

Home Service for March 29, 2026 Palm Sunday

Welcome and Announcements

You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

Everyone loves a parade—until they don't. Even as we wave our palms, we know that many lined the streets with jeers, not cheers. May our words of blessing and hope ring strongly, even when faced with the jeers and cruelty of the world.

Call to Worship:

Give thanks to God, who is truly good. Hosanna in the highest!
Praise Christ, whose love abounds with grace. Hosanna in the highest!
Welcome the Spirit with songs of praise. Hosanna in the highest!

Opening Prayer:

Christ of both celebration and sorrow, be with us in our time of worship today and in the week ahead. Help us embrace the fullness of your story, both the triumph and the tragedy. Strengthen us to proclaim blessing and hope, no matter the circumstances, that we may be children of your promise, both now and forevermore. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Faithful One, we want to be as faithful to you as you are to us. Help us sing your praises joyously and proudly, even when the jeering crowds frighten us. Walk with us in moments of celebration and times of trouble. Guide our steps, save our lives, and help us bring your message of love to the world. Hosanna, O faithful One; hosanna in the highest. Amen.

Words of Assurance:

Rejoice and be glad, for God's steadfast love endures forever!

Read Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

²Let Israel say:

“His love endures forever.”

- 19 Open for me the gates of the righteous;
I will enter and give thanks to the Lord.
- 20 This is the gate of the Lord
through which the righteous may enter.
- 21 I will give you thanks, for you answered me;
you have become my salvation.
- 22 The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
- 23 the Lord has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes.
- 24 The Lord has done it this very day;
let us rejoice today and be glad.
- 25 Lord, save us!
Lord, grant us success!
- 26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
From the house of the Lord we bless you.^[a]
- 27 The Lord is God,
and he has made his light shine on us.
- With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession
up^[b] to the horns of the altar.
- 28 You are my God, and I will praise you;
you are my God, and I will exalt you.
- 29 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

Prayers of the People:

God of Grace: On this day we praise you for all that your gracious Son said and did during his last week on earth; for his humility, which preferred service to rule; for his boldness in the face of mortal enemies; for his touching sorrow over Jerusalem; for his gifts of bread and wine to be shared in remembrance of the gift of his life; for his words of faith and forgiveness even while dying in agony on the cross.

Long ago, on the first Palm Sunday, the children Jesus loved greeted him with squeals of joy. We pray for the children today; for children orphaned by senseless wars; for children born unwanted and unloved; for children abused by their own parents. Arouse our consciences, righteous God, about the fate of children who are being carelessly sacrificed on the altars of nationalism, imperialism, economic or religious dogma. And energize us, we pray, to help at least one child in need of help.

On this first day of our Lord's last week on earth, we consecrate to you the services of worship we have planned for this Holy Week. Let your Spirit grasp us and reshape us through our self-searching, our grieving, our rejoicing. Let not this reliving of our Lord's passion and death leave us uninvolved or unchanged. Rather let this week be for us an occasion for re-examining our priorities, achieving greater integrity, and moving into costlier discipleship. In the name of our Savior and Lord, Jesus. Amen

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is The kingdom, and the power and the glory forever and ever. AMEN

Read the Lesson: Isaiah 50:4-9a

The Sovereign Lord has given me a well-instructed tongue,
to know the word that sustains the weary.

He wakens me morning by morning,
wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed.

⁵The Sovereign Lord has opened my ears;
I have not been rebellious,
I have not turned away.

⁶I offered my back to those who beat me,
my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard;
I did not hide my face
from mocking and spitting.

⁷Because the Sovereign Lord helps me,
I will not be disgraced.

Therefore have I set my face like flint,
and I know I will not be put to shame.

⁸He who vindicates me is near.
Who then will bring charges against me?
Let us face each other!

Who is my accuser?
Let him confront me!

⁹It is the Sovereign Lord who helps me.
Who will condemn me?

They will all wear out like a garment;
the moths will eat them up.

Read the Epistle Lesson: Philippians 2:5-11

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

- ⁶Who, being in very nature^[a] God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
⁷rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature^[b] of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
⁸And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!
⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Matthew 21:1-11

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”

⁴This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

⁵“Say to Daughter Zion,
‘See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”^[a]

⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. ⁷They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. ⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,
“Hosanna^[b] to the Son of David!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”^[c]

“Hosanna^[d] in the highest heaven!”

¹⁰ When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?”

¹¹ The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

Message

I would like to look at the first Palm Sunday through the eyes of a young boy, let us call him Jacob, as I summarize a children’s story about that day. It was a day young Jacob would not soon forget. It was Passover week and Jewish people from all over the world were streaming into Jerusalem. He had seen great crowds before, but on this pilgrim coming day, something was different. Jacob was drawn to the crowds by the mighty noise they were making. He looked down from the hillside on which he lived. He could barely see what was happening. He could see the crowd moving slowly toward Jerusalem. In the center of the crowd, he could see a man riding on a donkey. Everyone seemed to be giving the man in the center special attention. As the crowd drew near, he could see them spreading their garments on the road before the man. Others were cutting down branches from Palm trees and laying these before the man and his donkey.

