



"A Community Of Many Faithing Communities Where All Belong!"

Living Waters Contemplative Life Center | Divine Intervention Ministry to the Homeless
Tippecanoe just.good.food Garden | Food Justice Site PCUSA
Arts and Science Literacy Camps for Children

Welcome To Worship

April 2, 2023

9:30 a.m.

Palm Sunday



Palm Sunday
Worship

Welcome to this time of being with God and each other.

"The Wilderness Journey from Palms to Passion" Rev. Trish Eckert

✧Prelude: Zo Trembley

✧Words of Welcome

Today is a special service because this week is unlike any other week in the Christian calendar. Today we celebrate Palm Sunday, Jesus' joyous entry into Jerusalem. But we will also turn to the events that followed, walking through the moments that led up to Jesus' arrest. We'll do this as if journeying day by day, because just like our lives, holy week happened day by day.

In our service, we will incorporate the tradition of midrash. Midrash is an ancient Jewish tradition that weaves together the art of storytelling and the truth of scripture, inviting us to imagine and wonder about the details that exist between the lines. Today you will hear from five voices: a woman who witnessed Jesus flip the tables in the temple, a Pharisee, the woman with the alabaster jar who anointed Jesus' feet in Bethany, Judas, and one of Jesus' disciples in the garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus was arrested. As you hear these stories read aloud, we invite you to lean in. Imagine yourself there. Feel the truth of this narrative—for it was a holy week, and it was a hard week. Let us begin.

✧Opening Ourselves to God's Grace

Pastor Trish: As we prepare our hearts to hear God's word creatively proclaimed, please join me in our call to worship.

One: On Palm Sunday so many years ago, the people saw Jesus and asked,

All: Who is this?

One: In worship, we respond. In worship, we declare:

All: Jesus is a miracle worker and healer.

One: Jesus is a teacher and preacher.

All: Jesus is our light in the darkness.

One: Jesus is our source of love.

All: Jesus is our path in the wilderness.

One: So may we lay down our hearts like they laid down their coats.

All: Let us worship together.

Proclaiming the Word Together

Bible Wisdom Teaching - Sunday | Matthew 21:1-11

Pastor Trish: It was Sunday morning.

1 "When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, 2 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. 3 If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." 4 This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through

the prophet, saying, 5 “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.”

6 The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; 7 they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. 8 A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 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!”

10 When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking,

ALL MIDRASH READERS: "Who is this?"

Pastor Trish: 11 The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”

And this is where the story begins.

OPENING LITANY | "Who is this?"

This litany is voiced by the congregation and the five midrash readers, as we wonder together, “Who is this man with such a parade?”

ALL: Who is this?

M1: I heard he was a carpenter’s son.

M2: I heard he was from Nazareth.

M4: Can anything good come from Nazareth?

ALL: Who is this?

M4: I heard he knew John the Baptist.

M5: I heard he was related to John the Baptist.

M2: I heard he can heal people.

M3: Do you think he can heal me?

M4: Who is he?

M5: I heard he talks to gentiles.

M2: I heard he talks to children!

M3: And women!

M1: And tax collectors!

M4: Seriously, who is this?

M5: I heard he's the Son of David.

M2: I heard he's the Son of Man.

M3: I heard he's the one we've been waiting for.

M1: I heard he was born of a Virgin.

M2: I heard he was born in a stable.

ALL: Who is this?

M2: Why is he riding a donkey?

M3: How does he have so many followers?

M1: Do you think Caesar knows that a man from Nazareth has been welcomed with such a large parade?

ALL: Who is this?

M3: I don't know who he is, but I've heard he's gracious and kind.

M1: I heard he fed five thousand.

M5: I heard he survived the wilderness.

M4: I heard he helped the blind man see.

M3: Do you think he sees me?

