

## **April 5 2020 – Palm Less Palm Sunday**

**Welcome to Everyone for our third online worship service. A few notices first about church in time of covid-19:**

- **The Public Health & Provincially mandated closure of churches continues through May 4<sup>th</sup> (at the earliest). We will continue to keep you updated on Facebook, via website and by telephone, as we are able. Although the church building is closed, voicemail is checked regularly at 519-653-4721 the church number or 519-588-7701 Pastor. Please call if you need a pastoral telephone visit, or if we can help in any way. It is impossible for Pastor to call everyone in turn, so she is relying on you to reach out if you need a call.**
- **You will find this worship service most helpful if you read the sections out loud at home 😊 And sing along 😊 Brad also recommends looking up other lyric videos that pop up - Glory to God at home 😊**
- **As far as possible, the regular work of the church continues. Lay leaders are meeting using online meeting tools, and this past week, a few lay leaders met online to draft a Terms of Reference for continuing our missional redevelopment explorations. Our goal is to share information and be “ready to roll” when lockdown is over.**
- **Bonnie Scott continues to prepare and share information as widely as possible for those who do not have internet access. Brad continues to come in and practice. Pastor continues to visit, via telephone, to accompany however possible, and to prepare worship materials. Alex continues to bear the responsibility of treasurer and reminds us that buying and selling maple syrup is a good way to occupy our time 😊 If you order we will arrange delivery for Easter Sunday breakfast 😊**
- **We will go through Holy Week and Easter without physically meeting. When we re-open, we will have our Easter service. This Holy Week stay tuned for online or mailout worship resources for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday.**
- **Please stay in touch with each other. Call each other. Visit on the telephone, and where safe, through closed glass doors, and across fences. Let us know how we can help if you are shut in but need groceries or something delivered. Keep safe, and keep on praying. Think of this time as our time in the tomb, with our Saviour, from which we will be delivered soon 😊 Call Pastor if you need to talk, because she cannot possibly call everyone 😊**
- **May God bless you and keep you safe ...**

## **Palm Sunday – for our context today:**

Usually, on Palm Sunday, we would begin our service with a procession from the Narthex, after a reading of the Gospel story from Luke 19:28-40, which tells of Jesus' travel to Jerusalem on a special-order donkey, and how people laid their cloaks out for his entry. It was a celebration time, as the people prepared the way for the Lord. But also, if they had been paying attention, it was preparing for a very difficult transition: that of Jesus' death on the cross.

Jesus' death and resurrection are the instruments of our salvation. Through his suffering, we are liberated from sin, into life eternal alongside Jesus. So today, as we mark the beginning of Holy Week with Palm Sunday celebrated at home, we focus our worship on preparing the way for our Lord, through the hymn "The Days of Elijah" and the whole notion of Jubilee, a time when the burden of debt is dispensed, according to the laws given to Moses for God's people.

We would usually wave palms, and process, to remember Jesus' procession into the city of Jerusalem. If you would like to mark that time, take a coat and lay it down on the floor by a doorway – remembering Jesus' entry into the suffering that eventually sets us all free.

**Please take a few moments of silence and deep breaths  
to centre yourself for worship before you continue ...**

## **Confession: A Prayer During COVID times.**

During this season of Lent, much has changed in our world.

We want to visit and hug and hold hands.

We want to throw open our arms and our doors, sit together.

And we are called to respect the nature of this virus and refrain from contact.

We know that we are incapable of keeping each other safe through our own efforts only.

We confess of our weakness in keeping safe distances, in maintaining social isolation, in keeping the vulnerable ones as safe as possible.

We confess of our weakness in NOT reaching out by the means available to us: by telephone or internet, to encourage and cheer each other up.

We confess of our weaknesses in keeping strong faith and the encouraging message of eternal life in the forefront of our consciousness. We confess of succumbing to despair and the dark invasion of news into our Christ-enlightened consciousness.

