

***ctkAlive!* Scripture Study**
Lent 2020—A Cycle Readings
Session 3—From “Hosanah” to “Crucify”



[Henry Anderson](#), *Triumphal Entry*

*The whole city was disturbed.
The people asked, ‘Who is this man?’ “
Matthew 21:11*

Introduction

Opening Prayer (slowly . . . follow the pause marks (/ //).

Leader Easter joy is already rising in our hearts. Let us pray:

All God of light and vision, / just as your Son entered Jerusalem for the last time, / we now approach another Holy Week.

Leader Open our minds to the word of Scripture. Let your wisdom enlighten our study. // Help us to be aware during the coming week / of all that your love has done for us.

Leader We ask this in the name of Jesus, / our Risen Lord.

All Amen.

Our Lenten Summary

[Given that Lent and Easter 2020 are not “normal” times for us, let’s still ask ourselves:

Looking back over this Lenten Season during which we have pondered the Sunday readings, let's now reflect . . .

— *What new insights have I gained from these sessions during Lent this year?*

— *If I want this to be a truly reflective Holy Week, how will I adjust my life-routine to make it so?*

— *What is my favorite liturgy of Holy Week (Palm Sunday through Good Friday).*

What makes that day/liturgy so special to me? How will I compensate for being unable this year to participate (in person) at these beautiful liturgies?

Overview of the Theme of the Sixth Sunday of Lent—Palm Sunday (Leader)

We have arrived at the most important week of the liturgical year. Unfortunately, we will not be able to participate as a community to ponder together the implications of Christ's death and Resurrection.

In sports, they say that the worst thing that can happen to a coach is to get a "vote of confidence" from the university president or the owner of the team. In many cases, it's a sure sign that the coach is about to be fired. We're reminded of this on Passion (Palm) Sunday when the crowds welcome Jesus into the holy city of Jerusalem (their "vote of confidence").

In less than a week, those Hosanas will turn to jeers and shouts of, "Crucify him." What happened to Jesus cautions us to keep our motivation for engaging in Christian life and ministry clear. If our motive is to gain attention and approval, we might be in for a fall. Jesus accepted the acclaim of the crowds, but it didn't go to his head or turn him away from the final confrontation that could only end in his death.

He knew that his death would not be his last word. Resurrection would vindicate him. But, the path to resurrection we now call the Via Crucis (the Way of the Cross). Perhaps you had the good fortune to visit the Holy Land and follow in his footsteps. In you haven't traveled to Jerusalem, you are familiar with the four Gospel accounts of his private and public actions during the final week of his life.

The *first reading*, we recall Isaiah's calling, gift, and ministry of encouragement to the endangered and discouraged Israelite community: "(I) speak to the weary a word that will rouse them." After nearly 3,000 years, we still proclaim these words and take comfort in them.

The *antiphonal Psalm 95* (verses 1-10), like most of the other 149 poem/songs of David, assures us of God's shepherd-like care. "He is our God, and we, his people; the flock he leads and pastures. Would, that today, you heard his voice!" These thereby relieve us of concern about our unworthiness. Our good shepherd is watching over us day and night.

In the *second* reading, St. Paul reminds the Philippian community—and us today—that ours is a continuously generous, forgiving, and self-emptying God.

In the Palm Sunday gospel, we can only virtually/spiritually wave our palms. We are invited—again—to believe and trust that our meager personal and ministerial efforts do make a difference in the world, even when they seem small and overshadowed by our failings. Our efforts do make a difference, whether we are hailed for them . . . or “crucified” for them.

First Reading: From the Prophet Isaiah, Chapter 50, Verses 4-7

The Lord Yahweh has taught me so I speak as his disciple and I know how to sustain the weary.

Morning after morning he wakes me up to hear, to listen like a disciple. The Lord Yahweh has opened my ear.

I have not rebelled, nor have I withdrawn.

I offered my back to those who strike me, my cheeks to those who pulled my beard; neither did I shield my face from blows, spittle and disgrace.

I have not despaired, for the Lord Yahweh comes to my help. So, like a flint I set my face, knowing that I will not be disgraced.

Personal Reflection

— *In what ways do I perform that “sustaining”/“lifting up” ministry for others?*

— *Who among my family and friends might say of me, “S/he always makes me feel better about myself, more hopeful about my future”? How do I respond when someone thanks, not for some material gift, but for a more personal gift of time, presence, encouragement, modeling . . .?*

— *Who, among my family, friends, and acquaintances is most likely to “sustain me: (support me/lift me up), when I am feeling discouraged about my life-path (“What’s it all about?”)?*

Antiphonal Psalm 95: 1-10

Come, let us sing to Yahweh,
let us make a joyful sound
to the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come before him giving thanks,
with music and songs of praise.
For Yahweh is the great God,
the great King above all gods.
In his hand, are the depths of the earth
and the mountain heights.

