

# *Straight from the "Hart"*

April 10, 2022

**Palm / Passion Sunday**



## **Opening/Offering Prayer**

Almighty God, we have gathered because we want to celebrate the day your Son was heralded as king. With hopeful joy we want to see him enter hearts in peace. We offer ourselves that we may be instrumental in sharing your love with the human race. In Jesus name, Amen.

## **Bible Reading and Responsive Call to Worship**

Lay Reader: Try to put yourself into the story as we recount the grand entrance:

The ... news that Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem swept through the city. A large crowd of Passover visitors took palm branches and went down the road to meet him. They shouted, “[Hosanna!] Praise God! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! [Blessed is the King of Israel!”] Jesus found a young donkey and rode on it, fulfilling the prophecy that said: “Don’t be afraid, people of Jerusalem. Look, your King is coming, riding on a donkey’s colt.” His disciples didn’t understand at the time that this was a fulfillment of prophecy. But after Jesus entered into his glory, they remembered what had happened and realized that these things had been written about him. Many in the crowd had seen Jesus call Lazarus from the tomb, raising him from the dead, and they were telling others about it. That was the reason so many went out to meet him—because they had heard about this miraculous sign.



(L - Lay Reader, **C - Congregation**)

L: Rejoice with all your heart, my people! Shout with joy! Look! Your King is coming to you.

**C: He is righteous and victorious.**

L: Yet he is humble, riding on a donkey's colt. Bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

**C: We will bless him from the house of the Lord.**

L: The Lord is God. He is shining upon us. Join in the pilgrim festival with branches ...

**C: You are our God. We will praise and exalt you!**

L: Give thanks to God, for he is good!

**C: His grace and faithful loving-kindness continues forever.**

Inspired from Zechariah 9:9, Psalm 118:26-29 (CJB, NLT, TLB)

**Music Leader** Crowds have poured into Jerusalem, some from great distances, to celebrate Passover, the festival remembering the journey from slavery to freedom. Many of us have gathered with palms in hand, and some with cloaks. We are waiting and hoping to catch a glimpse of Jesus as he enters the holy city. We are confident that he is the Christ (the Messiah), God's chosen one in the line of David. He will lead us again on a journey to freedom, and all the world would see how our God graciously saves us from oppression. Come, let's join the crowds as we sing Our God Saves.

**Music      Our God Saves**

(Primary lyrics):

In the name of the Father, in the name of the Son, in the name of the Spirit,  
Lord, we come. We're gathered together to lift up your name,  
to call on our Savior, to fall on your grace.

Hear the joyful sound of our offering  
as your saints bow down, as your people sing.

We will rise with you, lifted on your wings,  
and the world will see that Our God saves.

CCLI # 2561297

**Music Leader:** It is hard to see anything in the masses of people on those narrow streets. There is a growing buzz on the street is that Jesus is making his way from the Mount of Olives on a donkey's colt, surrounded by his disciples who try to clear

the way for his entrance, people laying cloaks and palm branches in the road, and shouts of “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” We often think of and use the word as a word of general praise like hallelujah, which literally means “praise the Lord”. Hosanna’s literal translation comes from two root words – the first means deliver, or save, the second mean beg, beseech – so the word is along the lines of “*Please save!*” I like the way the CJB translates it: *The crowds ahead of him and behind shouted, “**Please! Deliver us!**” to the Son of David; “**Blessed is he who comes in the name of ADONAI (LORD OF LORDS)!**” “You in the highest heaven! **Please! Deliver us!**”* Those who you hear shouting and cheering are recognizing Jesus as the one the heavenly Father sent to deliver them, they were confident that he could do it, and with hearts full of praise, they were asking him to do so. He’s coming around the corner now. Get your palms ready and let’s join the crowd by singing Hosanna!

## **Music Hosanna**

(Primary lyrics):

Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest.  
 Lord we lift up your name with hearts full of praise.  
 Be exalted, O Lord, my God; Hosanna in the highest.  
 Glory, glory, glory to the King of kings.  
 Lord we lift up your name with hearts full of praise.

