

**WATCHUNG AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
**GUIDE TO WORSHIP**  
**PALM/PASSION SUNDAY**

**April 5, 2020**

**10:00 AM**

**GODS PEOPLE GATHER**

**PRELUDE**

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING PRESENTATION**

**GREETING (responsive/responder)**

A warm welcome is extended to all. Especially those who are worshipping online with Watchung Avenue Presbyterian Church for the first time or who have returned after an absence. Your presence both enriches us at this time of celebration together.

**OPENING PRAYER (one voice/una voz)**

Loving God, as we walk with Jesus during this holy week, each day drawing closer to his inevitable suffering and death, we are thankful for every moment of sunshine that fell on his path. We thank you for each waving palm frond and every shout of Hosanna. We add our praise and pledge our love forever. Hosanna in the highest! **Amen!**

**CALL TO WORSHIP (responsive/responder)**

**L:** We come together as a community of faith. We have gathered to talk, and listen to, and care for each other.

**R: We acknowledge this is a privileged time.**

**L:** Here we share a new covenant of promise and hope. Our fears melt into awe and wonder before God. Our failures become opportunities for learning.

**R: So let us share and celebrate this life we live.**

**OPENING HYMN**

#403 Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty

**THE PREPARATION**

**CALL TO CONFESSION**

How weary we are from these days of isolation and worry; how broken our dreams and hopes have become in these days. But, as we offer our prayers, God will remember us – our dreams, our hopes, as well as our failings, and He will restore us to new life. Let us join our voices together, as we pray, saying,

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION (together/juntos)**

**Please God, may we have the grace of sincere repentance, and find our true selves gathered up in your healing and freedom. Then having been forgiven, enable us to live as a forgiving people, breaking the vicious circle of this world's blame and counter blame. Let us be a redemptive community, sharing the love with which you have loved us. Through Christ Jesus our Savior. Amen!**

**MOMENT OF SILENT CONFESSION**

**ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

Friends, God does not ask us to wallow in our mistakes or deny ourselves the grace that abounds in human weakness. Let us take Christ at his word and live the life of the forgiven and the forgiving. **Amen!**

## THE HEARING / PROCLAMATION

### **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION (together/juntos)**

**Eternal God, whose word silences the shouts of the mighty: Quiet within us every voice but your own. Speak to us through the suffering and death of Jesus Christ that by the power of your Holy Spirit we may receive grace to show Christ's love in lives given to your service. Amen.**

### **HEBREW SCRIPTURE LESSON**

**Psalm 31:1-9;21-24**

### **BLESSING OF THE PALMS**

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 these 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.

### **NEW TESTAMENT GOSPEL LESSON**

**Matthew 21:1-11**

### **HOMILY "Your King is Coming to You Humble"**

### **MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION**

## THE RESPONDING

### **AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (together/juntos)**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord. who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE / PASTORAL PRAYER**

#### **THE LORD'S PRAYER (together/juntos)**

**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, as we forgive those who sinned 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.**

### **CLOSING HYMN**

*#96 Calvary (The Presbyterian Hymnal)*

### **BENEDICTION**

Go now and follow Christ in obedience. Have the same mind as was in Christ Jesus; Keep your ears open to God's teaching; Be humble, even in the face of hostility and do not turn back. And may the Holy Spirit keep you in God's steadfast love and fill your mouths with praise to the glory of God. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord, in the name of Christ. **Amen.**

