

# The Sunday Missive – April 2, 2023 – Palm Sunday

## Hymn154 All glory, laud, and honor

All glory, laud, and honor to thee, Redeemer, King!  
To whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.

Thou art the King of Israel, thou David's royal Son,  
Who in the Lord's Name comest, the King and Blessed One.

The company of angels is praising thee on high;  
And we with all creation in chorus make reply.

The people of the Hebrews with palms before thee went;  
Our praise and prayer and anthems before thee we present.

To thee before thy passion they sang their hymns of praise;  
To thee, now high exalted, our melody we raise.

Thou didst accept their praises; accept the prayers we bring,  
Who in all good delightest, thou good and gracious King.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHN8UAK6Yow&t=91s>

## The Collect of the Day

Almighty and everliving God, in your tender love for the human race you sent your Son our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon him our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, and also share in his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

## Isaiah 50:4-9

The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he wakens-- wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught.

The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backward. I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting.

The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me. It is the Lord God who helps me; who will declare me guilty?

## **Psalm 118**

Give thanks to the Lord who is good\* ***God's mercy endures forever.***

Let Israel now proclaim\* ***"God's mercy endures forever."***

Open for me the gates of righteousness\* ***I will enter them; I will offer thanks to the Lord.***

"This is the gate of the Lord\* ***Those who are righteous may enter.***"

I will give thanks to you, for you answered me\* ***And have become my salvation.***

The same stone which the builders rejected\* ***Has become the chief cornerstone.***

This is the Lord's doing\* ***It is marvelous in our eyes.***

This is the day the Lord has made\* ***Let us rejoice and be glad in it.***

Blessed are those who come in the name of the Lord\* ***We bless you from the house of the Lord.***

God is the Lord, who has shined upon us\* ***Let us form a procession with branches to the altar.***

"You are my God, and I will thank you\* ***You are my God, and I will exalt you.***"

O give thanks to the Lord who is good\* ***God's mercy endures for ever.***

## **Philippians 2:5-11**

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death-- even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

### **Hymn 458 My song is love unknown**

My song is love unknown, my Savior's love to me,  
Love to the loveless shown that they might lovely be.  
O who am I, that for my sake  
My Lord should take frail flesh, and die?

He came from his blest throne salvation to bestow,  
But men made strange, and none the longed-for Christ would know.  
But O my friend, my friend indeed,  
Who at my need his life did spend.

Sometimes they strew his way, and his strong praises sing,  
Resounding all the day hosannas to their King.  
Then "Crucify!" is all their breath,  
And for his death they thirst and cry.

Here might I stay and sing, no story so divine;  
Never was love, dear King, never was grief like thine.  
This is my friend, in whose sweet praise  
I all my days could gladly spend.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHN8UAK6Yow&t=91s>

### **The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew**

EVANGELIST: Jesus then came with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane. He said to them,

JESUS: Sit here while I go over there to pray. My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here, and stay awake with me.

EVANGELIST: He went on a little, fell on his face in prayer, and said,

JESUS: My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by. Yet not what I want, but what you want.

EVANGELIST: He came to the disciples and found them asleep; and he said to Peter,

JESUS: What! Could none of you stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake, and pray that you may not come into the time of trial. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

EVANGELIST: He went away a second time, and prayed:

JESUS: My Father, if this cup cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.

EVANGELIST: He came again and found them asleep, for their eyes were heavy. So he left them and went away again; and he prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then he came to the disciples and said to them,

JESUS: Still sleeping and taking your rest? The hour is at hand and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going; my betrayer is at hand.

EVANGELIST: While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived; with him was a great crowd armed with swords and clubs. They laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. Jesus said to them,

JESUS: Have you come out with swords and cudgels to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I sat teaching in the temple, and you did not arrest me. Put your swords away, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.

EVANGELIST: Then the disciples all deserted him and ran away. Jesus was led off under arrest to the house of Caiaphas the High Priest. Peter followed him at a distance till he came to the High Priest's courtyard, and going in he sat down with the guards, in order to see how this would end.

HIGH PRIEST: Have you no answer to the charge that these witnesses bring against you?

EVANGELIST: But Jesus kept silence. The High Priest then said,

HIGH PRIEST: By the living God I charge you to tell us: Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?

JESUS: The words are yours. But I tell you this: from now on, you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of God and coming on the clouds of heaven.

