

## **PALM SUNDAY 2018**

Welcome & Announcements

**Introit** – King of Kings

**Rebecca intro:** For Jesus, this week marks the beginning of the end. He knows what is coming. The disciple Matthew tells us that just days before entering Jerusalem, “Jesus took the twelve disciples aside privately and told them what was going to happen to him. ‘Listen,’ he said, ‘we’re going up to Jerusalem, where the Son of Man will be betrayed to the leading priests and the teachers of religious law. They will sentence him to die. Then they will hand him over to the Romans to be mocked, flogged with a whip, and crucified. But on the third day he will be raised from the dead.’” This is the story of Jesus’ last week on earth, a story often referred to as the Passion of Christ. The word, “passion” does not refer to emotions, but rather “passion” comes from a Latin word which means suffering. And today, we will go from the celebration of the crowds on Sunday, to the condemnation by the crowds on Friday, to the suffering and death of Jesus Christ our Lord. (*Extinguish the final Lenten candle*)

**Collin:** Our journey begins on what we now call Palm Sunday. At that time, however, it was Passover, one of the largest Jewish festivals of the year, and thousands of Jews from all over the country came to celebrate, including Jesus and his disciples who had walked the ninety miles from Galilee. Passover was a time of joy – retelling the story of how God brought the Israelites out of slavery, and anticipating the time when God would send the promised Messiah to save them. Many in Jerusalem believed that Jesus was that Messiah, and that he would establish his kingdom. But they were expecting him to save them, not from their sins, but from the oppression of the Roman government. He would surely be the one to lead them into battle and bring them to victory. And so there is excitement in the air as people anticipate Jesus’ arrival. A short distance away, Jesus and his disciples stand atop the Mount of Olives overlooking the city. He knows that by the end of the week, he will die. But he also knows the crowd is waiting for his arrival, and he could hear the crowds already singing.

**Hymn:** Hosanna, Loud Hosanna 278 *Piano plays one time while children process in with palms and choir follows. Congregation then stands to sing all three verses, as children process with palms.*

**Rebecca:** As Jesus came to the towns of Bethphage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives, he sent two disciples ahead. “Go into that village over there,” he told them. “As you enter it, you will see a young donkey tied there that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks, ‘Why are you untying that colt?’ just say, ‘The Lord needs it.’” So they went and found the colt, just as Jesus had said. So they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their garments over it for him to sit on. As he rode along, the crowds spread out their cloaks on the road ahead of him, and began waving palm branches – a sign of victory. It appeared as though Jesus was indeed the long awaited Messiah – the king who would deliver them! People began to shout and sing as they walked along, “Hosanna! Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!” This would fulfill the words of the Old Testament prophet Zechariah, “Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. Triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey.”

**Choir:** Song of Zechariah

**Collin:** The thrill of Jesus’ triumphal entrance didn’t last long. Over the next few days, tension began to build, as Jesus challenged the Jewish authorities. He overturned the tables of the unscrupulous merchants selling inside the temple. He exposed the hypocrisy of the religious leaders, condemning their practices, thus threatening their authority and way of life. So the chief priests met together and planned to put Jesus to death. They would send their temple guards to capture and arrest Jesus, but were unsure as to exactly how and when they could do this. And they wondered who might help them in this plot?

**Rebecca:** The Festival of Unleavened Bread, which is also called Passover, was approaching. The leading priests and teachers of religious law were plotting how to kill Jesus. Then Satan entered into Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve disciples, and he went to the leading priests and captains of the Temple guard to discuss the best way to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted, and they promised to give him thirty pieces of silver. So he agreed and began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus so that they could arrest him when the crowds weren’t around.

**Collin:** On that Thursday, Passover Eve, Jesus planned to share the Seder meal with his disciples. This is an annual ritual celebrated by Jews everywhere in which they tell the story of their freedom from slavery in Egypt. In the Old Testament Book of Exodus we read that God finally had enough of trying to convince Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. And God's final ultimatum was that the firstborn of all the households in Egypt and the firstborn of the livestock would die. However, as God's Spirit swept through Egypt with the plague of death, there was a way that the Israelites could be saved. By sacrificing a lamb and smearing its blood on the doorposts outside their home. When the Spirit saw the blood on the doorpost, it would "pass over" that place. God had made a covenant with his people that they would be saved by the blood of the lamb.

**Rebecca:** With the institution of the Last Supper, Jesus now becomes the sacrificial lamb, whose blood saves us...from sin and death. This would be a covenant for all of humanity. As they shared their meal, Jesus took bread, broke it, as his body was to be broken and said, "Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of what I have done." He then took the cup, gave thanks to God, gave it to his disciples and said, "This is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of your sins. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of what I have done." We celebrate Holy Communion as a meal commemorating our freedom, our freedom from sin, and freedom to live in grace and forgiveness.

**Hymn:** Lamb of God TFWS 2113

### **Holy Communion**

**Collin:** After the meal, around 11:00 pm, Jesus led his disciples across the Kidron valley up to the Mount of Olives, where Jesus often went to pray. On the way, Jesus warned his disciples that later that night something would happen and they would all desert him. Peter, convinced of his own allegiance and faith, reprimanded Jesus, "Even if everyone else deserts you, I never will!" Jesus gets even more specific: "Before the cock crows twice, you will deny three times that you even know me." But Peter was insistent, "No, I will never desert you." Once at the Mount of Olives, they went to a grove of olive trees, called the Garden of Gethsemane, Gethsemane meaning "olive press." Jesus took his three closet friends, Peter, James and John and told them he was deeply troubled and grieved, and could they just

stay awake and pray for him. But tragically, they could not. They fell asleep not just once, not twice, but three times. So Jesus was left alone in his anguish. He prayed to God that he might be let go of the awful burden about to be placed upon him – paying the penalty for the evils and injustices and sins of humankind, and the pain and suffering of the cross facing him. In the garden, where the heavy weight of stone slabs crushed the oil out of olives, so the weight of what was about to happen began to crush Jesus. Luke tells us he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground. Yet through it all, Jesus surrendered to the will of God. “Not my will, but yours, be done.”

**Rebecca:** Suddenly a large crowd of temple guards, yielding clubs and swords came to arrest Jesus. Just as it had been planned, Judas went over to Jesus saying, “Rabbi!” and kissed him. Immediately the soldiers grabbed Jesus and as they did so, Peter, in anger and defense, took his sword and cut off the right ear of Malchus, the slave of Caiaphas, the high priest. Jesus stopped Peter and said, “No more of this!” And then he reached out and touched and healed Malchus’ ear. “Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?” The soldiers dragged Jesus to the home of the high priest, Caiaphas, where, in the dark of the night the religious leaders had gathered secretly to determine Jesus’ fate. As he was bound and led away, all his disciples...his closest friends, deserted him and fled away.