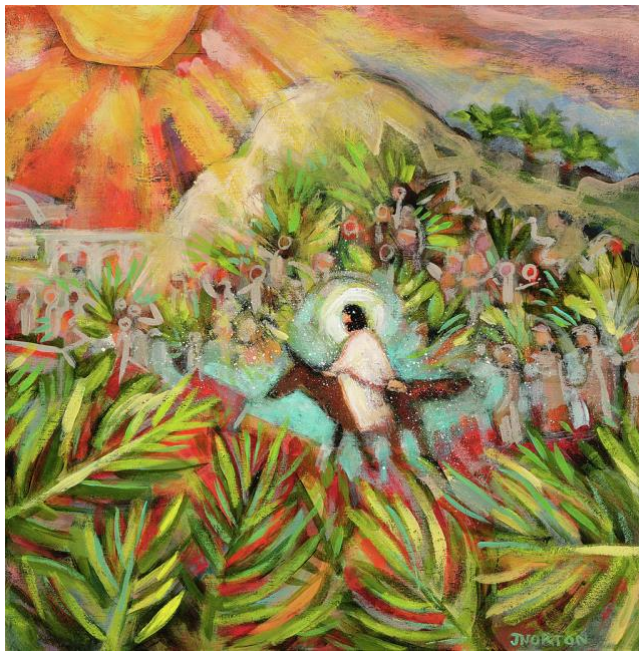
M2: I heard he walked on water! Is that even possible?

M5: I heard he can save us.

M3: I heard he can save all of us.

M2: Who is this?

ALL: Who is this?



~Jan Norton~

PALMS PROCESSIONAL & TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

The Congregation is invited to walk back to gather palms for waving in the air and placing on the floor as we sing our gathering hymn together:

✧ **Gathering Hymn 199 *Filled with Excitement (Mantos y palmas)***

Bible Wisdom Teaching - TABLES TURNED | Matthew 21:12-13

Pastor Trish: 12 Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. 13 He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it a den of robbers.”

DRAMATIC READING - MONDAY | The woman in the temple

I come here every Monday morning.

It has always been like this, at least for as long as I can remember. My parents talk about a time when this room used to be packed with people here to pray and hear the Torah every week. They talk about those days like they were the glory days—if only we could get back to that.

Now? Now the temple is primarily a marketplace.

I come here every week for the farmer’s market—to buy eggs and figs and food for my family. And they have the best bread! I’ve never felt guilty for that because I pray on my own, and we still celebrate passover; so is it really that big a deal?

I used to think not, but that changed the day Jesus showed up.

I don't know that I will ever forget that day. I had just bartered with Samuel down the street to get two fresh fish for my kids. That's when I heard the sound.

It was so loud—a crash, a splintering.

For a brief moment I thought God might be tearing open the walls of the temple and climbing inside.

I turned around, hands full of fish, to see the money changers' tables turned over and the doves flapping wildly in their cages. Coins slowly rolled their way across the holiest of holies and everyone froze.

I've never heard silence so loud.

Jesus paused and looked at the room. Quietly he said, "My house is to be called a house of prayer. Prayer. For all nations."

In the quiet, I felt myself hiding the two fish in my hands behind my back, like Adam and Eve hid behind leaves, wishing the coins in my hands could disappear. And then, as quickly as he arrived, he turned and left.

I can't be sure, but it looked like there might have been a tear running down his cheek, and for just a second, I wondered to myself—maybe, just maybe, that sound really was God tearing open the walls of the temple and climbing inside.

Who is he, you ask?

I'm not sure, but he's not like me. He's faithful. He's honest. There was nothing hiding behind his back.

Have any of you ever felt that kind of shame? Have any of you ever wanted to hide something from God?

Confess with me:

✧ **Prayer of Confession/Sharing our Innermost Lives with God**

ALL: God—for all the things we try to hide from you, forgive us. Amen.

Bible Wisdom Teaching - AUTHORITY QUESTIONED | Matthew 21:23

Pastor Trish: 23 When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?"

DRAMATIC READING - TUESDAY | A Pharisee

Do you know how many laws are in the Torah? Six hundred and thirteen. You know how I know that? Because I spent my entire youth memorizing them—hours upon hours upon hours of repetition.