CCLI # 2561297

## **Bible Reading Introduction**

We in the crowd calling out for Jesus to save are still expecting some sort of victorious revolution against Rome. But Jesus already knew that this path was going to lead him through something completely different. This day acknowledges Jesus as king with shouts and cheers and palms, but it also serves to strengthen the resistance to his presence, and Jesus knew that by week’s end he would be handed over to be beaten, tried, and crucified as an example of what happens to those who defy authority. He was well aware of the conspirators circling in for the kill, yet on this day as he rode into the city - he was defiantly determined, daring them to challenge him and his compassionate mission for those weary of life, and/or of political and religious oppression. Isaiah described it centuries earlier...

## **Bible Reading**

The Sovereign Lord has given me his words of wisdom, and the ability to



Oh, no, you never let go through the calm and through the storm.  
 Oh, no, you never let go in ev'ry high and ev'ry low.  
 Oh, no, you never let go, Lord, you never let go of me.  
 Yes, I can see a light that is coming for the heart that holds on,  
 and there will be an end to these troubles, but until that day comes,  
 still I will praise you, still I will praise you.  
 Oh, no, you never let go through the calm and through the storm.  
 Oh, no, you never let go in ev'ry high and ev'ry low.  
 Oh, no, you never let go, Lord, you never let go of me.

CCLI # 2561297

**Music Leader:** What the Christ followers didn't know that original Palm Sunday was that it was also the beginnings leading to this week of passion. I like this definition: "The word "passion" in the phrase "Passion narratives" can describe a person's intense devotion to a cause or describe the intensity of love. Passion also has the meaning "to suffer" ... (Quizlet.com)

It was Jesus Christ's intensity of love and devotion to his heavenly Father and to people that led him to enter Jerusalem, face critics, disrupt corrupt temple practices, put up with an illegal trial, be betrayed, beaten, abandoned, and crucified. It is just days before the crowd would be asked if they wanted Jesus freed or crucified. It would be much later that even his closest friends began to understand that the freedom he won for us was much greater than political Rome, he set free our hearts to be free from the power and ultimate consequences of sin – if we only believe and allow him to be the king of our life. If they only had the opportunity to have the hindsight we have so many years after the fact – after the resurrection. Would the crowd have remained faithful? Or would the peer pressure still be too great to hang on in hope of what his passion would do? We sang this song on the Reign of Christ the King Sunday last November with the piano. Now we sing it with the praise band as we prepare our hearts for prayer.

### **Music You Are My King (Amazing Love)**

(Primary lyrics):

I'm forgiven because you were forsaken. I'm accepted; you were condemned.  
 I'm alive and well, your Spirit is within me because you died and rose again.  
 Amazing love, how can it be that you, my King, would die for me?  
 Amazing love, I know it's true; and it's my joy to honor you. In all I do, I honor  
 you. You are my king! Jesus, you are my king!  
 Amazing love, how can it be that you, my King, would die for me? Amazing love,  
 I know it's true; and it's my joy to honor you. In all I do, I honor you. CCLI # 2561297

## Prayers

Lord, we give you thanks today because you are good and your love never fails. You entered Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, we have entered your presence to give you thanks. You entered Jerusalem, knowing the accolades of Palms would also be the beginnings of your Passion. Yet we like to think that we would still declare you king and want to honor you -- for while you did not become the deliverance from Rome, you did become the deliverance from the power of sin and death. You are our salvation and you answer our prayers. Though those responsible for building religion rejected you, you became the cornerstone of those building their life on faith. Your love endures forever.

We rejoice on this Palm Sunday for your Son became the bridge through which God's light shines on us and we are granted spiritual life. We take our palms and join the festive procession into your presence, into the God we trust. We place our time in your hands -- we lift to you our joys and sorrows, our successes and our setbacks, our conquests and our challenges. As Jesus prayed before his holy week passion, so we lift our prayers to you.

**Praises and Petitions** \* We continue to pray for the Ukraine, \* and we thank you that Vivian's son Denny, \* her sister Gen, \* and for her sister-in-law Angie, are all doing much better, thanks to you and thanks for the prayers of the people \* for Jan Martin's son Ray Martin, \* and sister-in-law Sharon, \* for Pierre Koudelka who should be recovering from surgery, \* for George Dugdale and his family after he was electrocuted last week and was in critical but stable condition, \* and for Linda Oldford recovering from back surgery, and there are certainly more that have not been named out loud but are on our hearts and minds, and we name them in this next moment of silence. **SILENCE** Lord, you know our faults, yet you promise to forgive. Keep us in your presence and under your wisdom. Restore within us the joy of your salvation. Help us to recognize your hand working in our world and transforming our hearts by the new things you are doing, that we may experience and proclaim your love in Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray **LORD'S PRAYER**

**Music Leader** Having the benefit of hindsight, knowing what kind of king Jesus really intended to be -- that he was so much more than a political-religious rebel who would create a temporary victory over tyrants, but one who would win a spiritual battle over evil that would permanently empower us to win our spiritual battles if we turn to him -- and some day everything will fall into place under his leadership. Let's stand and shout for all that Jesus did and does do for us.

