order, and peace returned.

Yet the idea of killing Jesus to bring peace is clearly found here in Matthew. The equation is: unanimity plus one. We all agree with one another, except this guy preaching that we should love everyone – sinners and outcasts alike. So the formula was simple: remove the one, and unanimity returns. The status quo is preserved.

In the gospels, we read of an innocent victim. And even though the whole world on that day seemed to be set against him, the one man, Jesus, was still right. It was possible for everyone – every person against him, every follower of him, everyone – to be wrong and for Jesus to be right.

It's still true. So often, Christianity is judged by the ways Christians act. It is hard to separate Christ from Christians. Yet, we may all act wrongly, and the truth of Jesus still remains true.

This is part of the way the world was getting turned upside down in Jesus' life and ministry. You could no longer count on common sense. For sense has never been something we humans held in common. You could no longer count on "what everyone knows." You could not count on what "they" said. If Jesus was and is God made man, then it was possible for the one suffering at the hands of the many to be right.

There would have been voices on the edge of the crowd. People who wanted to speak and remained silent. There would have been voices of reason in the angry mob – voices silenced by the shouting crowd, by fear. Their silence equaled consent. Remaining silent in the face of injustice is a way of standing with the unjust. Many in the mob that Good Friday did just that.

As the sky darkened that noon when Jesus hung on the cross, there would have been those who felt foolish to have ever proclaimed Jesus as a King. Some had waved palm branches and shouted at the tops of their lungs, who would now wish they had remained silent. From the joy of that Sunday

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entrance, to the darkness of the Friday we call “Good,” the crowd went from praise to derision. When Jesus failed to vent their anger at Rome, the violence turned against the son of David.

By three o’clock, the darkness of that day is complete, and Jesus cries with a loud voice, “*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*” – “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” It is time for the crowd to go home. The dry palm branches crackle under their feet as the mob shuffles home, vented of their anger. The promise of hosannas now crushed into dust.

The earth shook, and few heard the words of the centurion as Jesus died, “Truly this man was God’s Son!” The only voice of hope to be heard until Jesus own feet stepped on the dust of those palm branches three days later, proving that love could conquer even the anger of the crowd and the sting of death.

— *The Rev. Canon Frank Logue is the canon for Congregational Ministries for the Diocese of Georgia.*

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

Your King is coming - 1. Your King is a different kind of king. 2. Your King knows precisely who He was and who He is. 3. Your King comes with a compassion for souls and bodies. 4. Your King comes sounding a note of judgment. Matthew 21: 1 - 17

<http://www.preaching.com/sermons/11563705/page-4/>

How can we sing hosannas? - The first of two sermons based on Matthew 21, and 27. Raises the question - How can we sing hosannas in the face of Christ’s suffering on the first Good Friday?

<http://pastoralex.fortunecity.com/lent6a.htm>

Sermons from Seattle - series

[The Cross: The Hidden Face of God](#)

[Download the PowerPoint](#)

I Corinthians 1:18

[Heysanna, Hosanna, Sanna Sanna](#)

Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22

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Passion

Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22

Magnetism of the Cross

John 19:17-19

The Riots of Pilate

Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22

Misunderstanding the Promise

Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22

You Can't Kill the King

Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22

Humility: Christ Humbled Himself

Philippians 2:5-11

Annas and Caiaphas

John 18:19-24

Save Us From Our Crosses

Luke 23:32-38

If I Were God (The Cross)

I Corinthians 1:18-31

http://www.sermonsfromseattle.com/palm_passion.htm

CHILDREN

[Worshiping with Children](#), Palm/Passion Sunday, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2014/02/year-passionpalm-sunday-april-13-2014.html>

"[Sermon of the Week](#)," / "[Mensajes para ninos](#)," Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Coloring Pages, Puzzles.
<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

[Children's Sermons](#), Palm Sunday, Faith Formation Journeys

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<http://faithformationjourneys.blogspot.co.uk/2011/04/palm-sunday-childrens-sermon-2011.html>

[Rock Star Jesus](http://annashosannas.net/Lent-6A.php), Anna Shirey, *Anna's Hosannas*, Children's Lesson for Palm Sunday

<http://annashosannas.net/Lent-6A.php>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS - Liturgy of the Palms

[All Glory Laud And Honour](#)

[Hosanna, Loud Hosanna](#)

[Rejoice, The Lord Is King](#)

[Ride On, Ride On, Majesty](#)

[Prepare The Way](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Hosanna](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Servant King](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[God Of This City](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

HYMN SUGGESTIONS - Liturgy of the Passion

[O Sacred Head Now Wounded](#)

[O Love Divine What Hast Thou Done](#)

[Jesus! The Name High Over All](#)

[Depth Of Mercy](#)

[And Can It Be](#)

This Place: [Chord Chart](#) (*Scroll down for link*); [Preview](#) (*Scroll down for link*)

[God With Us](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Amazing Love](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Once Again](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

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