As the enormous crowd draws near, Jacob can hear what they were shouting. They crying out, “Hosanna to the Son of David” Again, “Hosanna, blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord.”

Young Jacob wonders, “What could it all mean? He hurries down the hillside as the crowd are making its way on the road. He grabs the hand of one of the pilgrims and asks, “What’s going on?” The man replies, “What’s going on? Why the king is coming, that is what is going on. See him ride on the royal animal. In olden days, all of our kings rode on a royal animal on the day of their coronation. The promises of a Messiah are now coming true. Here he is. See him riding there. See his dignity, see his majesty. His name is Jesus, Jesus from Nazareth. He is the Messiah, he is the King. The king is coming, Hosanna! Help us now Jesus! Save us now Jesus.”

Young Jacob still cannot understand completely. So, he joins the great crowd hoping he will understand more clearly. He finds the stranger that he had talked with a little earlier. “How can this Jesus help us,” he asks the stranger. “What kind of help can he bring? Why do we cry our Hosannas?”

The man decides he will have to sit down with Jacob and explain exactly what is happening. They leave the crowd and find a shady place under a tree. “See the man over there, the tall one with ragged clothes”, he says as he points to a passing man in the parade. “He is a very poor man. He is crying for help, he is crying for an end to his poverty and oppression.”

“Now, see the young men over there,” says the stranger, pointing to a group of rough looking men. “They want to fight in an army that will drive the Romans from the land.” “They are crying for help, they are saying their Hosannas to the Messiah, the king who will lead them against their enemies.” “Others are crying for restoration. They may want their health restored, maybe their relationship to God restored, maybe they have a disagreement with a friend, they are crying for the Messiah to restore that relationship.”

The stranger gets up and leaves young Jacob with his thoughts. Young Jacob thinks, “Hosanna, Hosanna to the Messiah, the king, Jesus. Jesus save me, save me from hunger, save me from the slow death of not having enough food. Save me from watching my father die from the evil spirit inside of him. Save my father, Hosanna, Hosanna, Messiah the king Jesus.”

Jacob gets up from his place under the tree and joins the crowd as it makes its way into the city. Yes indeed, thinks Jacob, this shall be a day that I will long remember.

But unlike young Jacob, who wonders, who is confused, hopefully we, you and I know the rest of the story. We know about Jesus. We know just what kind of king he is. A king who did not come with a great army, but a king who came in humility as Paul says in Philippians, “And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient even unto death, even death on a cross.” Our king came not to conquer, but to serve. He came not in glory, but in humility. He came not to be served, but to serve. To give of himself in the most complete way, to die for each of our sakes. Jesus, the king, who came riding into his coronation on that first Palm Sunday, He came not to be crowned with jewels, not to be robed in a cape of splendor, but he came to be crowned with a circle of thrones, and instead of being clothed in majesty, he was stripped, of his clothes.

Jacob was confused about who Jesus was, he did not fully understand, but Jesus knew full well what that day meant. He knew this was just the beginning of something great, something wonderful and at the same time, Jesus knew the suffering that would come, the pain and the agony of the cross of Good Friday.

Many that day came to see the Messiah riding into town. Many had their own ideas of what the Messiah, the king would be. Some thought he would be the one who would drive the Romans from the land, others thought he would be the royal king, like David, one who would give guidance to their lives, and still others, maybe like Jacob, who thought the Messiah, the king could help his father, would help those who were suffering from the brokenness of life.

Jesus understood all the different thoughts that people had about him. Palm Sunday was the day when even knowing that people are fickle, that they would get tired of parades and go home, Jesus came riding. It was a day when, knowing that religious leaders like things neat and tidy and were known for killing reformers, Jesus came riding. It was a day when, knowing that people will sell their souls for a handful of silver, knowing that even good friends will sleep while he suffer, it was a day when knowing all this, Jesus still came riding.

Jesus knew that the crowd would turn against Him on Good Friday, but he came riding anyway. Knowing that even his most trusted disciples would not stay awake in the garden as He prayed for strength to endure the cross, Jesus came riding. Knowing that He would be sold for 30 pieces of silver, Jesus still came riding.

Jesus came riding because he knew that all of people of his day and each of us today and those in the future needed to have Him ride into our lives as the Messiah and king who would save us from the power of hell through his resurrection on Easter Sunday. He came riding because he knew we needed his kingship in our lives today and every day. Amen.

Benediction:

Beloved, as we move into the week ahead, may God bless you with the insight to know the way of Jesus, the courage to hold firm to the way of Jesus when the crowds try to lead you astray, and the strength to follow the way of Jesus, the way of God's steadfast love that never fails. Amen.