EVANGELIST: Then they spat in his face and struck him with their fists; and others said, as they beat him,

CONGREGATION: Now, Messiah, if you are a prophet, tell us who hit you.

EVANGELIST: Meanwhile, Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard when a serving-maid came to him and said,

FIRST SERVING-MAID: You also were with Jesus the Galilean.

EVANGELIST: Peter denied it in face of them all, saying,

PETER: I do not know what you mean.

EVANGELIST: He then went out to the gateway, where another girl, seeing him, said to the people there,

SECOND SERVING-MAID: This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.

EVANGELIST: Once again he denied it, saying with an oath,

PETER: I do not know the man.

EVANGELIST: Shortly afterwards the bystanders came up and said to Peter,

CONGREGATION: Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent gives you away!

EVANGELIST: At this he broke into curses and declared with an oath:

PETER: I do not know the man.

EVANGELIST: At that moment a cock crew; and Peter remembered how Jesus had said, "Before the cock crows you will deny me three times." He went outside, and wept bitterly.

EVANGELIST: When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferenced together against Jesus in order to bring about his death. They then put him in chains, led him away, and handed him over to the Roman Governor. and as he stood there Pilate asked him,

PILATE: Are you the king of the Jews?

JESUS: The words are yours.

PILATE: Do you not hear all this evidence that is brought against you?

EVANGELIST: But to the Governor's great astonishment, he still refused to answer one word. At the festival the Governor was accustomed to release one prisoner to the crowd, anyone they wanted. At that time, there was a

notorious man called Jesus Barabbas. When they were assembled, Pilate said to them,

PILATE: Whom do you want me to release for you - Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus called Messiah?

CONGREGATION: Barabbas.

PILATE: Then what am I to do with Jesus called the Messiah?

EVANGELIST: All of them said,

CONGREGATION: Crucify him!

PILATE: Why, what evil has he done?

EVANGELIST: But they shouted all the more,

CONGREGATION: Crucify him!

EVANGELIST: So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing and that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying,

PILATE: I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.

EVANGELIST: So Pilate released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. And when they came to a place called Golgotha. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among them by casting lots; then over his head they put the charge against him, which read: "This is Jesus the king of the Jews." Two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and the other on his left. Those who passed by derided him and shook their heads saying,

CONGREGATION: You would destroy the temple and build it in three days? If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross and save yourself.

EVANGELIST: So too the chief priests with the lawyers and elders mocked him, saying,

CONGREGATION: He saved others, but he cannot save himself. King of Israel, indeed! Let him come down now from the cross, and then we will believe him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now, if he wants to; for he said "I am God's Son."

EVANGELIST: From noon on darkness fell over the whole land until three in the afternoon; and about three o'clock Jesus cried aloud,

JESUS: Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?

EVANGELIST: Which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Some of the bystanders, on hearing it, said,

CONGREGATION: He is calling Elijah.

EVANGELIST: One of them ran at once and fetched a sponge, soaked it in sour wine, put it on a stick and gave it to him to drink. But the others said,

CONGREGATION: Let us see if Elijah will come to save him.

EVANGELIST: Then Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed his last.

*(Silence is kept for a few moments.)*

EVANGELIST: At that moment, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and many of the tombs came open. Now when the centurion and those with him who were keeping watch over Jesus saw the earthquake and all that took place, they were terrified, and said,

CONGREGATION: Truly this man was God's Son.

### **On God's Time -- Passion and Palm Sunday A**

This is God's time, not ours. Of course, that's always the case, but never more so than in this magnificent, jarring, fulfilling and disturbing time of year we call Holy Week. These are our High Holy Days in truth and, like it or not we are on God's time.

One of the hardest things about getting older is becoming increasingly aware of that part of our human condition we call mortality. I'm not just talking about numbering our days because we know there are fewer of them left – that's tough enough but it can be withstood, softened, even sweetened by the gift of faith. If we are fortunate, we will also inherit the kind of faith that works under all conditions: terror, agony, abandonment, abuse and oppression.

