

Sermon March 30. 2026

We Welcome New Members

Welcome and Introduction of New Members

Our Covenant Together

Do you seek to grow in God's transforming love, as you follow in the Way of Jesus? *(I do)*

Are you open to the movement of the Spirit in your life? *(I am)*

Will you join with us as a church, as we seek follow God's direction in our midst? Will you welcome and respect each person's freedom to interpret God's Truth, as God gives them each light and wisdom. *(I will with the help of God)*

Will you participate in the life and mission of this diverse and inclusive community of God's people, praying and working with us in ministry together? Will you share regularly with us in the worship of God and financial support of our ministries? Will you offer your talents to our work, as the Spirit leads us to serve the community and the world? *(I will with the help of God)*

Affirmation of the Congregation:

All: We welcome you with joy! As partners in the common life of this congregation, we pledge to you our friendship and prayers as we grow together in God's transforming love. We give thanks that you join us now, as fellow seekers and servants!

A Litany of What We Believe

One: Our vision for our church is:

All: Our church will grow into a vibrant and diverse community of Christians that welcomes and seeks out people from all walks of life. That supports the spiritual, physical

and emotional needs that challenge the community and its members.

One: The mission God sends us out to do is:

All: We exist to LOVE people where they are and encourage them to grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ.

One: As followers of Christ, we share these Core Values:

We Love God

All: "You shall love the Lord God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:37-39 NRSV)

One: We Show Compassionate Love of Everyone

All: "Love one another, as Jesus calls us to love everyone, saying, 'I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.'" (John 13:34)

One: Wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome with open arms and open hearts!

All: Amen

Welcome to the Community

Matthew 21:1-11

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately." This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet: "Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this? The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

From the Manger to the Cross

Beloved, today we stand at the hinge of the story.

The gates of Jerusalem open before us, and the road behind us stretches all the way back to a manger in Bethlehem. Palm Sunday is not just a parade; it is a collision—of kingdoms, of expectations, of the way things are and the way God dreams they could be.

Today we remember the journey from the Manger to the Cross. Because the One who rides into Jerusalem today is the same One who was laid in straw. The same One who fled as a refugee. The same One who grew up under occupation. The same One who healed without asking for payment, who fed without checking credentials, who touched the untouchable and lifted the shamed.

Palm Sunday is not a new story... It is the continuation of the story that began in a barn.

When God chose to enter the world, God did not choose a palace. God chose a manger—a place where animals eat... a place that smelled like animals and sweat and poverty. A place where no empire would ever think to look for a king.

The manger is where God declared that holiness is found in the margins. From the very beginning, Jesus' life is a threat to the way the world organizes itself. Not because he is violent, but because he is vulnerable. Not because he demands allegiance, but because he embodies love.

The manger is God whispering: "My kingdom is different."

On another day, 30 years later, the Roman Empire stakes its claim. From the West Gate of Jerusalem, Pontius Pilate hosts a Roman military parade. This is a display of military might, featuring soldiers, cavalry and armor. Rome knew how to intimidate the pilgrims who gather for the Passover.

This is how Empires survive – through massive shows of might. You might shake your heads and think: "well, some things never change." We enter this Holy Week with bombs and drones falling in the same places where Jesus and his followers walked. We live in a time when global authoritarianism is rising, the non-profit organization Freedom House reports declines of political rights and civil liberties in at least 54 countries. We live in a time when one of our political leaders publicly pray for "violence to those who deserve no mercy."

But then God whispers in our ears: "my kingdom is different!"

At the East Gate, a different kind of procession occurs. You might call it a counter-parade. Jesus enters Jerusalem not on a warhorse, not on a chariot, not with soldiers marching in formation. He comes on a borrowed donkey. The one who is greeted as a "king" arrives on a beast of burden. A symbol of humility, of peace, of work. He rides in low to the ground. He rides in close enough to touch.

He rides in with the poor, the children, the ones who have been healed, the ones who have been restored, the ones who have been waiting their whole lives for someone to tell them they matter.

This is not a triumphal entry. It is a holy disruption. The crowd shouts "Hosanna!" Not "Hip Hip Hooray!" but "Save us."

Hosanna! Save us! The people who have been pushed aside and stepped on cry out because they know the world is not as it should be.

Palm Sunday is God whispering: "My kingdom is different."

The palms waving usher in a new time. The same crowd that shouts "Hosanna" today will shout "Crucify" by Friday. Not because they are fickle,

but because empire is efficient. The empire decides who deserves mercy and who does not. The empire knows how to crush hope.

Today hope rains down on the people. We what happens next... but they don't. All they know is God's whispering voice of hope.

Palm Sunday is an invitation. If Jesus' journey from manger to cross is the shape of God's love, then it is also the shape of our calling.

- ∞ We are called to choose humility over dominance.
- ∞ We are called to choose compassion over convenience.
- ∞ We are called to choose solidarity over safety.
- ∞ We are called to choose the donkey over the warhorse.
- ∞ We are called to choose the manger over the palace.
- ∞ We are called to choose the cross—not as a symbol of suffering for suffering's sake, but as a symbol of love that refuses to quit.

We know where this week is going. We know the betrayal, the denial, the trial, the violence, the tomb.

But we also know something else.

We know that the manger was not the end. We know that the cross will not be the end. We know that love will rise. We know that hope will breathe again.

God's story is always moving toward life and love.

Palm Sunday is the beginning of the end of the old world. And the beginning of the beginning of the new one.

So today, as we wave palms and shout "Hosanna," as we walk the road from the manger to the cross,

may we remember:

- ∞ God does not enter the world through power.
- ∞ God enters through vulnerability.
- ∞ God does not save the world through domination.
- ∞ God saves through love.
- ∞ God does not build a kingdom with swords.

- ∞ God builds it with compassion, courage, and justice.
- ∞ And that kingdom— that upside-down, manger-born, donkey-ridden, cross-shaped kingdom— is still breaking in.

Hosanna.

Save us.

And make us part of the saving.

Amen.

Beloved, Your strength may fail but God's hand never will! Chris will lead you wherever you may be