And after I mastered those, I went on to memorize the entire Torah. That's the first five books of the Bible, by the way.

I spent all those hours sitting at the foot of my teacher so that I could one day teach.

That's what faithfulness, sacrifice, and a life of service looks like—at least that's what I've been taught.

I've talked to every scribe and priest in the land and no one knows who taught this Jesus. No one raised him to teach. No one knows if he even passed his Torah comprehension exam. Where does he get his authority? **AND WHY ARE PEOPLE LISTENING TO HIM?**

That is the thing that blows me away. His teachings are unorthodox.

He's healed on the Sabbath.

He's talked to Samaritans.

He's completely disregarded our societal lines—befriending women and lepers.

Does he even know how many rules he's breaking?

I just don't understand.

This isn't the way it's supposed to be.

I studied for so long, and nothing prepared me for this.

Who is he, you ask?

He's a radical. A heretic. A rebel.

A mystery.

Bible Wisdom Teaching - ANOINTED | Matthew 26:6-13

Pastor Trish: 6 Now while Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, 7 a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table. 8 But when the disciples saw it, they were angry and said, "Why this waste? 9 For this ointment could have been sold for a large sum and the money given to the poor." 10 But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? She has performed a good service for me. 11 For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. 12 By pouring this ointment on my body she has prepared me for burial. 13 Truly I tell you, wherever this good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."

DRAMATIC READING - WEDNESDAY | The woman with the alabaster jar

It was Wednesday.

I heard he was coming to Bethany. People talk about stuff like that.

People also talk when you break open a bottle of perfume to anoint someone in a crowd. I learned that the hard way.

In a few years they may forget my name, but I bet they'll remember what I did. I am the woman who anointed Jesus, and it remains one of the moments in my life that I am most proud of.

Jesus was at Simon's house. He often went there when he was in the city, and I knew that. We all knew that, because we could see them packed in there! It's hard to miss twelve people packed into a room. So before the sun fell, I grabbed my jar of perfume—the only item of wealth I own—and walked to Simon's.

I had begged and saved for years to afford that jar of perfume. It was my back-up plan, my safety net when I could no longer work, so I kept it hidden in the cupboard of my house.

The whole way to Simon's house I clutched that jar like a mother holds a baby—terrified that it might slip from my hands too soon, that I might lose the only gift I had to give, accidentally anointing the dirt at my feet instead of the man who had healed so many.

It wasn't until I walked through the door and saw Jesus sitting there that I was able to release my grip on that jar. I had made it. I had my gift, and this was the moment.

The smell was unbelievable—sweet like milk and honey, but even stronger than fresh baked bread. I knew when I cracked that jar open it would be overpowering, it would send people into the street. But I had to do it!

People criticized me for wasting that perfume, but they don't know the whole story. They don't know what it meant to be seen and called by name. Jesus pulled me out of the wilderness of my own isolation. They have no idea the healing that Jesus offered me, and they probably could never understand what I would give to do it all over again. I mean, how do you put a price tag on life? On a full and abundant life?

I don't need everyone to understand. I just needed him to understand. He gave me the gift of new life, so in return, I gave him the only thing I had.

Who is this man, you ask?

He was grace embodied, and love let loose.

And I'll never be the same.

Bible Wisdom Teaching - BETRAYAL | Matthew 26:14-16

Pastor Trish: 14 Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests 15 and said, "What will you give me if I betray him to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver. 16 And from that moment he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

Could he have really been the Messiah—the son of God? Could he really be the One that God would send to redeem the world? Really?!

There were days I was convinced he was. Like the day he fed five thousand people. I still can't figure out how he did it, but I was there and people ate their fill. Or the night he told Peter to walk to him on the water. I could never begin to tell you how that happened, but I was there—it felt real!

