



### **This is March 28, 2021...It is Palm Sunday**

On behalf of our family of faith at Community United Church of Christ, Medford, WI, welcome to this time of worship! A special welcome to our friends at St Paul's United Church of Christ in Marshfield, WI, and our friends at First Congregational United Church of Christ in Park Falls, WI, who are joining us today!

"No matter who you are or where you are on your life's journey, you are welcome here!"

**Hymn: "Hosanna"** Soloist: Alicia Gardner, from St Paul's UCC in Marshfield, WI  
#266 Worship and Rejoice Hymnal  
Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest!  
Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest!

Lord we lift up Your name with hearts full of praise. Be exalted oh Lord my God!  
Hosanna in the highest! (Glory to the King of Kings!)

Glory, Glory, Glory to the King of Kings! Glory, Glory, Glory to the King of Kings!

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### **Call to Worship:**

Excitement is all around. Today, we tell an ancient story of a parade, palms and possibilities.

Today we say: Blessed is the One who comes in God's name! Hosanna!

**This One is Jesus of Nazareth —teacher, builder, Christ.**

In ancient Jerusalem, people gave Jesus a wonderful welcome.

**Today we celebrate the presence of the living Christ!**

**A Time of Repentance:** Let us pause now in silence and repent our sins of thought, word and deed; what we have done and what we have left undone.

**Prayer of Confession:** Lord Jesus, we confess that we are so much like the people in the crowd through which you rode as you set your face to enter Jerusalem.

We confess that we are as fickle as they were. When there is an opportunity to speak a good word for you, we are often silent. Forgive us, renew us and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and follow in your ways, to the glory of your name. Amen.

**Receive this Assurance of Pardon and Grace** John: 3:16-17

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Friends, believe the good news of the gospel. **In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Amen.**

**Now, Tori N, Peyton R, Paisley R and Parker R. will read the scripture:**

This is a reading from the **Gospel of Mark 11:1-11**, Common English Bible

**Tori:** "Jesus enters Jerusalem"

When Jesus and his followers approached Jerusalem, they came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives. Jesus gave two disciples a task, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, "Go into the village over there. As soon as you enter it, you will find tied up there a colt that no one has ridden. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>3</sup> If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'Its master needs it, and he will send it back right away.'"

**Peyton:** <sup>4</sup> They went and found a colt tied to a gate outside on the street, and they untied it. <sup>5</sup> Some people standing around said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" <sup>6</sup> They told them just what Jesus said, and they left them alone. <sup>7</sup> They brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes upon it, and he sat on it.

**Paisley:** <sup>8</sup> Many people spread out their clothes on the road while others spread branches cut from the fields. <sup>9</sup> Those in front of him and those following were shouting, "*Hosanna! Blessings on the one who comes*

*in the name of the Lord!* <sup>10</sup> Blessings on the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest!"

**Parker:** <sup>11</sup> Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. After he looked around at everything, because it was already late in the evening, he returned to Bethany with the Twelve.

Thank you, Tori, Peyton, Paisley and Parker! **My Message today is entitled,** "More Than Palms"

**Please pray with me:** Good and gracious God, may the words that we speak, the songs that we sing, the praise that we lift, and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing to you, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Today begins Holy Week. It comes to us the last week of what we have called the 40-day "Journey of Lent." Lent is the season of the church year in which we can turn our lives toward God if, by some chance, we've slipped off course. As we look in on Jesus entering the Holy City, Jerusalem, we can imagine that we are in the crowd that day. In these few moments, "...we can throw **our** clothes on the ground and sing our songs of praise and trust our unknown future to the God who works good in every circumstance and in every, holy week of our lives." ~Kate Huey

Picture this: The streets of Jerusalem are jammed with people from all corners of the world. We know that during the festival of Passover, the Holy City at least triples in size. We expect a frenzy of activity with voices pitched a little higher than normal; children running around and families gathering.

This year, it is different. We have high hopes for Jesus. Some of us have witnessed what he has done and some, having just *heard*, are curious to get a look at him. We all believe that it is he who has come to change our lives. Some of us have experienced a miraculous healing. Some of us are the outcasts of society that he, without judgment, has welcomed. We have learned that Jesus treats everyone the same and we want to feel it again. **"Look, here he comes!" we shout.**

Some among us expect a King with a plan who will lead a great army and we sense that the soldiers on duty are getting a little worried.

"There he is! Over There!" "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

Much to our surprise, when Jesus comes into sight, he is riding on a donkey. There is shouting and singing as we throw down our garments and palm branches on the street to cushion his ride, as is our custom.

And then, it dawns on us, the prophecy of Zechariah is being fulfilled today: (Zechariah 9:9)

*<sup>9</sup>Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you, triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

We notice that the religious officials are **not** shouting "Hosanna!" *They seem to be murmuring.*

Are they worried that Jesus would claim to be the heir of King David?

