

“I WANT JESUS TO WALK WITH ME”
CUCC, Palm Sunday Worship, Zoom – Sunday, April 5, 2020
Matthew 21:1-11

Palm Sunday. The day Jesus rode into town on a donkey, crowds shouting Hosanna in the Highest! Welcoming him as a king! Defying the rulers of the day. The oppressive regime called Rome.

Entering into the city and the week that he knew would lead to life-threatening events. Coming, even so, knowing how stirred up it all ways, and what a radical act of defiance his entry signified. An occupation. A challenge to the powers that be.

And those who lined the streets in that stirred-up city knew, as well, that they were proclaiming him king, messiah, the one come to save us. And this would not go over well when Rome heard of it!

Palm Sunday is a little different today, as we celebrate, welcome our Savior into our stirred-up town and lives, a little differently than usual!

We might need to go outside after worship and grab a branch and wave it and shout our praises in our own place and space. But, Jesus and that entry into our lives and this holiest of weeks has *not* been postponed!

Rev. Jill Duffield reminds us that it wasn't that different that day from our situation now. Close your eyes and listen to her describe the scene—then and now:

On that day so long ago when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on borrowed transportation, procured by fumbling, denying, betraying followers, some of the crowds called out in joyous belief, others questioned what all the fuss was about, and none of them really knew what was to come just a few days later. The whole scene was a mixed bag of human emotions, opinions, understanding and perspectives. Even those who named Jesus a prophet from Nazareth didn't get it completely right. Even the disciples, obedient and dutiful in following Jesus' directions, couldn't be fully prepared for the suffering soon to come. In all of their complicated humanity, they did the best they could in that moment and so, too, do we. Jesus makes his way to Jerusalem and the cross knowing all too well our shortcomings and failures. Jesus makes his way to Jerusalem and the cross because of our shortcomings and failures. Jesus knows, even if we do not, our need of him.

As we grieve what is lost this year—the waving palms, the soaring swell of the organ, the joy of singing with one another in the sanctuary, the touch of handshakes and hugs—we can be sure Jesus meets us where we are, no matter how we are. Jesus will not stop on the outskirts of Jerusalem or on the fringes of our lives. He enters fully into the city knowing what's to come. He enters fully into our lives, knowing our doubts, failings, denials, betrayals, misunderstandings and disappointments. He comes humbly toward us, accepting whatever we offer, a palm branch or tattered coat, exuberant praise or mumbled hope, knowing that soon he will go to the cross for our sake.

All this upheaval, cities stirred up with anxiety and illness, countries heaving with disasters natural and unnatural, human beings reeling from forces well outside of their control, and still Jesus will not be **thwarted**. He enters into the fray, vulnerable, humble, so close he can see our faces, hear our petitions, feel our swirling emotions.

Nothing can stop Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Nothing can stop the coming of the Son of God. Nothing can prevent Jesus from being present in the midst of all that shakes us and stirs us and

causes us to tremble. Soon the earth will shake and the rocks will split and the temple curtain will be torn in two. The crowds will disappear. Even Jesus' closest friends will abandon him. All will seem lost and dead and beyond redemption, but only for a while, for three days when time will seem to stand still. Then God will upend all our expectations yet again, and those tasked with keeping Jesus in the grave will be the ones shaken and rendered useless, because nothing can stop Easter, either.

JESUS WALKS WITH US AND WE WALK WITH JESUS

Jesus walks with us and we walk with Jesus. Into Jerusalem, into the tumult, into the unknown and known challenges ahead. Toward the Last Supper, toward the Garden, and the Tomb and the Garden on the other side.

Jesus' journey is not canceled. It's not even postponed. For it is not happening in Chronos time—our linear, calendar, limited sense of time. It is happening in Kairos Time—Divine Time—God's time that is eternal, everlasting and ever-happening.

Palm Sunday, Holy Week, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday—on toward Easter Morning. It's all happening! Right here and now—in our midst. In the midst of community. Even though not together physically, we are “in time together.”

Walking the journey with Jesus this week and walking with Jesus in response.

Not cancellation there! Nothing is truly postponed. There is no Never Never Land (or time) with God!

HOLY WEEK, HERE WE COME!

This week will be a holy week unlike anything we've ever experienced

We may well be entering the darkest week of this Covid season.

And as it was the darkest week of Jesus earthly life, we walk in to that journey with Jesus.

The Passion of Christ, the events of Holy Week, the drama that is at the root of our faith—something we have read about and dabbled in all these years,

Is about to come to life in ways we have never known before. We are on the Paschal journey with Christ.

Like Jesus we can't take a detour this year during Holy Week. We can't decide to let it pass on by and just look forward to the lilies and the cross the flowering and the joys and the breakfast of Easter!

We can't decide to detour around the last supper the cross the tomb.

We can't leave the city after the Palm Parade and retreat out to the countryside to our friends in Bethany like Jesus did and just stay there.

You've got to wonder if he wasn't awfully tempted to sleep in on Monday morning; to stay, linger over coffee with his good friends in Bethany, and change his plans go home by another way and not face Jerusalem and what was waiting for him there.

Jesus didn't take a detour in spite of the signs and we cannot either. There is no easy way out for holy week nor has there ever truly been.

And this is Good News!

For, we have an opportunity that we have never had before to engage Holy Week and the Passion of Christ like we never have in our lives.

For Holy Week and Easter are not canceled or even postponed this year—this season of COVID-19.

Holy Week happens and Easter will happen. Resurrection happens over and over again!

The cycle of fear, temptation, facing the cross, death, the tomb and rising to new life, happen for us and for Jesus Christ again and again.

Holy week is happening. Let us walk the journey with Jesus together in community—not one soul left alone.

Italian village residents find Lambrusco wine coming out of their taps

The wine ended up being piped into homes in the Castelvetro area of Modena from the nearby Settecane winery after a “technical fault” in one of the winery's silos meant wine was leaking into its water pipes. As the wine reportedly had a higher pressure than the water in the pipes, it began to run through the system and into nearby homes.

The local water board quickly sent technicians to put things back to normal – but not before residents “bottled as much of the precious liquid as they could,” wrote the Gazzetta di Modena, “to enjoy later at a lunch or dinner along with other typical Modenese specialties.”

The local council issued an apology for the incident on Facebook, and while some village residents voiced concern about the safety of their water supply, other complaints were directed at the council and local water company for fixing the problem too quickly.

COMMUNION – WINE POURING OUT OUR TAPS!!

Into our homes. Into our very lives! Wine coming into our water taps! Imagine that today!

Take a sip of coffee, tea, water, wine (it's a little early for that, but....) or juice! Drink in Christ's presence here and now, in this virtual time and space. Savor the taste, the refreshing moisture that quenches our physical and spiritual thirst. Any cup can be a communion cup. Any table the Lord's table.

Do this often, in remembrance of Jesus Christ. Do it all week long – whenever you take this cup and drink –remember him. Whenever you gather, break bread and fellowship together, you bring Christ's presence to your hearts and minds.

BENEDICTION

Let us commune, together. Through this Holy Week.

In space, and outer space, virtual space and inner space!

God is with us. Christ goes before us. The Comforting Holy Spirit wraps around us in prayer and community.

Stay in peace, Amen!