Forgive us of these ways Holy God. Forgive us of our need to be in control, to hold on to old ways, and help us in our submission to the requirements of this time.

**Amen.**

We hear the assurance of God's forgiveness:  
 Jesus Christ on the altar holds God's doorway ever open.  
 Jesus on the cross ensures we have a way home, where all is love:  
 Through his broken body, through his blood that was shed,  
 We are welcomed back into our home with God  
 Who receives us with love,  
 Forgiving and renewing us every time we knock.  
 Thanks be to God.     **Amen.**

**Kyrie Eleison: (#23 Sing the Circle Wide) (Haiti)**

*Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison.  
 Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison.*

*Sauvez moi la vie, O Jesus je vous prie, Kyrie  
 Sauvez nous la vie, O Jesus je vous prie,*

*Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison  
 Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison.*

*(you can listen to the Kyrie on youtube here – dancing is encouraged ☺ )*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDHQoSfX-RQ>

**Greeting**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**Prayer of the Day:** *(we pray together ... where-ever we may be)*

**God of all compassion, All-powerful God, in the mystery of Jesus' journey to the cross, you offer your eternal, infinite life to the world. Gather us around your Son: Jesus, our Redeemer and Way-Maker. Amen.**

**The Gospel Reading: Luke 19:28-40.**

After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, "Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it.'" So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They said, "The Lord needs it." Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying,

"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!

Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!"

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop." He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out." (NRSV)

Word of God, word of life. ***Thanks be to God.***

***Psalm 31 represented in song ... Shepherd Me O God ... (Marty Haugen)***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wP3eGsqGWZk>

**The Epistle Reading: Philippians 2:5-11**

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. [NRSV].

Word of God, word of life. ***Thanks be to God.\****

Acclamation of the Word: The Days of Elijah – lyric video below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8Tpnytkxaw>

click here for video of reading & sermon:

<https://youtu.be/XmQTO4tJY8Q>

## **The Holy Word according to 1 Kings 18:17-39**

### ***C: Glory to you O Lord.***

The moment Ahab saw Elijah he said, "So it's you, old troublemaker!"

"It's not I who has caused trouble in Israel," said Elijah, "but you and your government—you've dumped God's ways and commands and run off after the local gods, the Baals. Here's what I want you to do: Assemble everyone in Israel at Mount Carmel. And make sure that the special pets of Jezebel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of the local gods, the Baals, and the four hundred prophets of the whore goddess Asherah, are there."

So Ahab summoned everyone in Israel, particularly the prophets, to Mount Carmel.

Elijah challenged the people: "How long are you going to sit on the fence? If God is the real God, follow him; if it's Baal, follow him. Make up your minds!"

Nobody said a word; nobody made a move.

Then Elijah said, "I'm the only prophet of God left in Israel; and there are 450 prophets of Baal. Let the Baal prophets bring up two oxen; let them pick one, butcher it, and lay it out on an altar on firewood—but don't ignite it. I'll take the other ox, cut it up, and lay it on the wood. But neither will I light the fire. Then you pray to your gods and I'll pray to God. The god who answers with fire will prove to be, in fact, God."

All the people agreed: "A good plan—do it!"

Elijah told the Baal prophets, "Choose your ox and prepare it. You go first, you're the majority. Then pray to your god, but don't light the fire."

So they took the ox he had given them, prepared it for the altar, then prayed to Baal. They prayed all morning long, "O Baal, answer us!" But nothing happened—not so much as a whisper of breeze. Desperate, they jumped and stomped on the altar they had made.

By noon, Elijah had started making fun of them, taunting, "Call a little louder—he is a god, after all. Maybe he's off meditating somewhere or other, or maybe he's gotten involved in a project, or maybe he's on vacation. You don't suppose he's overslept, do you, and needs to be waked up?" They prayed louder and louder, cutting themselves with swords and knives—a ritual common to them—until they were covered with blood.

This went on until well past noon. They used every religious trick and strategy they knew to make something happen on the altar, but nothing happened—not so much as a whisper, not a flicker of response.

