



Order of service  
Date: Sunday April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
Lent 6A Palm Sunday

**We acknowledge that we are worshipping on the traditional lands of the Boon Wurrung people, of the Kulin nation, and pay our respects to elders past and present.**

Today like last week, I send you an order of service to help you work through the material better. I am including all the bits in the one document, so you don't have to chop and change from one to the other. It is kind of a long document as it contains everything, even the preaching.

This order contains no links to audio or video, it is just text, so if you feel confident with the songs just sing them, or read the words if you don't know the tune.

And PLEASE call me or email me if things don't work.

Now let's get down to it.

Let's sing. TIS 333, "All glory, praise and honour." The words are below to sing or say without music.

*All glory, praise and honour  
to you, redeemer, king,  
to whom the lips of children  
made sweet hosannas ring.*

1  
You are the king of Israel  
and David's royal son,  
now in the Lord's name coming,  
the king and blessed one.

2  
The company of angels  
are praising you on high,  
and we and all creation  
exultant make reply.

3  
The people of the Hebrews  
with palms before you went:  
our praise and prayer and anthems  
before you we present.

4  
To you before your passion  
they sang their hymns of praise:  
to you now high exalted  
our melody we raise.

5  
Their praises you accepted:  
accept the prayers we bring,  
who in all good take pleasure,  
our good and gracious king.

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

Children of God, Rejoice!

Sing out in celebration, God's people!

Your King is coming to you, humble, riding on a donkey, on a donkey's foal.

**Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest!**

**Blessed is the one who comes in the Lord's name.**

**Glory to God! Hosanna!**

## **PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND CONFESSION**

The King is coming.

Our God arrives, clothed in frail human flesh,  
riding a meek donkey's foal.

This is not the first time You have come to us, O God  
The history of human affairs is the history of Your arrival among us,  
As Creator,  
Purpose-Giver,  
Liberator,  
Prophet's voice and  
Priest's desire.

The story of each of our lives is the story of Your coming to us,  
As Comforter,  
Friend,  
Example,  
Challenger

Abundant-Life-Provider,  
And so we praise You;  
Open our eyes to Your Presence, Lord;  
Come to us again, Lord;  
Hosanna – Save us again, Lord.

And be glorified among us.

For You are our God.

And it is to you we make our confession.

Hosanna.

“Save us, O God!”

Save us. Not really a shout of praise, but a cry of desperation.

Only you, humble and riding on an ass, can save us on our war horses.

Only you, pouring yourself out, can save us from the wounds that swallow us.

Only you, suffering, can save us, married to our comforts.

Only you, loving and forgiving, can save us, so well defended.

Save us, O Vulnerable One, from the fortresses we carry with us.

Give me faith to ride with you, humble, disarmed, lovingly self-pouring,  
with deep trust in your saving.

Hosanna.

Blessed is the one who comes  
in the peace of God. Amen.

## **WORDS OF AFFIRMATION**

Christ refused to give up on love.

And Love never gives up on us.

We live in abundant forgiveness, grace,  
and gratitude as followers of Christ.

We enter this time of difficult conversations  
knowing we are forgiven

**Thanks be to God.**

**EARLY WORD** – Good morning Jerusalem.

The following is an excerpt from the most excellent morning show, Good Morning Jerusalem. Feel free to act out the various parts or just read it through.

### GOOD MORNING JERUSALEM

**Setting:** TV studio, city of Jerusalem, Palm Sunday

**Characters:** Director, Matthew, Tabitha, Philomena, Daniel, Learned Teacher, Crowd, Jesus.

**Director:** And we're live in 5-4-3-2-1

**Matthew:** I'm Matthew Lauer

**Tabitha:** And I'm Tabitha Guthrie

**Matthew and Tabitha:** *[Together]* Good Morning, Jerusalem!

**Matthew:** Broadcasting live from the heart of everyone's favourite big city!

**Tabitha:** Featuring Philomena Scott with the weather.

**Matthew:** And our ace roving reporter, Daniel Rather!

**Tabitha:** Welcome to Jerusalem's top rated morning newscast. First on the scene to give you breaking *[Matthew breaks stick]* news as it happens—and even before it happens!

