

Sunday Worship - March 24, 2024
Palm Sunday



He Qi, artist

Narrative Lectionary Week 29 - Palm to Passion Sunday
The Passion According to the Gospel of Mark

First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon, Iowa

*“Striving to live as Jesus lived –
confronting injustice with love, compassion, service.”*

Welcome to Worship

**Please stand if you are able*

PRELUDE

RINGING OF THE HOUR

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Leader: The Lord be with you.

ALL: And also with you.

THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

(Mark 11:1-10)

Reader 1: When Jesus and his followers approached Jerusalem, they came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives. Jesus gave two disciples a task, saying to them,

Jesus (Reader 2): “Go into the village over there. As soon as you enter it, you will find tied up there a colt that no one has ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘Its master needs it, and he will send it back right away.’”

Reader 3: They went and found a colt tied to a gate outside on the street, and they untied it. Some people standing around said to them,

People (Congregation): “What are you doing, untying the colt?”

Reader 3: They told them just what Jesus said, and they left them alone. They brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes upon it, and he sat on it.

Reader 1: Many people spread out their clothes on the road while others spread branches cut from the fields. Those in front of him and those following were shouting,

Crowd (Congregation): “Hosanna! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessings on the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna¹ in the highest!”

THE PROCESSION OF PALMS

All are invited to join in the procession, singing and waving palms.

***HYMN #597 Holy, Most Holy Lord (Sanna, sannanina)**

1. *Sanna, sannanina, sanna, sanna, sanna.
Sanna, sannanina, sanna, sanna, sanna.
Sanna, sanna, sanna, sannanina, sanna, sanna, sanna.
Sanna, sanna, sanna, sannanina, sanna, sanna, sanna.*
2. *Holy, most holy Lord, Lord God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are filled, filled with your holy light.
O blessed is the One, the One who comes, comes in the name of God.
Hosanna in the highest, hosanna, sanna, sanna, sanna.*

¹ Hosanna means “save now”

***PRAYER OF APPROACH**

God of community, we gather in your presence in this safe place.

We are your straying sheep and your loved children.

**We gather to hear the story of that love embodied in Jesus
and expressed through his death, on a cross outside a city wall.**

We gather to reflect, to remember and to sing of that love.

**May we know your presence in this time of sharing,
in the story, in our silence, in our song. Amen.**

DISCOVERY TIME

READING *Andrew* by Madeleine L'Engel

Jesus, too, needed friends; close friends
and solitude. The companionable meal,
laughter and talk—then he, the one who spends
himself must turn himself, turn, and conceal
himself in desert emptiness to be
by Father filled. And then poured strength upon
all the emptiest, the most in need. And he,
being human for us, needed me, Peter and John.
So he taught us. So did we learn
this lovely rhythm—needing, needed—then
the deepest of all needs, the heartward turn
to Love's own source, the spring which fills all [people],
Son-lit, Father-filled, Spirit-blown.
By yourself, Lord, to us our self is shown.

THE PASSION ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL OF MARK

THE LAST SUPPER

(Mark 14:10-31)

Reader 1: Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to give Jesus up to them. When they heard it, they were delighted and promised to give him money. So he started looking for an opportunity to turn him in.

Reader 2: On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was sacrificed, the disciples said to Jesus,

Disciples (Congregation): "Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover meal?"

Reader 2: He sent two of his disciples and said to them,

Jesus (Reader 3): "Go into the city. A man carrying a water jar will meet you. Follow him. Wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The teacher asks, "Where is my guest room where I can eat the Passover meal with my disciples?"' He will show you a large room upstairs already furnished. Prepare for us there."

Reader 2: The disciples left, came into the city, found everything just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover meal.

Reader 1: That evening, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. During the meal, Jesus said,

Jesus (Reader 3): “I assure you that one of you will betray me—someone eating with me.”

Reader 1: Deeply saddened, they asked him, one by one,

Disciples (Congregation): “It’s not me, is it?”

Reader 1: Jesus answered,

Jesus (Reader 3): “It’s one of the Twelve, one who is dipping bread with me into this bowl. The Son of Man goes to his death just as it is written about him. But how terrible it is for that person who betrays the Son of Man! It would have been better for him if he had never been born.”

Reader 1: While they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, and said,

Jesus (Reader 3): “Take; this is my body.”

Reader 1: He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them,

Jesus (Reader 2): “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. I assure you that I won’t drink wine again until that day when I drink it in a new way in God’s kingdom.”

