

# Palm Sunday

April 9, 2017

Campbell United Methodist Church

## The Call to Worship

Today is Palm Sunday, the first day of the holiest week of the year in the Christian tradition. Today we re-enact the scene of that first day, long ago. The story told in the Gospels is this:

When they approached Jerusalem and came to the town called Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus gave two disciples a task. He said to them, "Go into the village over there. As soon as you enter, you will find a donkey tied up and a colt with it. Untie them and bring them to me. If anybody says anything to you, say that the Lord needs it." He sent them off right away.

The disciples went and did just as Jesus had ordered them. They brought the donkey and the colt and laid their clothes on them. Then Jesus sat on them.

And when Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up. "Who is this?" they asked. The crowds answered, "It's the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

*There's a voice, strong and clear,  
ringing out far and near,  
"Let justice roll down, let justice roll down!" Like the rush of a stream,  
comes a powerful dream,  
let justice roll down, justice roll down!*

A large crowd had gathered. They spread their clothes on the road, in a sign of honor for the one who was coming. Others cut palm branches off the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds in front of him and behind him shouted,

Hosanna to the Son of David!  
Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Hosanna in the highest!

One Voice: Holy, living and justice-making God, we join your parade this day.

**All the People: We come to add our voices: Your kingdom come. Let justice roll!**

One Voice: Give us courage for the path and a heart for each other.

**All the People: Your kingdom come. Let justice roll!**

One Voice: We yearn for the time when earth looks like heaven. The day is coming!

**All the People: Your kingdom come. Let justice roll!**

*“The Call to Prayer”* in five voices

*Voice 1:* As I walk the streets of this beautiful and burdened land

*Voice 2:* I hear a sweet melodious voice that rings out -

*Voice 3:* it rings out across the mountains and the plains;

*Voice 4:* It rings out in the streets and in the holy places;

*Voice 5:* it rings out in the marketplace and in the sea.

*Voice 1:* The voice is captivating. It calls to me.

Its words are foreign and yet familiar,

and as if drawn to the beat, my body responds to its rhythm.

*Voice 2:* At this moment I forget my individualism and isolation

I recall that the call is heard around the world--

at different times and many places

All are called to join the holy conversation that is prayer.

*Voice 3:* This holy dialogue is spoken in tongues I cannot understand.

It is shared with those standing next to me

and those across the globe.

*Voice 4:* It is punctuated with needs I may never have...and ones so similar to mine...

*All Voices:* **...that we speak in unison.**

*Voice 5:* We cannot be that different if we share this same call,

for the call I hear, the call we hear, is only a reminder

of the call you gave us long ago--to remain in this

holy dialogue through the language of love.

*All Voices:* **We cannot be that different if we share this same call**

*Voice 1:* to pray to One greater than ourselves.

*Voice 2:* Allah

*Voice 3:* Jehovah

*Voice 4:* Elohim

*Voice 5:* Adonai

*Voice 1:* Yahweh

*Voice 2:* Dios

*Voice 3:* Ngewo

*Voice 4:* Yatah

*Voice 5:* God

*Voice 1:* May my heart be as a minaret that calls me into this sweet and holy conversation. As I pray may I remember that I do not pray alone; rather,

*Voice 2:* my voice joins the cacophony of voices around the world in praise of the One.

*Voice 3:* May I remember that we, too,

*All voices repeating randomly: ... we, too...*

All Voices: **are one. Amen.**

*For everyone born, a place at the table,  
For everyone born, clean water and bread,  
A shelter, a space, a safe place for growing,  
for everyone born, a star overhead  
And God will delight when we are creators of justice and joy,  
Yes, God will delight—when we are creators of justice, justice and joy!*

**The Message/Sermon this Palm Sunday was a performance of**

*Let Justice Roll: Song from a Birmingham Jail*

Music by Mark Miller

Text from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"

Sung by the Chancel Choir and Joyful Notes

Soloists: Roxanne Kohlin, James Creer

Introduction:

When Jesus came from the countryside into the city of Jerusalem that year, he knew he was 'calling the question', raising the stakes on what it meant to follow him. It is time, he said with the actions of this week, when it is no longer enough to admire me, or to applaud my good intentions.

Jesus came into Jerusalem—riding on a donkey—to put people in a position where they had to say 'yes' or 'no' to his invitation to be part of God's work of creating justice, changing the world until justice might 'roll down like an endless flow of water.'

Yes, I am with you no matter what the cost.  
Or no, I cannot let go of what holds me in this place.

During this week—the last week of Jesus’ life, the week that would end in his death—the stakes got higher. It was less and less possible to remain on the sidelines, either cheering as part of a big, anonymous crowd that lined the parade route; or standing on the fringe, throwing out cynical word-bombs.

This was a week that called for commitment.  
A statement of your ultimate loyalty.  
This is a week that calls for that still.

### Prayers of the People

All through Lent we have been closing our hands—making a tight fist—and then opening them as a sign of letting go, of giving up the ways in which we hang onto the things that separate us and kept us separated—cut off—from the open-heartedness that will bring justice. With clenched fists, we hold on to

Prejudice and privilege,  
resistance to learning and changing,  
unwillingness to reach out,  
fear of those who are different from us,  
a reluctance to forgive ourselves or those who have hurt us.

As we have opened our hands, perhaps we have begun to open to God. To the prophet’s call to let the waters of God’s Spirit wash over us, to regenerate our commitment to make a better world. Today I invite you, if you are comfortable... and maybe even if you are uncomfortable but willing... to reach out and connect with the hand of someone else. As the Lent season moves into Holy Week, we are reminded that Jesus too moved out of his comfort zone. The One who showed us the way to right relationship with our neighbor. Maybe connecting in spite of our own resistance is the *only* way to create the possibility of peace in a divided world.

We come before you, God of Justice,  
We come knowing that there are moments when we feel ready to walk hand-in-hand in the march for love...and others when we shrink back into the crowd—afraid, uncertain, uncomfortable.  
Thank you for your forgiveness is unending,  
Your invitation to join the parade at any moment.  
Open us to know your unconditional love that does not wait for our readiness.  
In your surprising grace.  
Move us closer to compassion and courage

to speak up and to stand up for what is right and good and loving.

And then help us to hear when you call us away from solitude into community; when you summon us from selfishness into sharing; when you need us no longer to be spectators, but partners in your work of healing, repairing, the world.

Hear our prayers today for our friends and loved ones.  
For those whose names and faces and burdens we carry in our hearts.

And for people everywhere whose names and faces we don't know, but who are your friends. People for whom your heart bends and breaks.

In silence we open ourselves. We pray for the things left unnamed, the hurts of which we are unaware. For the deepest yearnings of our hearts—and your heart.