### **POSTLUDE**

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- ❖ **IN PERSON WORSHIP HAS BEEN SUSPENDED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.**
- ❖ **NOTICE:** Sunday worship will be streamed on line and for those without that technology, will be given a conference call phone number. For details and to sign in, go to our website home page, [www.wapc.net](http://www.wapc.net).
- ❖ **BLESSINGS!!** *In the form of a \$1000.00 grant given to the churches of the Elizabeth Presbytery* as financial assistance during this time of crisis. We are grateful to the Elizabeth Presbytery's Administration and Vision Teams, Jeremy Campbell, Stated Clerk, Leslie Dobbs-Allsopp, Interim Leader, Ron Thompson, Moderator and Jan Margolis, Vice Moderator.
- ❖ **YEAR END CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS** : were mailed out; if you are still in need of a copy, please contact the office, 908-755-2781, or email, [office@wapc.net](mailto:office@wapc.net).
- ❖ **EARTH DAY!** is Wednesday, April 22nd. Remember to acknowledge and take care of what God has given us.
- ❖ **FELLOWSHIP BREAKFAST** at Perkins on Route 22 is cancelled until further notice.
- ❖ **POSTPONED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE: OPERATION BACKPACK SPRING DINNER BENEFIT CONCERT** on Saturday, April 25, 2020. **Please contact the church office for more information.** 908-755-278.
- ❖ **GOOD FRIDAY EVENING WORSHIP SERVICE** will be streamed online at 6:30 pm. Visit our church website to join in.
- ❖ **OPERATION BACK PACK: donations are now being accepted.**
  - Beef stew (small can) or Vienna sausages (4.6 oz can)
  - Chef Boyardee Pastas (cans or microwave packs)
  - Tuna (Ready to eat pouches)
  - Milk (8 oz. shelf stable boxes)
  - Juice boxes (8 oz. boxes)
  - Microwavable Macaroni & Cheese (either cups or packets)
  - Cold Cereal (small boxes 1.2 oz)
  - Pudding Cups or Fruit Cups
  - Small packs pretzels, cookies, fruit snacks, etc.**If interested in helping, please contact Gwyn Gronlund.**
- ❖ **AMAZON SMILE!!** [www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com). Remember, when making purchases on line with Amazon, use this website address & **choose WAPC as your charity.** Amazon will donate .5% of your eligible purchase price to the church. Every little bit helps!
- ❖ **USHER'S SCHEDULE:** will resume when we return to the sanctuary.
- ❖ **SEEKERS THURSDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY:** will resume when the COVID-19 health restrictions are lifted.
- ❖ **FISH-** Donations collected & taken to Food Bank every Sunday, helping North Plainfield residents in need.
- ❖ **OFFICE HOURS:** There will be no regular office hours. Our office administrator is working from home and only coming into the office when necessary. Messages left on the voicemail will be answered as soon as possible. *Thank you!*

## **SCRIPTURE READINGS**

**Lay Reader:** Psalm 31:9-16 contains the psalmist's anguish. The writer is suffering greatly and is the scorn of his neighbors. He fears the plotting of enemies against him in his weakness. But the psalmist trusts in God to deliver him from his enemies, and that God will save him in the end.

### **Psalm 31:1-9;21-24 NRSV**

<sup>1</sup>In you, O LORD, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me.

<sup>2</sup>Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily. Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me.

<sup>3</sup>You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me,

<sup>4</sup>take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge.

<sup>5</sup>Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.

<sup>6</sup>You hate those who pay regard to worthless idols, but I trust in the LORD.

<sup>7</sup>I will exult and rejoice in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction; you have taken heed of my adversities,

<sup>8</sup>and have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy; you have set my feet in a broad place.

<sup>9</sup>Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eye wastes away from grief, my soul and body also.

<sup>21</sup>Blessed be the LORD, for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me when I was beset as a city under siege.

<sup>22</sup>I had said in my alarm, "I am driven far from your sight." But you heard my supplications when I cried out to you for help.

<sup>23</sup>Love the LORD, all you his saints. The LORD preserves the faithful, but abundantly repays the one who acts haughtily.

<sup>24</sup>Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD. The Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks Be to God**

Matthew 21:1-11 is Matthew's account of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Matthew is the only gospel writer who has Jesus riding on both a donkey and its colt—because Matthew shows that Jesus is not like the warrior kings of the past, but humble, humble enough to lower himself to ride a donkey instead of a horse into the great city.

