

## **SCRIPTURE READINGS AND SERMON**

### **Palm Sunday**

**March 28, 2021**

**Psalm 118:19–29 (ESV), Psalm 31:5; 9-16 (ESV):**

19 Open to me the gates of righteousness,  
that I may enter through them  
and give thanks to the LORD.

20 This is the gate of the LORD;  
the righteous shall enter through it.

21 I thank you that you have answered me  
and have become my salvation.

22 The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone.

23 This is the LORD's doing;  
it is marvelous in our eyes.

24 This is the day that the LORD has made;  
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

25 Save us, we pray, O LORD!

O LORD, we pray, give us success!

26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!

We bless you from the house of the LORD.

27 The LORD is God,  
and he has made his light to shine upon us.

Bind the festal sacrifice with cords,  
up to the horns of the altar!

28 You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;  
you are my God; I will extol you.

29 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
for his steadfast love endures forever!

**Psalm 31:5; 9-16 (ESV):**

5 Into your hand I commit my spirit;  
you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.

9 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;  
my eye is wasted from grief;  
my soul and my body also.

10 For my life is spent with sorrow,  
and my years with sighing;  
my strength fails because of my iniquity,  
and my bones waste away.

11 Because of all my adversaries I have become a reproach,  
especially to my neighbors,  
and an object of dread to my acquaintances;  
those who see me in the street flee from me.

12 I have been forgotten like one who is dead;  
I have become like a broken vessel.

13 For I hear the whispering of many—  
terror on every side!—  
as they scheme together against me,  
as they plot to take my life.

14 But I trust in you, O LORD;  
I say, "You are my God."

15 My times are in your hand;  
rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!

16 Make your face shine on your servant;  
save me in your steadfast love!

**First Reading: Zechariah 9:9–12 (ESV):**

**The Coming King of Zion**

9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!  
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!  
Behold, your king is coming to you;

righteous and having salvation is he,  
humble and mounted on a donkey,  
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim  
and the war horse from Jerusalem;  
and the battle bow shall be cut off,  
and he shall speak peace to the nations;  
his rule shall be from sea to sea,  
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

11 As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you,  
I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

12 Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope;  
today I declare that I will restore to you double.

**EPISTLE: Philippians 2:5–11 (ESV):**

5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**THE GOSPEL - John 12:12–43 (ESV); Mark 14:1–15:47 (ESV):**

**The Triumphal Entry**

12 The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 13 So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!”

14 And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

15 “Fear not, daughter of Zion;  
behold, your king is coming,  
sitting on a donkey’s colt!”

**16** His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. **17** The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. **18** The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. **19** So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.”

### **Some Greeks Seek Jesus**

**20** Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. **21** So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” **22** Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. **23** And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. **24** Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. **25** Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. **26** If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

### **The Son of Man Must Be Lifted Up**

**27** “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. **28** Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” **29** The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” **30** Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine. **31** Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. **32** And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” **33** He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. **34** So the crowd answered him, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” **35** So Jesus said to them, “The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. **36** While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.”

### **The Unbelief of the People**

When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. **37** Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, **38** so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

“Lord, who has believed what he heard from us,  
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

**39** Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said,

**40** “He has blinded their eyes  
and hardened their heart,  
lest they see with their eyes,  
and understand with their heart, and turn,  
and I would heal them.”

**41** Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. **42** Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; **43** for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

**Mark 14:1–15:47 (ESV):**

### **The Plot to Kill Jesus**

**14** It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, **2** for they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people.”

### **Jesus Anointed at Bethany**

**3** And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. **4** There were some who said to themselves indignantly, “Why was the ointment wasted like that? **5** For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” And they scolded her. **6** But Jesus said, “**Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has**

done a beautiful thing to me. **7** For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. **8** She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. **9** And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

### **Judas to Betray Jesus**

**10** Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. **11** And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him.

### **The Passover with the Disciples**

**12** And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, "Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" **13** And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, **14** and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' **15** And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us." **16** And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

**17** And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. **18** And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." **19** They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, "Is it I?" **20** He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. **21** For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."

### **Institution of the Lord's Supper**

**22** And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." **23** And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. **24** And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. **25** Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

### **Jesus Foretells Peter's Denial**

**26** And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. **27** And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away, for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’ **28** But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” **29** Peter said to him, “Even though they all fall away, I will not.” **30** And Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” **31** But he said emphatically, “If I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And they all said the same.

### **Jesus Prays in Gethsemane**

**32** And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” **33** And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. **34** And he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.” **35** And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. **36** And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.” **37** And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? **38** Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” **39** And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. **40** And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. **41** And he came the third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. **42** Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”

### **Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus**

**43** And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. **44** Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard.” **45** And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, “Rabbi!” And he kissed him. **46** And they laid hands on him and seized him. **47** But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. **48** And Jesus said to them, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? **49** Day after day I was with you in the temple

teaching, and you did not seize me. But let the Scriptures be fulfilled.” **50** And they all left him and fled.

### **A Young Man Flees**

**51** And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, **52** but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked.

### **Jesus Before the Council**

**53** And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. **54** And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire. **55** Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. **56** For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. **57** And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, **58** “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.’ ” **59** Yet even about this their testimony did not agree. **60** And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?” **61** But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” **62** And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” **63** And the high priest tore his garments and said, “What further witnesses do we need? **64** You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?” And they all condemned him as deserving death. **65** And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, “Prophecy!” And the guards received him with blows.

### **Peter Denies Jesus**

**66** And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came, **67** and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.” **68** But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you mean.” And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed. **69** And the servant girl saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, “This man is one of them.” **70** But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, “Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.” **71** But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know this man of whom you speak.” **72** And



immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” And he broke down and wept.

