



Worship Service Theme: **Palm Sunday**

Helpful Elements:

Purple table covering (Lenten Season)
Palm fronds

Welcome: Welcome! Thank you for coming to our service today. My name is _____ and I'll be leading our worship time. Today is [or, This week we celebrate] **Palm Sunday**, when we remember and celebrate Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem for the Passover festival. This is the start of what's called Passion Week, remembering Jesus' Last Supper, betrayal, crucifixion, and then resurrection on Easter Sunday, which is next week. Our color is still purple, the Lenten color of humility and repentance.

[Either have palm fronds on the seats before the service begins, or pass them out now]

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Heavenly Lord: As the people spread their coats and palm branches on the ground to welcome Jesus into Jerusalem, so we welcome You into our lives this day. King of Glory, King of Peace, Servant King, reign in our hearts and lives today and all days, that we might praise your holy name. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Amen.¹

Opening Hymn: Doxology

Blessing the Palms: We start today by blessing the palm branches. Let us pray.

As it is written in Zechariah 9:9: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you; righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

¹ http://www.faithandworship.com/liturgy_Palm_Sunday.htm

On that day long ago, Lord Jesus, you rode into Jerusalem with people proclaiming “Hosanna!” and spreading their garments and palms before you in tribute. We pray, O Lord, for you to bless these palm branches today and make them holy, a reminder of your passion and your victory. Amen.

Suggested Hymns:
For the Beauty of the Earth
Amazing Grace

First Reading: Psalm 118

¹ O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever!

² Let Israel say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.”

³ Let the house of Aaron say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.”

⁴ Let those who fear the Lord say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.” ...

²² The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.

²³ This is the Lord’s doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.

²⁴ This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it. ...

²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Suggested Hymns:
Holy, Holy, Holy
Jesus Loves Me
Softly and Tenderly

Second reading: The Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem
From Matthew 21:

¹ Now when Jesus and his disciples drew near to Jerusalem, ... Jesus sent two disciples ahead, ² saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and

immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me.³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will send them at once." ⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

⁵ "Say to the daughter of Zion,
'Behold, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"

⁶ The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and Jesus sat on them. ⁸ Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

From Luke 19:

³⁷ As Jesus was drawing near to the city, ...the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, ³⁸ saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" ³⁹ And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." ⁴⁰ Jesus answered, "I tell you, if they were silent, the very stones would cry out."

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Suggested Hymns:

It is Well with My Soul

Shall We Gather at the River

I Need Thee Every Hour

Interactive Homily: Let's think about celebration, especially as it relates to this week leading up to Easter.

- Why do we have celebrations? What kinds of things do we celebrate?
 - Important events, such as births, birthdays, and anniversaries
 - Accomplishments, like finishing college or winning a race
 - Milestones of history as a nation, like July 4th or D-Day or V-Day (WW2)
 - When something has gone well! Any excuse to celebrate 😊

- How do we celebrate?
 - Gather with other people, cake and ice cream, balloons, piñatas, gift-giving, decorations, confetti, champagne, dancing in the streets, tickertape parade
 - Also special or ritual meals, such as the Passover Supper for Jews
- How does it feel to celebrate something? What emotions do you have? Why?
 - Typically feels good! Fun, exciting, remembering, powerful: tied to the importance of the event or memory
- When Jesus came into Jerusalem on a donkey for the Passover festival, everyone threw down their cloaks in front of him and laid down palm branches as a carpet. Why do you think the people did this? What did people know about Jesus at this point?
 - Jesus had been healing the sick, teaching with authority, gathering huge crowds
 - Jesus had been standing up to the religious leaders and standing up for the poor, the “unclean,” women, “sinners”
 - Jesus had even shown power over death, raising his friend Lazarus from a tomb just a few days earlier
- The crowds believed Jesus to be powerful, their friend, a man of God, and the promised Messiah! However, when we celebrate Palm Sunday, we know what’s coming next, don’t we? What happened after Palm Sunday?
 - The Last Supper, Jesus is betrayed by Judas, killed by the Romans at the Jewish leaders’ request, the disciples’ sadness and scattering in fear ... and finally the resurrection.
- So how is today’s celebration different than a typical celebration?
 - It’s more serious, even tinged with sorrow; we know the story of what Jesus suffered.
 - Theme of repentance and even death, realities of the world.
 - JOY ... not necessarily in the moment, but as we look *forward*.

Let us pray together in thanksgiving and wonder for this story and the Passion Week to come.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord’s prayer together:

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, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Suggested Hymns:

Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

My Jesus, I Love Thee

Third Reading: "All Glory, Laud and Honor" a poem by Theoduphus of Orleans² (Italian abbot and bishop around 780 A.D.)

All glory, laud, and honor
to thee, Redeemer, King!
to whom the lips of children
made sweet hosannas ring.

Thou art the King of Israel,
thou David's royal Son,
who in the Lord's Name comest,
the King and Blessed One.

The company of angels
are praising Thee on high;
and mortal men and all things
created make reply.

The people of the Hebrews
with palms before Thee went;
our praise and prayer and anthems
before Thee we present.

² https://songsandhymns.org/people/detail/theodulph_of_orleans

To Thee, before Thy Passion,
they sang their hymns of praise;
to Thee, now high exalted, our melody we raise.

Thou did accept their praises;
accept the prayers we bring,
who in all good delightest,
Thou good and gracious King.

Suggested Hymns:

The Old Rugged Cross

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

Fourth Reading: Thoughts and a Prayer for Palm Sunday

What a strange paradox; the King is coming, the people rejoice, singing “Hosanna in the highest!” But at that time, the people fail to understand that the King they welcome is the Servant King, the King who washes his disciples’ feet, the King who came not with an army but a weapon so powerful that not even death could resist: the sacrificial love of God laid out upon a Cross.

Lord God, as we sing our “Hosannas” today, may we remember also that which you were riding toward: the suffering and rejection, pain and humiliation, the cruel Cross. And let us look forward to the joy of Easter Day when you rose from death to reign forever.

Help us, as we daily lay our lives before you, to live the resurrection life that acknowledges Jesus as Lord and King over our lives. Amen.³

Suggested Hymns:

Beneath the Cross of Jesus

How Great Thou Art

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

³ http://www.faithandworship.com/liturgy_Palm_Sunday.htm

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology, Reprise