Then Elijah told the people, “Enough of that—it’s my turn. Gather around.” And they gathered. He then put the altar back together for by now it was in ruins. Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes of Jacob, the same Jacob to whom God had said, “From now on your name is Israel.” He built the stones into the altar in honor of God. Then Elijah dug a fairly wide trench around the altar. He laid firewood on the altar, cut up the ox, put it on the wood, and said, “Fill four buckets with water and drench both the ox and the firewood.” Then he said, “Do it again,” and they did it. Then he said, “Do it a third time,” and they did it a third time. The altar was drenched and the trench was filled with water.

When it was time for the sacrifice to be offered, Elijah the prophet came up and prayed, “O God, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, make it known right now that you are God in Israel, that I am your servant, and that I’m doing what I’m doing under your orders. Answer me, God; O answer me and reveal to this people that you are God, the true God, and that you are giving these people another chance at repentance.”

Immediately the fire of God fell and burned up the offering, the wood, the stones, the dirt, and even the water in the trench.

All the people saw it happen and fell on their faces in awed worship, exclaiming, “God is the true God! God is the true God!” *(The Message Translation)*

The Gospel of our Lord. ***Praise to you, O Christ.***\*

### **Message (imagine Pastor Janaki’s voice here!)**

A few weeks ago as the anthem at the start of worship, Brad and our beloved choir blessed us with the song, “The Days of Elijah”. The song uses some powerful words from scripture to celebrate the coming of our Lord, words like:

“These are the Days of Elijah, declaring the word of the Lord.”

Before we went into COVID lockdown, I talked with Brad and Nick about using this song, and the ideas in the words to focus our Palm Sunday worship service. I had no idea at the time that we would not be meeting in person at church to worship. But the song is no less appropriate to celebrate Palm Sunday, and especially this palm less Sunday, when we find ourselves, most definitely, in the “days of great trials”.

But to understand the days of Elijah, we have to understand a bit more about what it meant, and how Elijah declared the word of the Lord. For me to begin by explaining about Baals and altars might not make very much sense. So let me draw some parallel examples from our current reality.

Think of pre-COVID life ... when we had the freedom to run out to the grocery store or the movie theatre any old time we liked. When hugs were taken for granted. When maybe income was taken for granted, and simple things like being able to drive somewhere to visit loved ones, or accompany someone to the hospital. Travel for vacations were taken for granted and the presence of everything in health care that we might need was taken for granted.

Toilet paper, hand sanitizer, gloves, masks – all things we took for granted.

Pre-COVID life allowed us to use resources without thinking too hard: whether groceries or what we now call “non-essential services”. That life allowed us to make ourselves servants to a market-driven economy, in which our own consumerism, our own hunger for material and spacial comforts drove many of our practices. One of the things I miss most of all is being able to go sit in a coffee shop and read or write, where there are other people around ... Maybe we were worshipping other gods before COVID:

- the gods of convenience,
- the gods of individualism,
- the gods of materialism
- maybe these gods had us enslaved with debt,
- with ignoring our own spiritual hunger,
- with bright shiny things ... that tried but could never replace our God.

We could call these gods “Baals” – a collective name for a bunch of non sovereign Gods ... not Creator, not Jehovah, not Yahweh, not God the Father Son and Holy Spirit, but a bunch of other gods who had gotten in the lead and were running our lives.

Now we have a context.

Elijah was a prophet who lived in a time when many people worshipped Baals, and not the God of Israel. In the time when Elijah is trying to call people back to faithfulness in God over their Baals, he throws down a challenge:

Let’s both build altars.  
 Let’s both put slaughtered oxen on them.  
 Let’s pray to our God to ignite the fire.  
 Let’s see whose God prevails ...

Elijah is a very self-confident prophet ... some might say he was cocky. He doesn’t just build an altar and put the firewood on it and put the slaughtered animal on it. No that’s not good enough for Elijah. He digs a trench around his altar, then he drenches everything with buckets of water until the trench is full.