Aging is difficult enough but what's even harder is the realization that comes with emotional maturity: the realization that the circumstances of love include loss. That is to say, when we love someone – anyone -- sooner or later we will lose them, at least in the worldly sense. And often we will lose them because they go away in this life. As those of us who are fortunate enough to be parents know, however close by our kids may live, the only way they could be flourishing people themselves was for us to let them go – give them a vigorous and positive sendoff (and maybe a little dough if we have it), and hope like heck they come see us once in awhile (and not just for more of the same.) Some will; some won't, but the letting go has to happen either way, and it hurts. Likewise with even the dearest of friends: if we are fortunate, we have found many amongst God's creatures

to love. Only a precious few do we get to keep seeing. We have to let our loves go or spend our days bereft.

This truth makes of our lives an emotional rollercoaster. And it only gets more suddenly steep the longer and more fully we live. Every surfer knows: the bigger and longer the ride, the more chance of a crash. The more we love, the more risk we face... in the worldly sense. God knows this too, and wants to accompany us on every ride to keep our spirits up as much as we will let her; to whisper in our ears: "Fear not!"

At this time of year, the gospel story picks up speed. With the increasing drama of Jesus' last days, God's presence is heightened; the stakes are higher: they are life and death. This week we are, as any of you pilots might tell us, in the spiritual simulator. We are on an emotional ride that can seem frightening, challenging, even daunting even though -- as in the sim -- we know the outcome. We are practicing to be loving and faithful human beings through thick and thin by taking this ride through the painfully beautiful stories and liturgies and mysteries of Holy Week, all in God's protective embrace.

The betrayal by Judas, the glorious procession we just imitated, Jesus' trial and beatings and death seem like a horror movie: one we would only watch because we knew it was going to end. It is impossible for us to imagine how the disciples felt, because we are on the other side of the resurrection. Just as we know a movie is only a movie, we know Jesus will only suffer and die for a time. This is God's plot, and our task, our joyous privilege, and our salvation lies in giving ourselves to the experience.

So we watch and wait. This is tough, especially for Americans. You don't hear those Swedes in an Ingmar Bergman film saying, "C'mon, cut to the chase!" We watch, we wait, and we care for each other -- worshipping together, washing feet, feeding each other, keeping vigil, and listening deeply for the resonances in our own hearts that come as this miraculous, world-changing story unfolds again and changes us too -- as if for the first time -- if only we will let it. Our procession with the palms serves as a celebration of welcome. As the people laid their cloaks and branches down to make a way for Jesus, we symbolize our willingness to welcome the transforming influence of love in our own lives. We make straight in the deserts of our hearts a highway for Good.

Will we end up as condemning, self-righteous and murderous powermongers or will we see ourselves as eager pilgrims on the way of

peace? Notice the Gospels are very careful not to let us lay the blame for Jesus' demise off on Pilate the Prefect or the other Romans, or even Herod. It is a Roman who says "Surely this man was innocent" in Luke. It is the leaders of the people themselves, the supposedly wise and powerful who make the big mistakes. The lesson is plain: the wiser and more powerful we think we are about things that really matter, the more carefully we had better look for signs of our own folly, misguidedness and self-obsessed violence – physical, emotional or economic. We can be our own worst enemies when it comes to deciding what is just and conducive to health.

Our great hope is that this story will work on us: that we can be still and available enough to be transformed; that we can become true witnesses through words and deeds to what can happen when we allow God's pen to write our lives. In this week we get to practice the whole arc of christian life stories.

They are the stories of God's love for humankind, prophesied by Isaiah: "See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare. I will not grow faint or be crushed until I have established justice in the earth and the coastlands wait for my teaching!"

### **Hymn 474 When I survey the wondrous cross**

When I survey the wondrous cross where the young Prince of Glory died,  
my richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, save in the cross of Christ, my God: all  
the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to his blood.

See, from his head, his hands, his feet, sorrow and love flow Mingled down!  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far Too small;  
love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9eCUqz\\_x5A&t=65s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9eCUqz_x5A&t=65s)

## **To a Daisy**

Slight as thou art, thou art enough to hide,  
Like all created things, secrets from me,  
And stand a barrier to eternity.  
And I, how can I praise thee well and wide  
From where I dwell—upon the hither side?  
Thou little veil for so great mystery,  
When shall I penetrate all things and thee,  
And then look back? For this I must abide,  
Till thou shalt grow and fold and be unfurled  
Literally between me and the world.  
Then shall I drink from in beneath a spring,  
And from a poet's side shall read his book.  
O daisy mine, what will it be to look  
From God's side even of such a simple thing?

Alice Meynell