Reader 3: After singing songs of praise, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Jesus said to them,

Jesus (Reader 2): “You will all falter in your faithfulness to me. It is written, *I will hit the shepherd, and the sheep will go off in all directions*. But after I’m raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.”

Reader 3: Peter said to him,

Peter (Congregation): “Even if everyone else stumbles, I won’t.”

Reader 3: But Jesus said to him,

Jesus (Reader 2): “I assure you that on this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.”

Reader 3: But Peter insisted,

Peter (Congregation): “If I must die alongside you, I won’t deny you.”

Reader 3: And they all said the same thing.

HYMN #220 Go to Dark Gethsemane (verse 1)

1. *Go to dark Gethsemane, all who feel the tempter’s power;
your Redeemer’s conflict see; watch with him one bitter hour;
turn not from his griefs away; learn from Jesus Christ to pray.*

JESUS PRAYS IN THE GARDEN, IS BETRAYED AND ARRESTED

(Mark 14:32-52)

Reader 1: Jesus and his disciples came to a place called Gethsemane. Jesus said to them,

Jesus (Reader 2): “Sit here while I pray.”

Reader 1: He took Peter, James, and John along with him. He began to feel despair and was anxious. He said to them,

Jesus (Reader 2): “I’m very sad. It’s as if I’m dying. Stay here and keep alert.”

Reader 3: Then he went a short distance farther and fell to the ground. He prayed that, if possible, he might be spared the time of suffering. He said,

Jesus (Reader 2): “Abba, Father, for you all things are possible. Take this cup of suffering away from me. However—not what I want but what you want.”

Reader 3: He came and found them sleeping. He said to Peter,

Jesus (Reader 2): “Simon, are you asleep? Couldn’t you stay alert for one hour? Stay alert and pray so that you won’t give in to temptation. The spirit is eager, but the flesh is weak.”

Reader 3: Again, he left them and prayed, repeating the same words. And, again, when he came back, he found them sleeping, for they couldn’t keep their eyes open, and they didn’t know how to respond to him. He came a third time and said to them,

Jesus (Reader 2): “Will you sleep and rest all night? That’s enough! The time has come for the Human One to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up! Let’s go! Look, here comes my betrayer.”

Reader 1: Suddenly, while Jesus was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, came with a mob carrying swords and clubs. They had been sent by the chief priests, legal experts, and elders. His betrayer had given them a sign:

Judas (Congregation): “Arrest the man I kiss, and take him away under guard.”

Reader 1: As soon as he got there, Judas said to Jesus,

Judas (Congregation): “Rabbi!”

Reader 1: Then he kissed him.

Reader 3: Then they came and grabbed Jesus and arrested him. One of the bystanders drew a sword and struck the high priest’s slave and cut off his ear. Jesus responded,

Jesus (Reader 2): “Have you come with swords and clubs to arrest me, like an outlaw? Day after day, I was with you, teaching in the temple, but you didn’t arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled.”

Reader 3: And all his disciples left him and ran away. One young man, a disciple, was wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They grabbed him, but he left the linen cloth behind and ran away naked.

HYMN #220 Go to Dark Gethsemane (verse 2)

2. *Follow to the judgment hall; view the Lord of life arraigned;
O the wormwood and the gall! O the pangs his soul sustained!
Shun not suffering, shame, or loss; learn from him to bear the cross.*

PETER DENIES JESUS

(Mark 14:53-54, 66-72)

Reader 2: They led Jesus away to the high priest, and all the chief priests, elders, and legal experts gathered. Peter followed him from a distance, right into the high priest's courtyard. He was sitting with the guards, warming himself by the fire.

Reader 1: A woman, one of the high priest's servants, approached and saw Peter warming himself by the fire. She stared at him and said,

Servant Woman (Reader 2): "You were also with the Nazarene, Jesus."

Reader 1: But he denied it, saying,

Peter (Congregation): "I don't know what you're talking about. I don't understand what you're saying."

Reader 1: And he went outside into the outer courtyard. A rooster crowed.

Reader 3: The female servant saw him and began a second time to say to those standing around,

Servant Woman (Reader 2): "This man is one of them."

Reader 3: But he denied it again. A short time later, those standing around again said to Peter,

Bystanders (Reader 2): "You must be one of them, because you are also a Galilean."

Reader 3: But he cursed and swore,

Peter (Congregation): "I don't know this man you're talking about."

Reader 1: At that very moment, a rooster crowed a second time. Peter remembered what Jesus told him,

Jesus (Reader 2): "Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times."

Reader 3: And he broke down, sobbing.

