

Coronavirus Lockdown

Matthew 21:1-11

“Hosanna, Hosanna!”

On this 3rd Sunday of stay-at-home worship during the global coronavirus outbreak, how are you coping? Being in lockdown is far from easy. Being on one's own or sharing your home with your family has its own unique challenges. So many people are trying to stay upbeat and positive. And yet we are weary, aren't we? Weary of all the changes we're experiencing with this lockdown; fearful for our loved ones/frontline workers, our homes, our livelihoods, our churches; fearful of the unknown future. Adrenalin has gotten us so far and now that's coming to a natural end. What are we to do now?

The longer we continue to battle this pandemic, the more personal it will become. We will begin to know people (if we haven't already) who have the virus, suffered from it, died from it, or survived it. This can be traumatizing.

We are living in dangerous times. Even though we may live on our own, may we know we are not alone when it comes to living in dangerous times.

Jesus too lived during dangerous times, as the religious leaders plotted his death. We normally associate Palm Sunday with celebration . . . cheerful crowds waving palm branches and shouting their praise as Jesus enters Jerusalem riding on the foal of a donkey. But some biblical historians believe this parade could have also been seen as a political protest of the Roman Empire.

It has been written that palm branches were symbols for Jewish nationalism and independence; the laying down of one's cloak on the ground signified a person's willingness to lay down his own authority to abide by someone else's. The word “Hosanna” does not mean “hurray” but “God deliver us” in original Hebrew. Combine the message of these symbols and actions – God deliver us . . . we submit to your authority, Jesus . . . give us Jewish independence! These actions are all quite risky and dangerous to do in the face of an oppressive regime.

And yet Jesus stood his ground; he knew his time had come to return to the Father. He met this challenge prayerfully and face-to-face. Even though he did not drive Roman rule out of Jerusalem, Jesus did offer deliverance. Even though he did not become an earthly ruler which redeemed Israel, Jesus did become the King of Peace who reconciles all people to Almighty God. He was willing to confront the dangerous oppressive powers of this world, so that people may come to have new life and eternal life in him. And yet this confrontation revealed his vulnerability and human limitations. It brought an end to his earthly life. But that was not the end of him. It was just the beginning of his eternal reign.

This pandemic will reveal our vulnerabilities and limitations in ways we hadn't anticipated. Fear, anxiety, and grief may already be our daily companions. May we find ways to meet these current challenges with active prayer, faith in God and in conversation with those dearest to us. In the ways we can, may we reach out and help others. May we as a church shout “Hosanna” – “God deliver us,” praying for all the world. As



life unfolds in the weeks ahead, may we trust we are not alone no matter what may come. May we not lose hope, for we follow the Deliverer and Prince of Peace who rode into the holy city on a donkey, with meekness and majesty. May our streets soon be filled with shouts of praise: “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Hosanna!



Prayer

The following prayer was written using the 5 words/phrases that caught my attention while reading our Gospel lesson. They are noted in bold print.

Oh Lord, you know our worries, fears, and frustrations on this very day. You say to us “**bring them to me.**” We are grateful that we can turn to you with all these things and entrust them into your care.

On this Palm Sunday, you won’t ride into Jerusalem on the foal of a donkey, but you are able to ride into our hearts and lives with your humility and majesty. Prophet Zechariah’s words are still true for us today as they were in ancient times: “**Your King comes.**”

We shout our “**Hosannas**” and ask you to deliver us from the suffering endured during this coronavirus outbreak. Help us to better cope with our daily challenges and to become more at ease with uncertainty. May our hearts be **stirred** in such a way that we have more hope for the difficult days ahead. May we know in our hearts and profess with our lips, “**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!**”

Amen.