### **Matthew 21:1-11 NRSV**

<sup>2</sup>When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup>saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. <sup>3</sup>If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately."

<sup>4</sup>This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, <sup>5</sup>"Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

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

<sup>9</sup>The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" <sup>10</sup>When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" <sup>11</sup>The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

The Gospel of the Lord.

**People: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

## **HOMILY: Your King is Coming to You Humble – Matthew 21:1-11**

Let us pray: Gracious God, bless now the words of my lips and the meditations of our hearts. Breathe your Spirit into us and grant that we may hear and in hearing be led in the way you want us to go. Amen.

Today, Christians throughout the world celebrate "Palm Sunday" in remembrance of that day 2000 years ago, when Jesus made what is called His "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem.

Matthew is the only Gospel writer who has Jesus riding on both a donkey and its colt, because Matthew shows that Jesus is not like the warrior kings of the past, but humble, humble enough to lower Himself to ride a colt and a donkey instead of a horse into the great city.

Speaking of a colt and a donkey, I read this joke. It was Palm Sunday but because of a sore throat, 5-year-old Annie stayed home from church with her mother. When the rest of the family returned home, they were carrying palm fronds. Annie asked them what they were for.

"People held them over Jesus' head as he rode by on a colt," her father explained. "Wouldn't you know it," Annie fussed, "the one Sunday I'm sick, Jesus shows up offering pony rides! Gee Whiz"

Well, let me tell you, this was not just any pony ride, and it was no joke. The people were so enthusiastic in welcoming Him that crowds lined the streets, throwing flowers, and spreading their cloaks on the road as a carpet for Him.

And following the traditional method of welcoming kings, they cut palm branches and waved them in the air before Him. In the face of such a wild and tumultuous event, the Pharisees who had been plotting against Jesus cried out in despair, "Look how the whole world has gone after Him!" (John 12:19)

Jesus was planning on going to Jerusalem for some time, and He knew that when He arrived there, He would suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priest, and scribes who will finally condemn Him to death.

He would then be turned over to the Romans who will afflict Him, humiliate Him, and then crucify Him. But Jesus also knew that on the third day He would be raised from the dead.

Can you imagine triumphantly being praised and admired by welcoming crowds knowing that these same people would condemn him to death just a few short days later. Yet He mounted that young colt and donkey, allowed them to bathe Him in adulation because it just felt so good at the time.

I have often wondered why people annually go to Time Square to celebrate New Year's Eve. I often wondered what it like to be a part of such a celebration. But, on the other hand, I never wanted to be caught up in a cheering crowd.

But I am told by those who have attended that it is an experience unlike any other, to be surrounded by such positive energy and blissful joy. It is a collective cry and unifying moment for many, even Jesus.

But, don't for a minute think Jesus was disillusioned by this cheering crowd. He was totally in charge of this situation. He was all too aware of the outcome. Of His own demise. He said, *"No man takes my life from me.... I lay it down of my own accord."* (John 10:18)

He was not fooled by some fantasy that He had the power to change the attitude of His enemies in Jerusalem. He had no illusion at all. However, his disciples were still in a fantasy. With the crowd all around them they were on cloud nine. Euphoria.

They really thought Jesus would now display his physical might and come into His own, in the worldly way they expected. A crown and a kingdom. They saw success and glory within their grasp.

They didn't want a humble servant. They wanted a victory against their Roman enemies. They wanted a warrior. Fighting was the last thing on Jesus' mind. Jesus knew things would soon end in what would seem like disastrous, bloody defeat. It must have been hard for him to continuously tell the people to love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy.

I can imagine how unbearably lonely Jesus must have felt in the middle of the crowd. Anxiety and fear about His certain fate must have tormented him. He knew there would be no special intervention by the God with fragrant flowers. No supernatural action to prevent the agony and death that awaited Him.