SILENCE

LITANY OF CONFESSION

Leader: Judas, slave of jealousy, where are you?

ALL: I am here.

Leader: Peter, slave of fear, where are you?

ALL: I am here.

Leader: Thomas, slave of doubt, where are you?

ALL: I am here.

Leader: People of Jerusalem, enslaved to mob rule, where are you?

ALL: I am here.

Leader: Pilate, slave of expediency, where are you?

ALL: I am here.

Leader: The story of Christ's passion and death mirrors for us much of our own weakness and sin. We all come *here* as people who have missed the mark and are alienated from God and our neighbor near and far.

~Richard N. Eick, *Imaging the Word*, vol. 1

SILENCE

Merciful God, for the things we have done that we regret,
for the things we have failed to do that we regret,

forgive us;

for all the times we have acted without love,
for all the times we have reacted without thought,

forgive us;

for all the times we have withdrawn care,
for all the times we have failed to forgive,

forgive us.

For hurtful words said and helpful words unsaid,
for unfinished tasks and unfulfilled hopes,

forgive us.

HYMN #577 Lord, Have Mercy (sung in Latin)

Kyrie elieson. Kyrie elieson.

Kyrie elieson. Kyrie elieson.

For self-righteousness that will not compromise,
and from selfishness that gains by the manipulation of others,

forgive us, O God.

For the lust of money and power that drives destruction,
For the arrogance and thoughtlessness that abuses your good creation,

forgive us, O God.

For trusting in the weapons of war and mistrusting the councils of peace,
For hearing, believing, and speaking lies about other nations,

forgive us, O God.

For suspicions and fears that stand in the way of reconciliation,
For words and deeds that encourage discord,
perpetuate racist assumptions, sexist stereotypes, and classist attitudes,
for everything that contributes to oppression,

forgive us, O God.

HYMN #577 Lord, Have Mercy (sung in Latin)

Kyrie elieson. Kyrie elieson.

Kyrie elieson. Kyrie elieson.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Leader: Friends, remember this: Even Judas was included in that last supper with Jesus.

ALL: Even when we are languishing in the depths, Christ offers his grace.

READING *Andrew: having run away from Jesus in the garden* by Madeleine L'Engle

...I know I betrayed you
and must forever know that this coward, too,
is as much me as the loyal disciple I thought to be.
This stranger who is most of me is still
my Lord's failed friend, but friend nevertheless,
and in this friend I now must find, before I sleep,
His image, and His love.

THE TRIAL OF JESUS (Mark 15:1-15)

Reader 2: At daybreak, the chief priests—with the elders, legal experts, and the whole Sanhedrin—formed a plan. They bound Jesus, led him away, and turned him over to Pilate. Pilate questioned him,

Pilate (Reader 3): “Are you the king of the Jews?”

Reader 2: Jesus replied,

Jesus (Reader 1): “That’s what you say.”

Reader 2: The chief priests were accusing him of many things. Pilate asked him again,

Pilate (Reader 3): “Aren’t you going to answer? What about all these accusations?”

Reader 2: But Jesus gave no more answers so that Pilate marveled.

Reader 1: During the festival, Pilate released one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. A man named Barabbas was locked up with the rebels who had committed murder during an uprising. The crowd pushed forward and asked Pilate to release someone, as he regularly did. Pilate answered them,

Pilate (Reader 3): “Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?”

Reader 1: He knew that the chief priests had handed him over because of jealousy. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas to them instead. Pilate replied,

Pilate (Reader 3): “Then what do you want me to do with the one you call king of the Jews?”
They shouted back,

Crowd (Congregation): “Crucify him!”

Reader 1: Pilate said to them,

Pilate (Reader 3): “Why? What wrong has he done?”

Reader 1: They shouted even louder,

Crowd (Congregation): “Crucify him!”

Reader 1: Pilate wanted to satisfy the crowd, so he released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus whipped, then handed him over to be crucified.

HYMN #220 Go to Dark Gethsemane (verse 3)

3. *Calvary’s mournful mountain climb; there, adoring at his feet,
mark that miracle of time, God’s own sacrifice complete;
“It is finished!” hear him cry; learn from Jesus Christ to die.*

THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS

(Mark 15:16-41)

Reader 3: The soldiers led Jesus away into the courtyard of the palace known as the governor's headquarters, and they called together the whole company of soldiers. They dressed him up in a purple robe and twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on him. They saluted him,

Soldiers (Congregation): "Hail! King of the Jews!"