We continue to cheer, "Hail, Son of David!"

Come back now out of that scene as those who know the rest of the story that the people in the crowd could not have known that day. Picture a time when something amazing has unexpectedly happened to you, something you would call "a God-moment. Maybe it was a time when you have witnessed healing or a time when you have received the comfort and care of those around you; or a time when you have felt what it is like to forgive or to be forgiven? Think of a time when you were feeling lost and someone somehow *found you* at just the right time and said, "You can do this." This is what the people in the streets were feeling.

We do not know what lies ahead at the end of the day, either. There are times when we have felt the same excitement...and I would guess that we probably never felt like shouting "Hosanna!" But we may have remembered to thank God for that blessing. We may have been anxious to tell someone about it.

That one last holy week in the life of Jesus made a difference in the lives of the people in Jerusalem that day just as it has in our lives.

We know that the shadow of the cross loomed ahead. We know that the end of the human life of Jesus was just 5 days away. This is not just a story of a triumphal ride through town, followed by false judgment, violence and ending in a cruel death on a cross. Prof. Margaret Farley, of Yale Divinity School has written this: "Through the death of Jesus, all death is overwhelmed; through the humiliation of Jesus, all humiliation can be transformed. This is not because of the death or the humiliation but, because of the love that was not broken. When Jesus entered Jerusalem lamenting its failure to understand the things that were for its peace, he did not thereby give up the struggle against the works of war. There is a time to stand before all the world in a word of truth, bearing witness to a life, a love, a dignity so great that neither death nor anything else will destroy it, or even render it silent."

Thanks be to God that the people shouted, "Hosanna." Thanks be to God that they paved the path for the days that have shaped our faith and the faith of millions for nearly 2000 years.

Thanks be to God that they encouraged Jesus by their cheers and that he felt like we do when someone has told us, "Good job!" "We appreciate what you have done!" We have walked through these streets *in our minds* year after year on Palm Sunday and have spoken and sung the words, "Hosanna in the highest!" knowing quite well that this one day was just the beginning of a much greater story.

Don't let your remembrance of Holy Week end today. Surround yourself with each of the traditions including scripture, symbols and music that lead us to the celebration of the Resurrection.

On Maundy Thursday, revisit the upper room and recall Jesus celebrating the Passover meal, the last supper with his disciples, as he gives that meal a new meaning and challenges us all to love and to serve one another. Share bread and wine or juice and remember that we all are invited to the meal.

Revisit the Garden of Gethsemane on Good Friday with Jesus as he agonizes at what lies ahead. Read the story of his passion and imagine the pounding of the nails and hear his last words from the cross.

On Easter, get up early at sunrise, and follow the breath-taken women to the tomb who discover that the stone has been rolled away and that Jesus has risen just as he said.

*Can you imagine someone telling you not to praise and honor the one that turned your life around?*

*Can you imagine someone telling you not to praise the one that healed you?*

*Can you imagine someone telling you not to praise the one that loved you and has forgiven you; the one that didn't condemn you but renewed and restored you? ~Reggie Blount d365*

I can't. We have come just as we are today, as skeptics and seekers, witnesses and believers. As we go back to whatever it was we were doing, go back into the world *a little more* assured of *whose we are!* Go, shouting praises and maybe a loud "Hosanna!" or two.

As Christians, and not only during this Holy Week, it is our responsibility to spread the ancient but, good news every day. "*Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is he who has come and **is here** with us today.*"

This is something celebrate...and it is more than palms, isn't it? Thanks be to God!

### **Take a deep breath... and let it out**

**Time for Prayer:** Let's spend a few moments in silent prayer.

We will begin by praying the prayer that the national leadership of the United Church of Christ shared this week, grieving the deaths of the people who were shot in Atlanta and in Boulder. Please pray with me: "*Holy God, we come before you, once again broken-hearted and grieving as we hold the hurt and pain of loss of life to violence. We come grieving the lives taken in Atlanta and Boulder this week, families broken apart by the absence of their loved ones. We pray peace and comfort for these families as they attempt to deal with this deep loss and heal. May peace and joy eventually find them as they mourn. We pray for the healing of this nation. We pray your love will be experienced and felt by all, love extending to everyone regardless of race, religion, or gender; love that holds sacred and beautiful all lives. Be with us in this moment of grief and loss.*"

Loving God, as we step into the week that we call “Holy,” lift us up in the presence of our difficulties and let us be not afraid to tell of your wondrous works in our lives. You have been the still voice in our minds that says, “Do it!” “Go there.” “Yes, you can!” All thanks and praise to you!

Guide us as we strive to further discern your will as we grow in faith. Renew us and give us courage to continue the work that Jesus began, speaking your word and proclaiming your message. We lift to you the members and friends of St Paul’s UCC, First Congregational UCC and Community UCC and all faith communities around us. Bless us, lead and guide us in the decisions we make and in the words we speak.