Yet there in that Holy City was where He had to be. This was His mission. He had to remain true. For God's sake. There was no turning back. He was determined to see it through to the end, trust it all into the hands of His Father in heaven.

Sheer love and courage drove Him on into the city of Jerusalem, which was named as the place of peace but would provide scant peace for His body or soul.

In contrast to expectations, and other processions of Roman guards and governors, Jesus enters on the humblest of animals, a donkey and a colt. It is a dramatic statement, meant to send a message about what kind of king He would be.

It is meant to make us think, even among our cheers, that we should probably begin to expect something different than a mighty warrior. The brightness of the parade is contrasted to the shadows that begin to appear, ominous foreshadowing for where Jesus is heading.

This tension emerges again, much more if we pay attention to the irony and threat Jesus' entrance as "king" really presents. Rather than a mighty warrior king, Jesus is the kind of king who brings about peace. This is the fulfillment of the scriptures. And I think the crowd understood that a little bit, especially those who had been following Him.

Jesus, after all, has presented Himself as nothing other than a teacher and healer, a "miracle-making philosopher/rabbi whose only firepower is His compelling presence and word." And that was enough to draw a crowd.

The crowd of Palm Sunday represents the height of the excitement over who Jesus was on earth, and hints at the possibility of what his kingdom might bring. Those who gathered along the sides of the road that day, holding palms longed for a Savior.

We need these same palms as a reminder – and a challenge. They remind us that we are called to be evangelists of the Gospel...heralds of Christ – to celebrate him the way they did that day in Jerusalem.

These palms challenge us to keep crying “Hosanna,” to keep proclaiming the Good News – even when the world tempts us to do otherwise, even when it seems like it would be easier to go with the crowd and simply choose Barabbas.

They challenge us to not turn our back and walk away. They challenge us to not step over Jesus or ignore Him. And they challenge us not only to remember what we have done to Him, but what He has done for us. That is what this week is about.

So, before we look ahead to next Sunday, and the big plans and the big meal, look back, and look within....and look to these palms. Look at what we are called to do...and who we are called to be.

There was so much in the world from which they needed redemption and peace. This was more than just good fun on a Sunday afternoon; it was an urgent plea for their very lives. *This* is what Palm Sunday is all about.

A people’s deep longing for something more. It is a story rich with drama and full of spirit, the perfect text to usher us into this Holy Week. Of course, we know where this story leads – by the end of the week our King will wear a crown of thorns.

And yet, with this knowledge we still dare to praise Him and lift Him up above all others. We share in the hope of the people gathered that day long ago, because we are those people, too. Because your king, Jesus Christ, is coming to you humbled. What a wonderful gift. A king that is not looking to be served but to serve.

Holy Week begins as it ends, in triumph, to remind us that suffering is a journey with a goal, not a winding road that leads nowhere. The end of the journey is resurrection, a new kind of existence. The way to that new life is through the cross and tomb. It’s the road Jesus traveled. And he accompanies us along the way today - and every day of our lives.

We may not all be queens or kings, but we can be humble royalty by calling our neighbors while we are confined at home. Asking if they are alright and if they need anything. And when we address others, act as though we are passing the peace in church, with love in our hearts and a chuckle in our voice. God bless you one and all and stay safe. Amen.

Let us pray: God of Grace and God of Glory, we are silent and humble before the cross. Help us this day to drop to our knees and listen in silent, reverent awe, knowing that Jesus suffered and died in anguish so that a bridge of trust and truth might be built that allow us to know that you, our Father, have forgiven us and that you love us and are watching over us, even when we suffer. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## **PASTORAL PRAYER FOR PALM SUNDAY MATT. 21:1-11**

Lord Jesus Christ, on the first Palm Sunday you entered the rebellious city where you were to die. Enter our hearts, we pray, and subdue them to yourself.

As the people spread their coats and palm branches on the ground to welcome Jesus into Jerusalem, so we welcome Him into our lives this morning. King of Glory, King of Peace, Servant King, reign in our hearts and lives this day and all days, that we might praise your holy name. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!