**Matthew:** This morning we're at the gates of the world's most famous metropolis because—

**Tabitha:** There's news. Big news! Breaking news!

**Matthew:** *[breaks stick]*

**Tabitha:** Really?

**Matthew:** Sorry!

**Tabitha:** Before we go to our top story, let's get a weather update. What's it doing out there, Philomena?

**Philomena:** Well, Tabitha, it's currently 30 degrees Celsius and sunny. *[Holds up weather map]* The forecast is pretty quiet through the week, and your outlook for Passover is beautiful—

it should be a lovely evening to get together with friends and celebrate.

But all that will change by Friday, when there is a significant chance of a major storm. This storm should begin with darkening clouds around noon, and that afternoon's weather looks pretty grim.

There's even—hard to believe—the possibility of an earthquake around 3 PM, so brace yourselves for a little turbulence.

Looking ahead to next weekend, Saturday's cloud cover and rain will give way once again to bright sunshine by daybreak on Sunday morning. Weather-wise, this should definitely be a week to remember! Back to you!

**Matthew:** Thanks, Philomena. Enjoy this beautiful day, and make sure to wear your sunscreen!

**Tabitha:** Here's a quick rundown of other major news stories we're following—protests outside several government buildings after this week's scheduled "Free the slaves now!" forum was suddenly cancelled by a troop of Roman soldiers. Definitely no comment from the slaves.

**Tabitha:** But let's move onto our top story, and for that, let's go out to our ace roving reporter, Daniel Rather! Good morning, Daniel!

**Daniel:** Good morning Tabitha! Good morning Matt! Good morning, Jerusalem!

**Matthew:** Well, Daniel, it looks like quite a crowd is starting to gather out there. Can you give us an idea of what's going on?

**Daniel:** Well, Matt, rumours have been flying around that a MAJOR entry into town is about to happen. People are saying a new King is coming, a powerful ruler—there has even been talk that this mysterious visitor might be the Messiah himself!

**Matthew:** No way!

**Daniel:** Yes way! Not only that, this King is going to get rid of the Romans, and make a brand-new kingdom for the Jews!

**Tabitha:** What makes people think these rumours are true, Daniel?

**Daniel:** Well, some of our learned teachers have been studying Scripture, and they're finding clues everywhere! Let's talk to one of our learned teachers right now. Good morning, sir!

**Learned Teacher:** Good morning to you Daniel. Long timer viewer, first time interviewee.

**Daniel:** Ok, then, so can you tell us what you think, based on these clues you've found?

**Learned Teacher:** Well, we've all been waiting for the Messiah for, like, ever. And all of a sudden, this guy named Jesus comes on the scene.

**Daniel:** Jesus of Nazareth?

**Learned Teacher:** That's the guy.

**Daniel:** Isn't he the guy who's been roaming around for three years?

**Learned Teacher:** Teaching, healing, doing wondrous things, yeah, him.

**Daniel:** But that doesn't make him the Messiah, does it?

**Learned Teacher:** Well, it's sure looking that way to me, Daniel!

**Tabitha:** Can we interrupt you here, Daniel? We're starting to see a person entering the city. He has some people with him, and he's riding a—a—well, it looks like a donkey!

**Matthew:** Now that's weird. Where's his camel?

**Tabitha:** Weird or not, the crowd is just loving it! They're waving palms and cheering, "Hosanna! Hail, Jesus!"

**Crowd:** [*waving palms*] Hosanna! Hail, Jesus!

**Daniel:** Yes, Tabitha, it's amazing. It's like he's cast a spell on the crowd. People can't take their eyes off this guy.

Hold on, he's coming right by here. Let me try to get a word...Sir? Sir?