Then and only then does he call upon God to light the fire.

And he does this after the Baal prophets, the whole crowd of them, try their best to get their Baals to light their fire by praying, then by cutting themselves ... I mean they are a mess in a big bleeding heap by the time it is Elijah's turn.

But whose fire do you think gets lit?

It is the water-soaked firewood, with the water in the trench, and the slaughtered bull all watered down that ignites and burns like nobody's business.

### **This is the God we have faith in.**

Now you must realize, this would not have been nearly as impressive if everything had been dry! It took the disdainfulness of the wet set up, along with the failure of the false gods, to illuminate the brilliance of God's faithfulness in the midst of a time when the people of God were going astray.

So ... here we are:

Three weeks ago it was like the first bucket of water got dumped, here in Waterloo region, a few confirmed cases. We were still going around business as usual with some fringe fear. Baal business as usual.

Two week ago was like the second bucket of water got dumped ... church was ordered closed. Some other places closed. But lots of things were still open. Distractions (other than the news) were still available to us. I remember planning on going to the movies ...

One week ago ... things closed down. Cases skyrocketed and continue to rise, and the trench is filling with the waters of our fears, our grief at the loss of life as we knew it, our grief of the loss of life we know will come.

But life as we knew it ... was it really all that we thought it was? Were there unexamined places in which we ran on autopilot (as discussed in last week's message)?

I know for me the busyness was exhausting. The constant requirement to do do, to be be be, even church work for me began to feel more focused on administration than ministry – especially with the upcoming AGM and the preceding meetings and presentations about missional redevelopment. Baal was tiring me out. Everything that wasn't putting God first and calling on God first was tiring me out.

But it is a path, a roadway, a journey we are on ... and we are moving forward in it. We are right about now at the point where we might be moving in procession towards the worst, the hardest of it – like the people accompanying



Jesus on his journey into Jerusalem.

In the gospel reading, the people celebrate Jesus even though he is heading to a death he has foretold ... they celebrate. They call out Hosanna – “Save us” ... They don’t even know how hard it is going to be ... they make so much noise and fanfare with their celebration that pharisees beg Jesus to get the disciples to stop all their merry making and noise.

And Jesus says if these were silent, the stones would shout.

We journey today with Jesus towards the cross:

It is the cross of increasing infection and death rates.

It is the cross of fear.

It is the cross of grief.

The cross of knowing we will encounter loss of life on this journey.

It is the cross of withdrawal from the many and millions of shiny things that have distracted us from God, that have drawn us to other gods, small g gods ... Baals.

Like the buckets of water of Elijah, like Christ himself who poured himself out **for us**, taking on the form of a slave in order to walk in human form **with us** ... **we are being poured out**. We are being challenged in every possible way ... to call out, to pray to our God. As the song says, we are the labourers in the vineyard of the Lord ... that means now is our time:

- to pray,
- to witness,
- to love,
- to be patient,
- to be kind and gentle ... to be compassionate, and to call on God.

And poof ... soon and very soon ... we will experience the jubilee., salvation comes. In the Old Testament law given to Moses, every 50th year was to be announced as a jubilee year. In this year, all those who compelled by poverty into slavery and debt, were heavy burdened ... all of those debts were forgiven. Jubilee meant a reclamation of liberty from debt ... an incredible time of liberation from enslavement ... much like Jesus’ death and resurrection in this Holy Week mark our incredible liberation in Christ from death, from fear, from the shackles of mortal confinement.

Poof ... despite all the pouring out of everything, of life as we know it – God is faithful and God responds.

This is a time of fear, of pouring out, of grief, of rearranging life as we knew it into something entirely new. And as we accompany Jesus to the cross, let us celebrate accordingly ... these are the days of Elijah – preparing the way of the Lord.

Amen.