But, there were other days I wasn't so sure. Like the day he sent us out two by two to heal people—did he really expect us to be able to do what he did? Or the days he rebuked the Pharisees. Could the Son of God really be that hard on people, especially the leaders of the law?

I wanted to believe he was the Messiah. I really did. I wanted to give everything I had, but something deep within me wasn't settled. I was beginning to lose sleep over it and the Pharisees began whispering in my ear. What if he wasn't all he said he was? What if everything I saw could be explained? What if I had risked my life, only to find out he was just another great teacher among many? It was that unsettled voice deep within me that told me to do it. That small voice was more powerful than my will, my thoughts, and my faith. It ruled me, and I followed it.

Most people said I betrayed him for the money, but that would be too simple. I handed him over because I couldn't know who he was for certain. There is no black and white, no hundred percent proof when it comes to God. Doubt is an untamed wilderness of the mind, and that shade of gray ate at me.

Who was that man, you ask?

If you would have asked me last week, I would have told you, "I'm not entirely sure."

Ask me on Sunday and my answer will have changed.



✧Words of Invitation and the Breaking of the Bread Communion of the People

Welcome

We gather again after a busy few days in Jerusalem with Jesus. The crowds grew as Jesus taught near the Temple — as did the resistance against him. Jesus weeps over Jerusalem even as they reject who he is. We, too, are challenged by whom we believe Jesus to be. Challenged, because unless we dismiss him as merely a historical figure, what we believe about Jesus requires a response.

As we ponder all that has happened, not yet in the upper room, let us offer our thanksgiving for the God who calls us, loves us, and sustains us.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

God who speaks in many ways, your creation proclaims your glory. Our voices of praise join singing birds, crashing waves, and the whispering of the wind through the trees. From your word made manifest in nature to the prophets you sent when we turned away, we give thanks that you still speak to us today.

Jesus who wept for us, your grace is not bound by the limits of our faithfulness. In love you told us parables that we might know who you are. You performed miracles that displayed your power. All of this that we might open ourselves to you. For your radical love, we give our thanks.

Spirit who lives and moves within us, you continue to make yourself known. You reveal yourself when truth is spoken to power. You lay bare the half-truths and intentional misunderstanding that we use to shield ourselves from the challenges of discipleship. At the same time, you nurture hope within us that we might be Christ's love in the world. How thankful we are for your careful tending of our hearts.

As we gather here in the name of the Triune God, we humbly ask that you would be the Spirit of Grace among us. Surround us with your presence and bring us into communion with our Risen Lord. Make the loaf and cup more than symbols of grace as we are joined as the Body of Christ.

As a sign of our unity in you, we join our voices together to pray, saying:

✧**The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who is 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

Words of Invitation and the Breaking of the Bread

Matthew 26: 17-29

17 On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?” 18 He said, “Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.’” 19 So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal.

20 When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve disciples, 21 and while they were eating he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.” 22 And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another, “Surely not I, Lord?” 23 He answered, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. 24 The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.” 25 Judas, who betrayed him, said, “Surely not I, Rabbi?” He replied, “You have said so.”

26 While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” 27 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you, 28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

Communion of the People

Prayer after Communion

God of hope, we give you thanks for the blessing of our communion with you. May you guide us in faithfulness as we move through Holy Week. From the upper room to the empty tomb, we seek to be where you are. Amen.

Aspects of this Communion Service were contributed by Rev Michelle Henrichs, excerpted from her blog: <https://lifeinthelabyrinth.com/>

Bible Wisdom Teaching - THE GARDEN | Matthew 26:36-47

Pastor Trish: 36 Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” 37 He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee and began to be grieved and agitated. 38 Then he said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.” 39 And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me, yet not what I want but what you want.” 40 Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, “So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? 41 Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” 42 Again he went away for the second time and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” 43 Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. 44 So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third

time, saying the same words. 45 Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Now the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46 Get up, let us be going. Look, my betrayer is at hand.”

47 While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

DRAMATIC READING - THURSDAY NIGHT | A disciple in the garden of Gethsemane

It all happened so fast.