The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hand shaped the dry land.
Come and worship; let us bow down,
kneel before Yahweh, our Maker.
He is our God, and we, his people;
the flock he leads and pastures.
Would, that today, you heard his voice!
Do not be stubborn, as at Meribah,
in the desert, on that day at Massah,
when your ancestors challenged me,
and they put me to the test.
For forty years they wearied me, and I said,
“They are a people of inconstant heart;
they have not known my ways.”

Personal Reflection

- *What connection do I find between our Palm Sunday theme and the lyrics sung by the psalmist and chosen by liturgists for this day?*
- *Take some time to “google” Meribah and Massah. How do these two examples fit the theme of Palm Sunday and the rest of Holy Week?*

Second Reading: From the Letter of St. Paul to the Philippians 2:6-11

Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking on the nature of a servant, made in human likeness, and, in his appearance, found, as a man.
He humbled himself by being obedient, to death, death on the cross.
That is why God exalted him and gave him the name which outshines all names, so, that, at the name of Jesus all knees should bend in heaven, on earth and among the dead, and all tongues proclaim, that Christ Jesus is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Personal Reflection

- *What does ‘self-emptying’ mean in my personal life circumstances? In other words, how is Jesus asking me to “empty” and “humble” myself for others (as a parent, spouse, lover, friend, employee, vowed religious, lay minister, etc.)?*
- *What worries me about this concept of self-emptying? For example, what will be left of me and for me, when I give God my all every day? What will be left of me, for me?*

Gospel Proclamation From St. Matthew (21:1-11)

When they drew near Jerusalem and arrived at Bethphage, on the mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying, "Go to the village in front of you, and there you will find a donkey tied up with its colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says something to you, say: 'The Lord needs them.' He will send them back immediately."

This happened in fulfillment of what the prophet [*Zechariah 9:9*] said: 'Say to the daughter of Zion: See, your king comes to you in all simplicity, riding on a donkey, a beast of burden, with its colt.'

The disciples went as Jesus had instructed them, and they brought the donkey with its colt.

Then they threw their cloaks on its back, and Jesus sat on it.

Many people also spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The people who walked ahead of Jesus and those who followed him began to shout: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna, glory in the highest!"

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was disturbed. The people asked, "Who is this man?"

And the crowd answered, "This is the Prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee."

Personal Reflection

Notice Jesus does not speak during Matthew's retelling of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

— *What non-verbal message(s) did Jesus give to his followers, as he entered the Holy City?*

— *What would I say, if someone were to ask me, as the bystanders asked, "Who is this man"?*

— *Matthew's "Hosanna" and "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" are proclaimed at every Mass. Why do my 'Hosannas' at Mass fail to excite me? Isn't it the same person—the Risen Christ—who is present to us in community, in Scripture, and the Eucharist? What will I do this Palm Sunday to make my acclamations more than just rote liturgical recitation?*

Journaling Prompts

Take some time to write about the insights you gained reflecting on the four readings for Palm Sunday.

(cont.)

Or,

Put yourself at the gates to the city of Jerusalem. Though it may be difficult, suppose this is the first time you've seen the man, Jesus. He's riding a donkey, and a small crowd has gathered to greet him. The people are waving palms and shouting / singing, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna, glory in the highest!"
Sit with that experience. Take it in.

- *What is the first thought that comes to mind?*
- *How do you respond to what you see happening?*

Questions (Leader)

Feel free to send me any questions you might have.
Feedback is also welcome.

Preview of Next Session

Easter Sunday

Acts 10:34-43 (The new "Jesus Jews" take their first steps to proclaim the Risen Messiah)
Antiphon Psalm—118 ("If the Lord is with me, I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?")

Colossians 3:1-4 (If you believe in Jesus as Lord, then what . . . ?)

John 20:1-9 (Mary of Magdala is the first to discover the empty tomb.)

Recommended Reading:

[*The Passion and the Cross*](#) by [Fr. Ronald Rolheiser, OMI](#)

("This profound and compassionate spiritual meditation will be of inestimable use to anyone who has ever suffered or struggled in life—which is to say, everyone." — James Martin, S.J., author of *Jesus: A Pilgrimage*)

[*This War is the Passion*](#) by [Caryll Houselander](#)

("She seemed to see every day for the first time, and the driest of doctrinal considerations shone out like a restored picture when she had finished with it." — Msgr. Ronald Knox)

(cont.)

Closing Prayer

(Source: <http://desperatepreacher.com/prayers.htm>)

Leader Let us pray as we accompany our King to Jerusalem. // Let's not forget our RCIA candidates, / who are preparing for baptism / and full membership in our community.

All: Heavenly Father, / your Son came to us humbly on a donkey's back. / Now, he sits exalted at your right hand.

Leader: As we enter into Holy Week, / contemplating his path of suffering, / help us to be loyal and steadfast disciples, / that we may always hear his word, / follow his teachings, / and live in his Spirit.

All: Prepare our hearts for that day when every knee shall bow . . .

Leader: . . . and every tongue confess / that he is Lord and King, / to your eternal glory.

All: Amen.

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