**Jesus:** Peace be with you, my friend Daniel.

**Daniel:** Yes, that's me, are you a fan of the show?

**Jesus:** Not exactly. But I do know you.

**Daniel:** Hmmm, so....this is quite the hero's welcome! You must be on top of the world!

**Jesus:** Not exactly. I know that people are excited about something that isn't going to happen.

**Daniel:** The people are shouting "Hosanna! Save us!"

**Crowd:** Hosanna! Save us!

**Daniel:** I've been hearing them call out things like "Messiah" and "King of the Jews"!

**Crowd:** Messiah! King of the Jews!

**Daniel:** Sounds like they expect you to be their new ruler!

**Jesus:** Ah, but my Kingdom is not of this world.

**Daniel:** So you're not here in Jerusalem to take over?

**Jesus:** I am here in Jerusalem for the end, and then the beginning.

**Daniel:** You've lost me there!

**Jesus:** Never mind, someday you'll understand.

**Daniel:** Well, welcome to our fair city, whoever you are! Hope you have a really great time here!

**Tabitha:** May I break in here and ask a question?

**Jesus:** Yes, Tabitha?

**Tabitha:** Tabitha, right! Are you a fan of the show?

**Jesus:** Not exactly.

**Tabitha:** I've been hearing about the Son of God, come down to earth. Are you—could you be—

**Jesus:** *[Smiles]* Well, if you'll pardon me, I have a journey to finish.

**Tabitha:** Oh, of course. But Jesus—will we see you again?

**Jesus:** You can count on it! *[Walks off]*

**Matthew:** And there you have it! Jesus of Nazareth—the mysterious stranger who's taking Jerusalem by storm! And we'll stay on this big story and keep you updated if there are any new developments! For now, I'm Matthew Lauer.

**Tabitha:** And I'm Tabitha Guthrie, wishing you all...

**Together:** Good morning, Jerusalem!

Here is a song we can sing with the children, a new Palm Sunday song called "Pave the way with branches."

Here are the words to read if you don't have the video.

Jesus is coming. Pave the way with branches. Jesus is coming. Hosanna! **(Repeat)**

*Chorus: Hosanna. Jesus is coming, Hosanna to the Prince of Peace. (Repeat)*

**READING** - Our reading today has moved from John's gospel to Matthew's gospel. The passage is Matthew 21:1-11. Below is an adaptation of the passage or you can follow on in your own bible.

## A Road Made of Cloaks

Based on Matthew 21:1–11

The disciples were finally near Jerusalem. Jesus had been telling them all along that they'd wind up here, the big city, the home of the temple. But it hadn't really seemed real until now. Everything seemed like a big deal. Things that were pretty ordinary seemed heavier somehow like something else was lending them more weight. The donkey Jesus wanted, for example. It was such an ordinary thing, except some said it was a fulfillment of prophecy, so it felt important like it was the most special donkey in the world. The donkey didn't have a saddle, so they made one out of their cloaks. They knew some people said Jesus was a king. But they thought he looked more like a child playing dress-up, with a donkey instead of a warhorse, a bunch of cloaks instead of a fancy saddle.

They worried that the crowd might laugh. But people quickly joined the spirit of this day, taking off their own cloaks and jackets and spreading them out on the road that Jesus was travelling. The poor people, the ones who didn't have cloaks to lend, cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. How strange it was to see a muddy donkey trampling such beauty beneath its feet.

They called him fancy names, too: Son of David, the one who comes in the name of God, the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee. They yelled out, "Hosanna". They felt so proud that others could finally see what they had known all along: this was someone who came from God, someone worth following, no matter where he led them.

Later, they would reflect on when it was that everything had changed. Was it when he threw people out of the temple for abusing the poor? Was it when he told the scribes and Pharisees that they had forgotten God's justice? Maybe if that woman hadn't anointed his feet, he would never have been arrested and tried and killed.

It was impossible to tell when things had changed.

But they knew one thing: when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the donkey that day, they had never seen him look so brave.

**PREACHING** – I just can't wait NOT to be king!

It is always fun to have a parade on Palm Sunday, have a bit of fun with it and make a point.

