

**WESLEY UNITING CHURCH  
SUNDAY, MARCH 24<sup>TH</sup>, 2024  
LITURGY OF THE PALMS  
10:45am**



**Today, we begin the journey into Holy Week with the celebration of Sunday of the Palms which marks Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and his subsequent execution.**

Lent is a time when we can come to a deep understanding of the human being. It is in Lent that the stories we read, focus upon the nature of the human being. Journeying through the Gospel of John, we have discovered that the fundamental human problem is our brokenness: we habitually “miss the mark”, the literal meaning of the Biblical Greek word for sin – *hamartia*. For John this missing of the mark has to do with our desire to imitate, to compete, to want to be like the other, to have what the other has. It is no surprise then that John sees the human being at his core as violent. Violence is the fruit of it all.

Now that we move into Holy Week through the door of Sunday of the Palms, we see again the human disposition to violence. On Palm Sunday, we hear of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, leading a procession of peasants, in opposition to the simultaneous entry of Pilate from the opposite side of the city, leading an imperial procession. Palm Sunday is a story of the conflict of contrasting world views, opposing human behaviours, where we are invited to imitate Jesus (*imitatio Christi*), not Pilate (*imitatio Pilati*).

But there is something else going on here as well. While the crowd enthusiastically supports Jesus, soon after they will ultimately imitate the religious and political leaders and call for his blood. Jesus becomes the *scapegoat* for the pent-up frustrations of the masses, the victim of violence, even as he attempts to provide an alternative path forward, which embraces peace-building.

## GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

### PRELUDE:

### INTROIT:

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY AND SAFE CHURCH STATEMENT

Let us acknowledge the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples,  
The first inhabitants of this place,  
part of God's good creation.  
We honour them for their custodianship of the land,  
on which we gather today.

The Uniting Church in Australia believes that all people are made  
in the image of God, and so we accept every individual regardless  
of race, age, creed, sexuality and gender.

### WELCOME AND LIGHTING OF THE COMMUNITY CANDLE

### INVOCATION OF THE TRINITY AND GREETING

In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
The Lord be with you  
**And also with you.**

### CALL TO WORSHIP

We come to prepare for the holiest of weeks.  
**We will journey with joy on our lips;  
we will travel through betrayal and death,  
cradling hope deep in our hearts.**

Jesus leads us through this week, and we will follow,  
for he is the life we long for,  
he is the Word who sustains us.

**We wave palm branches in anticipation;  
we lay our love before him, to cushion his walk.**

Setting aside all power, glory, and might, he comes:  
modelling humility and obedience for all of us.

**Hosanna! Hosanna!**

**Blessed is the One who brings us the kingdom of God.**

**HYMN 348:** Ride on, ride on.

## **PRAYERS OF ADORATION**

God, Father of Christ, mothering creation,  
**we adore you.**

Christ, Saviour of humanity, restorer of life even in our dying,  
**we adore you.**

Spirit, Bringer of Christ into community,  
**we adore you.**

Eternal God, Three yet One,  
**we adore your holy name.**

## **A PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

The expression “O God our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you” is derived from Augustine’s “Confessions”, 1.1.1. Augustine’s insight is that we are made by God for relationship with God. To the extent that we avoid that for which we are made – relationship with God – we miss the point.

O God,  
 our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you.

You are beyond our busy imaginings,  
 far above our elevated constructions of thought.

Yet you meet us in the dust.

Your footprints cross ours.

Behind us and before us

you tread the path,

you lead the way;

**O God,**

**Our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you.**

Yoked to Jesus your Son,  
 we strain against your direction,  
 asked to stand up, and be counted,  
 we retreat in our own inadequacy.

**O God,**

**our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you.**

Forgive us our bondage to fixed patterns of thought and action,  
 when they no longer serve you;  
 as we bury ourselves in our anxieties and insecurities.

Lift us from the unconscious fear  
 that we may actually see your vision  
 know your wisdom  
 and find our rest in you,  
 through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**O God,  
 our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you.**

### **ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

Friends in Christ, know this: that we made for Love by Love.  
 In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.  
**Thanks be to God!**

### **PEACE**

*We greet each other with the words, "The peace of the Lord be with you" or if  
 from a distance, the hand over the heart, or the hands clasped.*

## **SERVICE OF THE WORD**

### **PRAYER FOR UNDERSTANDING**

In our struggle to hear your word O God,  
 bless even our doubts, our wonderings,  
 our wanderings,  
 our soul struggles, our deep questions and deeper mysteries.  
 Teach us to love your questions as well as our answers.

THE PSALM: 118:1-2, 19-29, pages 492-493

**HYMN 346:** Prepare the Royal Highway

GOSPEL: John 12:12-16, page 875.

This is the Gospel of the Lord - **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

**ANTHEM:**

**PREACHING**

**OFFERING HYMN 357:** When his time was over.

*The Offering is received as the congregation sings. We remain standing as the prayers over the offerings are made.*

## **PRAYERS OVER THE OFFERINGS**

In gratitude and hope, we give of our money and of ourselves to your reign.

**Amen**

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

We are asked to pray today for the peoples of the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia. We continue to pray for the peoples of Ukraine, Russia, Gaza, Israel, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

*At the end of each petition the following bidding is offered and we end with the "Our Father"*

Liturgist: Build us together in Christ.

Response: **Make us your dwelling place.**

**Our Father in heaven  
hallowed be your name  
your kingdom come  
your will be done  
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.**

## **THE SENDING FORTH ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**HYMN 339:** O sacred head sore wounded.

### **COMMISSION AND BLESSING**

God sends us forth in this week of holiness.

**We will go to clothe those who are cold,  
we will offer our hearts to those who are lonely.**

Jesus walks with us through the pain of the week.

**We will listen to those who cry out for help,  
we will forgive those who betray us.**

The Spirit comforts and strengthens us on this journey.

**We will take the hands of all who stumble along the way,  
we will lean on strangers when we cannot take another step**

The Grace of God attend you;  
the love of God surround you;  
the Holy Spirit keep you;  
this day and forever

Our service has ended  
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

### **POSTLUDE**

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**Liturgist:** Rev'd Dr. Geoff Dornan

**Preacher:** Rev'd Dr. Bruce Stevens

**Music Coordinator:** Jade McFaul

**Organist:** ???

**Bible Reader:** ???

**Sound and Video:** ???

**Flowers arranged by:** ???