Reader 2: Again and again, they struck his head with a stick. They spit on him and knelt before him to honor him. When they finished mocking him, they stripped him of the purple robe and put his own clothes back on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

Reader 1: Simon, a man from Cyrene², Alexander and Rufus' father, was coming in from the countryside. They forced him to carry Jesus' cross. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha, which means Skull Place. They tried to give him wine mixed with myrrh³, but he didn't take it. They crucified him.

Reader 3: They divided up his clothes, drawing lots for them to determine who would take what. It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. The notice of the formal charge against him was written,

Reader 2: "The king of the Jews."⁴

Reader 1: They crucified two outlaws with him, one on his right and one on his left.

Reader 2: People walking by insulted him, shaking their heads and saying,

Crowd (Congregation): "Ha! So you were going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, were you? Save yourself and come down from that cross!"

Reader 3: In the same way, the chief priests were making fun of him among themselves, together with the legal experts. They said,

Authorities (Congregation): "He saved others, but he can't save himself. Let the Christ, the king of Israel, come down from the cross. Then we'll see and believe."

Reader 1: Even those who had been crucified with Jesus insulted him. From noon until three in the afternoon the whole earth was dark. At three, Jesus cried out with a loud shout,

Jesus (Reader 2): "*Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani*," which means, "My God, my God, why have you left me?"

Reader 1: After hearing him, some standing there said,

Bystanders (Reader 3): "Look! He's calling Elijah!"

Reader 1: Someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine⁵, and put it on a pole. He offered it to Jesus to drink, saying,

Bystander (Reader 3): "Let's see if Elijah will come to take him down."

Reader 1: But Jesus let out a loud cry and died.

Reader 2: The curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom.⁶ When the centurion, who stood facing Jesus, saw how he died, he said,

² Cyrene is located in North Africa. Simon is an outsider who takes up the cross and follows Jesus.

³ This mixture was intended to dull the pain, to keep him from enduring crucifixion with full consciousness.

⁴ Roman soldiers taunted him as king and Pilate affixed this title to the cross. Rome, too, was threatened by Jesus' boundary-breaking activities.

⁵ A cheap wine, likely there for the soldiers to quench their thirst.

⁶ Most likely the curtain dividing the Holy of Holies, where God's presence dwelled, from the rest of the Temple complex. With Jesus' death, access to God is "on the loose."

Centurion (Congregation): “This man was certainly God’s Son.”

Reader 3: Some women were watching from a distance, including Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James (the younger one) and Joses, and Salome. When Jesus was in Galilee, these women had followed and supported him, along with many other women who had come to Jerusalem with him.

HYMN #221 O Sacred Head, Now Wounded (verses 1, 3)

1. *O sacred head, now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down;
now scornfully surrounded with thorns, thine only crown;
O sacred head, what glory, what bliss till now was thine!
Yet, though despised and gory, I joy to call thee mine.*
3. *What language shall I borrow to thank thee, dearest friend,
for this thy dying sorrow, thy pity without end?
O make me thine forever; and should I fainting be,
Lord, let me never, never outlive my love to thee.*

**THE BURIAL OF JESUS
(Mark 15:42-47)**

Reader 1: Since it was late in the afternoon on Preparation Day, just before the Sabbath, Joseph from Arimathea dared to approach Pilate and ask for Jesus’ body. (Joseph was a prominent council member who also eagerly anticipated the coming of God’s kingdom.)

Reader 2: Pilate wondered if Jesus was already dead. He called the centurion and asked him whether Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that Jesus was dead, Pilate gave the dead body to Joseph.

Reader 3: He bought a linen cloth, took Jesus down from the cross, wrapped him in the cloth, and laid him in a tomb that had been carved out of rock. He rolled a stone against the entrance to the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was buried.

HYMN #215 What Wondrous Love Is This (verses 1, 3, 4)

1. *What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul, what wondrous love is this, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss
to bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul, to bear the dreadful curse for my soul!*
3. *To God and to the Lamb, I will sing, I will sing, to God and to the Lamb, I will sing;
to God and to the Lamb who is the great I AM,
while millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing; while millions join the theme, I will sing!*
4. *And when from death I’m free, I’ll sing on, I’ll sing on; and when from death I’m free, I’ll sing on;
and when from death I’m free, I’ll sing and joyful be,
and through eternity, I’ll sing on, I’ll sing on; and through eternity I’ll sing on.*

READING Three Days by Madeleine L’Engle

...For every birth follows a kind of death,
and only after pain comes life.

We depart in silence, and await the resurrection...