But if we leave this story at the parade, then we end up actually missing the point. This is how Bill Loader puts it:

*Palm Sunday is also [Passion Sunday](#). The Palm Sunday passage moves us towards the Passion. It has its genesis in Jesus' strategy to bring himself and his message to Jerusalem. This was much more than a PR opportunity not to be missed because of the concentration of people in Jerusalem during Passover. Rather it belongs to the body language of the message of the 'kingdom'. It is an expression of hope for change. Just as Jesus reflected the Jewish roots of his passion for change by choosing twelve disciples, so also his march on Zion reflects his people's vision that God would bring about a change beginning with Jerusalem.*

*To affirm the vision of the kingdom and to live out its hopes in the present in action and symbol meant challenging existing structures of authority, both those of the temple leadership and those of Rome. This is the backdrop for the drama which follows. To journey with Jesus still means espousing a challenge to the powers which hold sway in our world (and our church). (Loader)*

Today is Palm Sunday, the last Sunday in Lent, the doorway to Holy Week, a week away from Easter Sunday arguably the most important celebration on the churches calendar. By this time churches around the world are gearing up for the biggest church week of the year, some with services every day, even several times a day, some with just a few, maybe Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, all leading up to the big one, Easter Day. It is at the same time usually an exhausting week but also exciting and a roller coaster of emotions, and a hive of activity.

But this year, it is markedly different.

Churches around the world are empty, will be empty on Easter Sunday, empty this week.

For many of us this week will be a lonely time, a sad time when we can't meet face to face with our friends and family in a church that will be a second home for many. We are being forced into hiding as it were.

How then does this story make sense to us this year?

What can we make of it mostly incarcerated in our own homes?

Which got me to thinking.

The power of the day in this story was of course Rome. And I think because for much of the gospel stories this truth sits often in the background, and only really comes to the fore in the passion stories, we tend to discount the influence of Rome on these times.

Let's be clear, it was everywhere.

People were scared to move around, scared in their own towns, scared to leave their own homes.

And maybe this year that is our entry point to this story.

Caught in our own homes we can reflect on this story in light of our own fears.

And not just our personal ones but the deeply held fears of the community against a power that is so small as to be unseen, unlike the might of Rome.

But let me stay with the story for now.

Jesus entry into Jerusalem as Bill Loader suggests, is a confrontation to the powers of that day and this.

Some scholars such as John Dominic Crossan have suggested that as Jesus entered Jerusalem through one side of the city, Pilate entered the city from the other side. Whether this actually is the case, it offers a provocative image for us to consider. It paints a polarizing image for us, inviting us to consider, where do we stand and which do we support?

*To journey with Jesus still means espousing a challenge to the powers which hold sway in our world (and our church). (Loader)*

It is useful for us also to consider that Jerusalem was already packed for the holiday week, the week before the Passover celebration.



Every man, his family and his dog tried to get to Jerusalem for this occasion because this was (and is) the big-ticket item on the Jewish calendar, as Easter is for us.

So it was crowded.

Real crowded.

The Roman historian Josephus is recorded as claiming there were 2.5 million people in Jerusalem at that time.

Keep in mind this was in the old walled city of Jerusalem, not modern-day Jerusalem which by comparison has around 900,000 people.

Even if the number was half what Josephus claimed, it is still enormous amounts of people in that space and surrounds. But if he is correct, then it was squash city.

I shudder at the thought of how their toilets managed.

So you can imagine, the Romans were on full alert.

And we can reasonably assume it was like this the entire week until the end of the Passover.

Into this mass of humanity rode Jesus on the donkey, and possibly Pilate, on a war horse, surrounded by soldiers, not merely for show, but for protection too.

And there is still more here for us to consider.

Jan Richardson has written these thoughts on this story from Matthew.