### **Jesus Delivered to Pilate**

**15** And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate. **2** And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him, “You have said so.” **3** And the chief priests accused him of many things. **4** And Pilate again asked him, “Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you.” **5** But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

### **Pilate Delivers Jesus to Be Crucified**

**6** Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. **7** And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. **8** And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. **9** And he answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” **10** For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. **11** But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. **12** And Pilate again said to them, “Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?” **13** And they cried out again, “Crucify him.” **14** And Pilate said to them, “Why? What evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him.” **15** So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

**16** And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor’s headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion. **17** And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. **18** And they began to salute him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” **19** And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him. **20** And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the...

### **Jesus Is...**

## Sermon 13 - Palm Sunday

### “Physician, Empty Thyself”

#### Philippians 2

Dear friends,

Our Epistle lesson for this Palm Sunday comes from Paul's letter to the church at Philippi. In this letter Paul writes to encourage the Philippians in the good work that they have been doing, to thank them for their personal service to him, and to teach them some things, and this epistle is the start of the “teaching things” part of Paul's letter.

**“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.”** Paul reminds them of the benefits they've received from being Christian. Comfort from God's love, encouragement from Christ, you have these things, given for free, Paul says. They do participate in the Holy Spirit, by eating and drinking Christ's body and blood, hearing his Word, and all that. So, on the basis of all of that, Paul gives his point about being of the same mind.

That is something worth remembering. We have the same mind, the same love, based on what we believe about Jesus. This is not something that we come up with or invent, it is one of the gifts that Jesus gives us. We are of the same mind because God has given us the same faith in the same Jesus. Just like our forgiveness, our faith, our unity as a church comes from outside of us. We gather around Jesus' body and blood together confessing hey, guess what, it really is Jesus' body and blood, it's also Jesus' bread and wine. We testify together that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, actually rose from the dead, and that it is vitally important for us to continue believing that because that's the basis of our hope. Since Jesus rose from the dead, we know He is truly God, we know He's

beaten death for us, and everything that happened on the cross is ours through faith. We have the same love. It's not a feeling of love for each other, we have the same love because Christ first loved us, and gave Himself up for us. That's what ties us together as church, what we believe, which we find in how we express those beliefs and how we stick to them. Both of those things are gifts from God.

Paul goes on. **“3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”** Sounds basic, and it is. This is that accord, we serve each other, we serve our neighbors, and so on. Now, the burning question is why we should do this, and can we even do this? Paul answers that in the next bit. **“5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”**

So Paul lays out God's will for us, then He points us to how God accomplishes that will in Jesus. I mean it. God wants us to be of one mind, one doctrine, one faith, one baptism, and so forth. But look at what he says. This is OURS in Christ Jesus, we already have this, we just hold onto what we've been given. Our work is maintenance, staying plugged into Jesus, learning about Him, hearing His Word, eating His body and blood, and so forth. We don't have to manufacture unity ourselves because it's ours, we have the same mind in Christ. We just need to maintain it. That's hard enough, particularly when we are selfish sinners surrounded by selfish sinners.

But our Savior is different, and that is good news for us. Paul goes into great detail about it. He says that Christ was God, He didn't exercise His rights as God. We see this in Jesus' life throughout the Gospels. The devil in the desert challenged Him to turn stones to bread, but He didn't. Why? Because human beings can't make stones into bread. Jesus

had that power, but He chose to get the food He needed the same way we get the food we need, by working for it. That's what Paul means when he says that Christ emptied Himself, he had all the power and the might of the God that created this universe, but he didn't use it unless God the Father told him to.

Jesus makes Himself a servant in more ways than one. Not only does He become man, but He commits to a course of action that will lead to His death. He didn't have to do this, but He did it out of His great love for His creation. He emptied Himself in that way as well. He made that mission His mission, to save mankind from their sins, to shed us His blood to redeem us. We take this for granted all the time. Of course Jesus would do this! What else would Jesus do but work to save us? Well, He could judge us. He could wipe us out and start over. But He didn't. He took the long road, the hard road. This is an act of amazing compassion, and a humbling one for us. That's what we hope in, that Jesus made this choice and did all of this for us.

Paul finishes this epistle lesson with by highlighting the reversal and the inversion that Jesus challenges us to hold to. **“9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”** Jesus Christ showed His love by emptying Himself for us, that makes sense. But now Paul is telling us that Jesus Christ is showing us His glory, His power, by emptying Himself. Jesus shows us that He is strong by becoming weak. He shows us that He's in charge by becoming a servant. Jesus takes the throne of heaven by leaving heaven and coming down to earth. It's a real mouthful for our minds to wrap around. We think of folks being in charge as taking the lead, and those beneath them following. Jesus flips that around, and He sets that tone for us in many places throughout the Gospels.

The crucifixion itself is this kind of inversion. It is the power of God being shown in powerless, it is the goodness of God being shown in evil. Killing Jesus is not a good thing

by any stretch of anyone's imagination, so why is this Friday Good Friday? Because God takes the evil of that murder and He uses it to pay for the sins of all mankind, He sheds the blood of His son to rescue us from the devil's kingdom. That same death takes place in us. We go to the baptismal font to die, we die when we repent of our sins, and we are raised to new life. The death of our sin leads to new life for us, that's Jesus' purpose.

Palm Sunday reminds us of what is glorious and great in God's sight. In God's sight, taking on flesh, becoming nothing, suffering, bleeding, and dying is His glory. That's what He came to do, that's what He does to us. It reminds us of what it means to be a child of God, to be a child of God is to die to ourselves, to give up our glory, our efforts, our agendas and serve His. That's why we have to die. None of that is natural to us. Serving the neighbor? Giving up ourselves? We're full of ourselves! But all that dies in Jesus, and that is a wonderful thing for us.

Amen.