## Music Stand and Shout

(Primary Lyrics):

Stand and shout, shout and sing, we've been bought and redeemed.

Jesus died, Jesus lives, Jesus loves, and he forgives.

So let your praise rise up and magnify. Let your voice be heard and testify!

Our God loves, our God saves, our God rescues from the grave.

Our God showers down his mercy for the glory of his name.

Our God heals, our God frees, our God gives us ev'rything  
to live and love in freedom here and now. Stand and Shout!

Earth and sky, sky and sea shout the glory of the King.

If they praise him, why don't we sing the song of the redeemed?

So let our praise rise up and magnify.

Let our voice be heard and testify! Stand and shout!

CCLI # 2561297

## Series Review and Video

We continue the series on the foundational building blocks of establishing and maintaining a rock-solid relationship with God. We began by **seeing** Jesus and his mission on earth. We learn to grow in **knowing** God personally. We do this by carefully **listening** to him -- and by **speaking** to him as a loving Father. We follow Jesus' example by **serving** others. And last week we added all these things together and from them begin to form a lifestyle, a way of **living**, (or **walking**) a chosen path, a path that is meant to be taken together.

And today, we establish our relationship with God by adding the brick of **sharing** our lives with others. [Pastor places a brick on the table (See picture on first page)] We can only walk this journey together if we are **sharing** ourselves with each other. Therefore, like Jesus did on this Palm - Passion Sunday, we determine to offer ourselves to the betterment of our world by loving God and loving others.



## Video

For those like me who have trouble seeing the words, and to reinforce them -- the video began with words of Jesus - That quote I will not repeat because we will hear a version of it shortly. Following the quote of Jesus, the video said: "...The church is not a building that you come and sit at -- it's a movement that you choose to be

a part of -- to help people meet, know, and follow Jesus. You are the hope of the world. You are God's plan to change the world. One life at a time. Hartland's mission statement is quite similar -- it is "sharing the journey to know, to love, and to serve God.



## Intro to Reading

After this week ends, after Jesus has died on the cross, rises from the tomb, appears to people for 40 days, he sets up a final meeting on a particular mountain with his disciples. When they see him; some worship and some have lingering doubts. Some people will worship anytime they see God is actively at work in and beyond his people. Others can only see things to doubt and criticize. Jesus doesn't stop to get them on board -- he trusts the Spirit and his truth will saturate them and they will become established as they do what he says.

Therefore, Jesus simply comes close to them and presses on with Matthew's rendition of the resurrected Christ's last words to his disciples -- his plan on how we **share** our life with each other and with the world -- words that some eventually labeled as "The Great Commission. A commission is an instruction, a command, an authorization to do some-thing, a thing to be held responsible for carrying out - - continuously --. Jesus said:

## Reading

"All authority of the universe has been given to me. Now wherever you go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And teach them to faithfully follow all that I have commanded you. And never forget that I am with you every day, even to the completion of this age."

Matthew 28:16-20 (TPT)

## Sermon Established: By Sharing

On Palm Sunday we usually only hear the narrow context of a feel good, victorious entrance into Jerusalem. But we only need add a verse or two at the beginning and a verse at the end to understand that events leading to his passion were also well under way on this day. All the people heard of Jesus' arrival and they flocked to see him as well as Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Then the leading priests decided to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus, for it was because of him that many people had deserted them and believed in Jesus. (John 12:9-11) Those were the words written right before the entrance we heard at the beginning

of this worship service. And then immediately following what we heard at the beginning of the service, we hear the Pharisees saying to each other “See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him.” (John 12:19)

The official powers of the day were already openly opposed to Jesus’ grass roots movement toward God, and while the general populace may not have known the plots being created in back rooms, they probably knew enough to know that it was risky to openly declare their support in public -- yet they did, and Jesus’ opponents unhappily declared what is our greatest hope – that the whole world would follow Christ and his ways, and which led the chief priest to advise that it would be good if one man died for the people” (John 18:14)