Thank you, gracious God, for constantly restoring us. Let us be your peaceful people, O God, as we try harder to walk side by side in all of our diversity. We lift before you those who have lost hope; those who are lonely; those who are newly diagnosed with the COVID virus; those who *fear* the virus and the vaccine; those who are suspicious of being masked and those who will mask up for as long as is necessary. If we can’t see eye to eye, loving God, then, let us see heart to heart.

We give thanks for those who have heard good news this week, who will begin new jobs and who are beginning to realize long-awaited opportunities have just arrived. We give thanks for the joy in seeing that spring is springing up all around us.

Hear our prayers, O God, for those you have placed upon our hearts and minds this day, especially for Susan S, Maggie M, Tom N, Dan, Albert, Tamara C, Mark D, Phil G, Christine D, Jackie K, Cathy S, Rick, Teresa G, Jamie H, Angie, Shelly B, Mike K, Mike G-P, Matt L, Mary Kay’s husband, Trudy’s mother, Audrey, Nancy, Teresa’s Aunt Mary and Rob M and all those that come to mind now.

We pray in the name of Jesus and in his words: 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 sins and we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

**Solo: “The Holy City”** Soloist: Mark Donner from First Congregational UCC, Park Falls, WI

1. Last night I lay a sleeping, there came a dream so fair:

I stood in old Jerusalem beside the temple there.

I heard the children singing and ever as they sang, me-thought the voice of angels  
from heav'n in answer rang. Me-thought the voice of angels from heav'n in answer rang.

**Chorus: Jerusalem, Jerusalem, lift up your gates and sing,  
Hosanna in the highest! Hosanna to your King!**

2. And then me-thought my dream was chang'd. The streets no longer rang.

Hushed were the glad hosannas the little children sang.

The sun grew dark with mystery, the morn was cold and chill,  
as the shadow of a cross arose upon a lonely hill.

**Chorus: Jerusalem, Jerusalem, lift up your gates and sing,  
Hosanna in the highest! Hosanna to your King!**

3. And once again the scene was changed: new earth there seemed to be..

I saw the Holy City beside the tide-less sea. The light of God was on its streets,  
the gates were open wide and all who would might enter and no one was denied.

4. No need of moon or stars by night, or sun to shine by day

It was the new Jerusalem that would not pass away.

**Chorus: Jerusalem, Jerusalem, sing for the night is o'er.  
Hosanna in the highest, Hosanna for ever more!  
Hosanna in the highest, Hosanna for ever more!**

**This is our time of intention and thanks** Let us turn our thoughts to our responsibility as one body in Christ to give what we can toward the support of our churches' ministries. Remember that no matter the size or the shape, every gift of time, talent and treasure makes a difference! Thank you to all who have made it possible for bills to be paid and for our outreach into the community to continue!

**Let us dedicate our gifts:** Gracious God, as we share what we have received from your hand, we dedicate all that we have dropped off, mailed or given electronically in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen

**Benediction:** Even if you do not know what to say, even if you are afraid to shout, go now, and shout "Hosanna!" to our God, The Mighty One who is passing between us. Join with all creation in welcoming the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of us all.

This time of worship has come to an end, let our service continue. **Peace be with you and be safe!**



**Pop in for our Community UCC, Medford, Sunday Coffee hour, 10-11am! All are welcome!**  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83105711931...> Meeting ID: 831 0571 1931 Passcode: 275883

### **Wednesday Devotional, March 31, The Thirty-first day of Lent (not counting Sundays!)**

It is good that we can be together, even though apart, in this "Time for Pause!"

**Listen now to a passage from Paul's letter to the Philippians 4:6-7, that draws our attention to requests in our prayer:** ~ Common English Bible:



- <sup>6</sup> Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks.
- <sup>7</sup> Then the peace of God that exceeds all understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus.

If I would ask you if there is anything you would like to *pray about* what would you say? When I ask the children that question, they say, "For my pets." "For tomorrow at school." "For help in taking a test." "For my family." "For my teacher." The basics. Children have a wonderful way of thinking, don't they? Now, take a moment and name a person who needs a prayer, (maybe it is you!) ask for help, make your list of thanks-givings and "I'm sorrys." Are you done, yet?

Let us pray together in the words that Jesus taught us: 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 sins and we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

**Hymn: "There's Something About That Name"**  
# 108 Worship & Rejoice/ #115 Chalice Hymnal

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus: there's something about that name! Master, Savior, Jesus, like the fragrance after the rain;  
Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, let all heaven and earth proclaim:  
Kings and kingdoms will all pass away but, there's something about that name!

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**The blessing of God, Creator, Redeemer and Comforter is with us during these days of Holy Week & always!**

**You will find these recorded services at [uccmedford.org](http://uccmedford.org)  
Click on "media." 715-351-0450**

*Pastor Mary Jo*