It was late—later than I had realized, and sleep was clinging to me like a fog I couldn’t shake. I heard the crowd arrive in my dreams. At first I thought it was a crowd of people wanting Jesus to heal them. I thought selfishly to myself for just a moment, “How in the world did they find us here?!”

That’s when I started to wake up.

I realized the crowd didn’t sound right—it wasn’t people praising Jesus or begging for mercy. It was too quiet, far too quiet for that; and in the quiet I could hear the clink of swords in sheaths.

I frantically pulled myself from sleep, shaking awake my brothers and trying to stand up quickly.

I saw Judas at the front of the crowd.

“What is he doing there?” I thought.

“Maybe things will be okay after all,” I thought.

But I was wrong.

In a split second my whole world fell apart around me. I went from knowing my way, knowing my purpose, and knowing my plans, to standing in the wilderness alone. It happened as quickly as a summer thunderstorm and as slowly as the change in seasons.

The crowd with clubs and swords were taking Jesus. They were taking him away, and he was not fighting it.

Maybe if I had stayed awake like he had asked then this wouldn’t have happened. Maybe if we had left Jerusalem and gone back to Bethany, this wouldn’t have happened.

What am I supposed to tell my family? The man I have seen heal the sick and walk on water has been arrested, and the angels didn’t stop it.

Who is this man, you ask?

He’s not a criminal. That’s for sure.

It all happened so fast.

Responding to the Word Proclaimed

✧ **Hymn *The Road to Jerusalem*** words and music by Betsy Gonwa

CLOSING LITANY | "Who is he?"

ALL: Who is he?

Pastor Trish: On Sunday he was everything—the center of the parade, the center of our attention. His arrival was holy and unexpected and beautiful.

ALL: Who is he?

M1: On Monday he turned the world upside down. He flipped the tables while he flipped the script. I've never seen anything like it before.

ALL: Who is he?

M2: On Tuesday he was a teacher. But he wasn't like the other teachers. He sat and they sat. He spoke and they listened. What they don't know is he hasn't earned his place.

ALL: Who is he?

M3: On Wednesday he pulled me from the wilderness. He gave me the gift of new life, so I gave him all that I had. People may have stared and talked, but newness does that to people.

ALL: Who is he?

M4: On Wednesday he was nothing more than a man worth thirty pieces of silver.

ALL: Who is he?

Pastor Trish: On Thursday he was the body broken for us, the blood shed for us.

ALL: Who is he?

M5: On Thursday he was betrayed. He was arrested. He was treated like a convict. On Thursday he was alone, and I was asleep.

ALL: Who is he?

Pastor Trish: It's the question everyone is asking.

Friends, this is the question of holy week, and it's the question of our entire lives. In order to answer this question, we have to walk through all of holy week, through the wilderness of betrayal and death, the wilderness of the tomb and surprise endings. This week we invite you to reflect on this wilderness journey throughout holy week, as we continue to walk through the wilderness of faith—the good days, the bad days, the everyday—step by step.

✧ **Benediction**

May we be awake to the joy and the pain of the path we each are walking.
May we be mindful of the path that Jesus walked and turn our attention
to the Christ who walks alongside us.

May we walk with courage.

May we experience grace.

May we accompany one another and strive to make the path smooth for all - whether
they are loved ones, the enemy or the stranger. Amen.

Now that the worship has ended, may the service truly begin.

✧ **Our Response:**

Holy One, now we your servants go in peace. Your Word lives on in us.

✧ **Postlude**

Holy Week Worship Opportunities

- **Maundy Thursday Ecumenical Service**

Thursday, April 6, 2023 at 7 pm – Prince of Peace Lutheran
4419 S Howell Ave, Milwaukee, WI 53207

- **Good Friday Ecumenical Service** “The Seven Last Words of Christ”

Friday, April 7, 2023 at 7 pm – Christ Church United Church of Christ
915 East Oklahoma Ave, Milwaukee, WI 53207