*This is the week we remember once again the moment when Jesus enters Jerusalem, moving with intention and deliberation into what waits for him there.*

*In some respects, the final stretch of Jesus' path has been laid out for him. We know what will happen to him after he enters the city. We know the terrible road he will walk to the cross. Yet Jesus is no helpless victim here, no passive participant. He is not dragged into Jerusalem, nor does he slink into the city on the sly. Jesus does not cease to make his own road as he chooses to walk with courage and clarity.*

Get up and do not be afraid, he told the disciples on the mount of transfiguration. Here he continues to take his own advice. (me)

*Jan continues - This week invites us to consider how we are moving through our own journey—through Lent as well as through life. Are we allowing ourselves to be swept along by circumstances, traveling our road by default?*

*Or are we seeking to walk with intention and discernment, creating our path with some measure of the courage and clarity by which Christ walked his, even in the midst of forces that may (do?) lie beyond our control?*

*There is a time for stillness, for waiting for Christ as he makes his dancing way toward us. And there is a time to be in motion, to set out on a path, knowing that although God is everywhere, and always with us, we sometimes need a journey in order to meet God—and ourselves—anew.*

*This is a week to ask, Jan writes, how do we meet God in motion?*

I want to ask, how do we meet God in stillness? How do we meet God in the walls of our home in which we might feel trapped, how do we meet God when we might be going a little stir crazy?

*Jan continues with her words - How do we move toward the One who is already making his way toward us?*



*Whatever circumstance we may find ourselves in, how do we participate in creating our path? What road is calling to us and has our name written on its stones? And more importantly, will we go?*

How we grapple with such questions in this time, is extraordinarily unique. Most of us have never, and hopefully will never again, find ourselves, our world in fact, in this position again.

Nevertheless, here we are, confined to our homes, under the rule of an invisible power, contemplating a parade.

Everybody loves a parade.

But after the “Jesus is coming pave the way with branches” bit, there is even more. There is the picking up of the branches and the cloaks, putting them in lost property and hoping the owners will claim them.

Then there is the last bit of that stony road to walk.

A walk that does not have a pretty end.

At least not at first.

So, get up, take that next step, wash your hands, do the next right thing and don't be afraid.

Jesus is coming.

Hosanna. Amen.

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Lord Jesus Christ, whose greatest moments of triumph happen on the back of a donkey's foal and nailed to a bloody cross,

We gather to prepare the way for You in our lives and in our world.

There are so many people and things that call for our allegiance, so many kings seeking to rule over us.

But, You ride into our experience as another kind of King;

a serving, humble and challenging King who calls us not to slavery, but friendship.

There are so many things that seek our energy and resources for their own sakes so many Kingdoms seeking our souls for their own glory.

But, You ride into our experience heralding another kind of Kingdom

a Kingdom where the least are the greatest,

where the meek inherit the earth,

and where children are the best example of citizenship.

a Kingdom which seeks to bring life, not drain it.

God in this next brief time, here our own concerns for those we know in particular need of our attention...

**(A time of silent prayer, or spoken if you prefer)**

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

There are so many things that draw our attention.

So many realities that seek our faith and assent.

But, You ride into our experience revealing another kind of reality

a reality where death does not have the last word.

a reality where pride, selfishness and evil are defeated

by love and self-giving.

a reality which does not parade itself for all to see,

but fills every moment, every situation and every thing with life,  
while waiting for us to discover it.

And so, we cry, from our hearts  
Hosanna, Save us.

Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord. Amen.

Hear our prayers, silent and spoken, and help us to be part of the answer to these requests. We offer them in the name of the one who gave us His prayer:

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**and forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and forever. Amen.**

**BLESSING** - Lord, just as we have entered Jerusalem with you, be with us in all the Jerusalem's we will be facing. Guide our steps. Encourage our hearts. Give us abundant faith to follow you.

Leader: God is with us.

**People: God is with us.**

Leader: We can face whatever tomorrow might bring because we know...

**People: God is with us.**

Leader: We can dare to stand at the foot of the cross because we know...

**People: God is with us.**

Leader: We can confront the realities of our world because we know...

**People: God is with us.**

Leader: Go in peace, as the blessed and beloved people of God, knowing that wherever your journey leads you,

**People: God is with us.**

**Final Song.** This has been our theme song during Lent. We missed it last week but here it is now.

DON'T BE AFRAID

Don't be afraid, my love is stronger,

My love is stronger than your fear.

Don't be afraid, my love is stronger,

And I have promised,

Promised to be always near.