## **Hymn of the Day - ... Days of Elijah – Robin Mark**

**[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B\\_IXIRbx-vQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_IXIRbx-vQ)**

### **Thanksgiving for our Presence on this Land.**

We thank you God,  
for granting our existence on this safe, bountiful, land,  
and we recognize that we thrive here and enjoy life on the traditional territories of the Anishnabe, Neutral and Haudenosaunee people. **Amen.**

### **A RE-cited Apostle's Creed (By Bishop Sid Haugen)**

I believe that God created this good world of sun and stars, of wild places and cultivated fields, of work and play, of art and sport. I believe that God placed me on this earth for a reason; along with every other human being I meet each day. I believe that every day is a gift. For all of this I am called to thank God and love the life God made.

I believe that Jesus Christ is the divine one: who walked this earth, and who, in his teaching, life and death shows me the heart of a loving God. I believe that the resurrection of Jesus brings a hope and a life to the world and to my life that cannot be quenched by all the forces of this world, by my own human brokenness, or by death itself. For all this, I am called to love Jesus and to follow him by serving others.

I believe in the Holy Spirit. I believe that I could never find God by my own intelligence or effort, but the Spirit of God, moving like the wind, has graciously called me through the wonder of the gospel: through the community of Jesus, through the Word and sacraments – just as the Spirit calls the whole church in its many families with its many names. I believe this same Spirit speaks and works through people who may not know a church and who may not call themselves religious in any way. For all of this, I am called to live generously, as one who has faith that God is always at work in me, in the church, and in the world itself.

**While you listen to the offertory song, continue your prayers with the words of the song, and consider how you may be a blessing in the coming week.**

Offertory – **Bless the Lord O My Soul**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4Svh-9ohg4>**

## Offering Prayer

God of all abundance, receive our brokenness and the offering of our lives. Take us, who return to you in thanksgiving: form us and shape us into a love like Jesus, so that we may be love for this broken world. **Amen.**

**(please remember to send an offering to the church if you are able)**

## **Prayers of Intercession** (Prepared by Pastor Joanna Miller)

Loving God, in these days, when it feels like we're living out the realities of Holy Week like never before, keep reminding us that the story doesn't end with death, or waiting. Help us to believe that something new and wonderful will emerge from this; fill us up with hopeful expectation for what will come. Lord, in your mercy,  
**Hear our prayer.**

We are seeing reports, God, of drastic drops in the levels of emissions and pictures of the ways that life is re-emerging. Help us to be inspired by these stories and pictures, that we might become even more committed to the work of caring for this planet we inhabit and for all the creatures who share it with us. Lord, in your mercy,  
**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for the decision makers, O God. For our political leaders, that they lead according to the best information to keep as many of our neighbours as safe as possible. For the scientists, who are working so hard to understand what is happening and for the ones who work hard for a vaccine. For the business leaders who are responsible for the care of their workers. For the health care providers, who run towards the fire and accept the risk in the name of serving others. For the parents, who struggle to find a balance between work and play, screens and fresh air. Give them all your wisdom and compassion. Lord, in your mercy,  
**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for the vulnerable in our midst. For those whose suffering began long before we heard of COVID-19. For those whose mental health is suffering. For those who are in the midst of treatments and diagnoses and for all who are medically fragile. Be with each one, send them your healing, be present with them. We pray especially for those we name we name either silently or aloud. Lord, in your mercy,  
**Hear our prayer.**

We give you thanks for all the saints that have gone before us, whose faith reminds us to hold on in the midst of fear and unknown. Bless all those in your presence and all who will die this day. Lord, in your mercy,  
**Hear our prayer.**

All these things, Lord, we entrust to your care, knowing that you hear all of our prayers. And we pray in the way that Jesus taught us to pray:

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.**

**Sending Hymn This is My Father's World ....**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfWjey9tQS0>**

**Blessing:**

May God bless you and keep you.

May the face of God shine upon you with grace and mercy.

May God look upon you with favor

and give you ☩ peace.

**Amen.**

**Have a safe week beloved friends ☺**