**March 24 – Passion/Palm Sunday**

*This week, the center of the church’s year, is one of striking contrasts: Jesus rides into Jerusalem surrounded by shouts of glory, only to be left alone to die on the cross, abandoned by even his closest friends. Mark’s gospel presents Jesus in his complete human vulnerability: agitated, grieved, scared, forsaken. Though we lament Christ’s suffering and all human suffering, we also expect God’s salvation: in the wine and bread, Jesus promises that his death will mark a new covenant with all people. We enter this holy week thirsty for the completion of God’s astonishing work.*

**Procession with Palms**

* [Mark 11:1-11](https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/Index/2024-3-24/0) [John 12:12-16](https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/Index/2024-3-24/0) (alternate)

 *Jesus enters Jerusalem Jesus enters Jerusalem*

**Readings and Psalm**

* [Isaiah 50:4-9a](https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/Index/2024-3-24/0)

 *The servant of the Lord submits to suffering*

* [Psalm 31:9-16](https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/Index/2024-3-24/0)

*Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.*

* [Philippians 2:5-11](https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/Index/2024-3-24/0)

 *Humbled to the point of death on a cross*

[Mark 14:1--15:47](https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/Index/2024-3-24/0) [Mark 15:1-39 [40-47]](https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/Index/2024-3-24/0) (alternate)

 *The passion of the Lord The passion of the Lord*

**Prayer of the Day**

Everlasting God, in your endless love for the human race you sent our Lord Jesus Christ to take on our nature and to suffer death on the cross. In your mercy enable us to share in his obedience to your will and in the glorious victory of his resurrection, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**GOSPEL MESSAGE -** **The Heart of the Story**

Martin Luther called the Psalms a “little Bible.” He wrote that all the rest of the Holy Scriptures could be found in them. Luther went so far as to suggest that in the Psalms the church can glimpse the death and resurrection of Christ. In these ancient songs and prayers of the Hebrew people, every human emotion is laid bare: joy and contentment, anger and sorrow, hope and despair. The Psalms give voice to the wide spectrum of experiences that mark our human lives. This is their power—they speak the heart’s language, turbulent as our hearts may sometimes be.

In a similar way, Holy Week places us at the center of the whole story of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. From the “hosannas” of Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem to the seeming abandonment of the cross, emotions run high this week as the story of Christ’s passion reaches into the depths of our human experience. The palm and passion stories are themselves a “little Bible” of salvation for the church within the wider story of God’s saving love for all.

As we gather to hear the story of Christ’s passion anew, the words and rituals of the church’s worship life invite us to feel our way into this story from the inside out. We hear the shouts of blessing and come to the Passover in quiet hope. We follow to Gethsemane and to the cross, with mixed emotions. What does betrayal feel like in our bodies? What about amazement? Fear? How have we experienced ridicule or shame? How have we ourselves dismissed or derided others?

The palm and passion stories offer us a chance to contemplate Christ’s sufferings and meditate on our salvation—to come side by side with Christ’s passion and so to know and access our own. We are invited to honestly glimpse the workings of our own hearts. Nothing is off limits to God’s grace. No human experience is untouched by the story of God’s redemptive love.

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