Holy God, hear the petitions of your servants that we may find favor in your sight as we pray.

Eternal Father - grant unto us a humility like Christ Jesus - and grant that we may ever obey and serve Him by showing love for one another as He has shown love to us. Put in our minds and our hearts His eternal example and guide us in the way of peace. Lord hear our prayer....

Help us to have a heart of compassion, a tongue that utters words of forgiveness, and hands that perform works of healing. Lord hear our prayer....

Grant us, O Lord, courage in our obedience to you and strength in our service. Make us ever mindful of the sin that leads to death and of the righteousness that leads to life. And help us to trust, O God, not in ourselves, but rather in you. Lord hear our prayer.

Illumine the minds of the leaders of the world with the wisdom that does not heap up prideful words or speak in arrogance. Help us to remember that the future is in your hands and hidden from human view, so that we might place our faith less in our clouded understanding than in your divine guidance. Lord hear our prayer.

In this time of wars and rumors of war, earthquake and famine, pandemic viruses and of nation rising against nation, we pray for the welfare of the world and for the faith to see that these troubles are but momentary with your coming kingdom of peace. Lord hear our prayer.

Put your laws in the hearts of this community and write them on our minds, that we may approach one another with true hearts in full assurance of faith. Lord hear our prayer.

Raise the poor from the dust and lift the needy from the ash heap: Hear our prayers for those who call to you, especially \_\_\_\_\_.  
With a glad heart we give thanks for \_\_\_\_\_.

We commend to you those who have departed before us, especially \_\_\_\_\_. Help us to remember that in your love, all of us, those here and those gone before us, rest in hope.

Loving God, you have inscribed your holy will upon our hearts and minds: Grant us grace to hold fast to the confession of our hope, without wavering, in the assurance of your faithfulness, through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

All these things we ask, most gracious God, in the name of us crucified redeemer - the one who taught us to pray to you saying, OUR FATHER .....

## PRAYER LIST

### **Healing, comforting, and /or supportive prayers for;**

- *For the family and friends of Barbara Hyney, who passed away from complications due to the COVID-19 virus. Watch for details regarding a memorial service.*
- *Tim, Yadira, & Bryan Young, son, daughter in-law, grandson, of Fran & Wayne Young, who are waiting for COVID-19 test results.*
- *Jeff Bunnell, who has completed his radiation treatment and will have a follow up exam in a month.*
- *Pastor Madelynne Lindsey, dealing with some health concerns.*
- *Estelle Kennedy, who has returned to rehab in Bridgewater.*
- *Betsi Kennedy, who is home recovering from surgery.*
- *Marilyn Cortright, recovering at home and continued prayers for her husband, Tim Cortright.*
- *Amanda Lake for health concerns.*
- *Jim Roselli's sister, Joanne, currently in a Kansas City hospital.*
- *Cayla Ulner, Pastor Lindsey's niece, diagnosed with depression.*
- *Susan Sendelsky & her sister, Kerry, members of Pastor Lindsey's former church family, Oak Tree Presbyterian, both fighting cancer.*
- *Jane Windbush, Pastor's sister & Stephanie Weaver, Pastor's niece, who both suffer from Rheumatoid Arthritis.*
- *Jackie Slattery and Sean Slattery, daughter and grandson of Estelle Kennedy during a difficult time.*
- *Gail Schmeisser, continuing to be challenged with mobility issues.*

### **Continued prayers for those people at home or in continued care:**

*Grace Landsperger, and Margaret Herman-Angely, at home, Bob Monteith, at Green Knoll Center in Bridgewater, Beverly Krausse, at Berkeley Heights Nursing & Rehab, Berkeley Heights, and Gail McKenna, at 2225 Kirkland Village Circle, Bethlehem, PA 18017.*

### **Prayers of support and thanksgiving for:**

- *Jim Roselli*