For him it was an expedient removal of Christ from the picture, lest Rome crush all of them -- but for the rest of us, it means something completely different -- it means salvation from sin. For Christ, it was a hope that his sacrifice would unleash the movement of God for all time. As we take in global and personal news these days, we sometimes wonder how God is going to work in this natural disaster, or that human violence, or this economic setback, or what seems to be a spreading inclination to do wrong (though I’ve read preachers from the 17 and 1800s saying the exact same so...it is always there, isn’t it? or a personal reversal of fortune... And the answer is that God has set one clear plan in motion. He has placed faith in his Son’s followers to make a positive difference. Jesus expressed the plan on the mountain that day.

These final marching orders are not limited to the officially positioned people, or to those who are especially gifted, powerful or popular. As one person put it, *It is not the "great" that are commissioned, but the commission that is "great."* It is for all of us -- together. No individual can do it all, but each of us has a part to play and together as a group we can fully participate in moving his mission forward.

The first question we ask is akin to the religious law expert’s question of Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29). And we look at the great commission and we ask, “Who are these “thems” that are supposed we are supposed to teach? and baptize... The short answer is – everyone who is doesn’t have a relationship with Christ yet. The longer answer is, Because discipling is a never ending process, it includes us too. We all need to continue in the process of growing in a personal relationship with Christ. It includes everyone. The church is a grass roots movement of people who by their heart directed attitudes, words, life choices and actions, are striving to help everyone meet, know, and follow Jesus, whether it is

across the world across the street, or in the same room. So let's look at it more closely...

First, we are commissioned with authority. All authority is mine, so now I pass it on to you... we are commissioned with authority. It is not granted to us because of who we are, what we say, or what we do; (we don't *earn* this commission) nor does it come from knowing the words of the commission. Nor is it our chance -- to use the biblical phrase -- "to lord it over others" because we have authority. No, it flows from God's purpose, the Spirit's presence, and the person of Christ -- to move what *God* wants -- forward.

**Commissioned with authority**

Over the last weeks we've been learning, or reminded, how the one who has authority over all the Universe uses that authority. We heard phrases, and we will again, especially during this holy week, that summarizes how Jesus uses his universal, kingly authority. In heaven, equal with God, holding all authority, Jesus happily leaves all of that and goes from there to come to us with "Amazing Love" as a "Suffering Servant" who "kneels at the feet his friends" and is "obedient to the cross".

He tells us to follow the same pattern -- in humble grace and love and an attitude of service to God's world, we are to go. During his student minister days, a pastor served a small, elderly congregation where the highlight of every year was their participation in the community's annual festival (I think it was strawberries). More planning, time and effort went into that festival than anything else in the life of the church. At a council meeting, this young pastor suggested they set aside some time to explore ways their declining church could reach out to their changing community. The council chair replied, "We don't have time for that, we haven't recruited enough workers for the festival."

**Go**

The pastor later confessed he was filled with inexperienced enthusiasm and naïve idealism when from the pulpit the next Sunday he blurted out that "There's more to the Christian life than festivals!" He might as well have spoken against Christmas and Easter. For the first time in no one knew how long, they did not participate in the community festival. Nearly 30 years later, this pastor reflected -- "No one there remembers my name, but they all remember "the pastor who killed the festival."

Theologically speaking, the great commission was never meant to compete with the normal activities of life or church life. We don't do this (commission) *instead* of

any other activity. This now experienced pastor understood that our unique purpose, our commission filters through every activity of life (including festivals) -- personal life, community life, school life, work life, home life, and sometimes even the church. We personify our faith in Christ wherever we go and whatever we do. We take our faith with us from these walls as we go into our work places, into our recreational places, into educational places, into our extracurricular volunteer organizations, into our households, into or through our restaurants, and stores, and into our neighborhoods. Wherever our daily path takes us, we use our words and our lives as the Spirit leads -- to make disciples.

We go. We make disciples. Disciples are people who have embraced and devoted their life to learning and living a certain teaching. So, for example, Matthew Stafford has embraced and devoted himself to following the ways and discipline of football, ( or Aaron Rogers). Justin Verlander has done the same, submitting his body, mind, and life patterns to the discipline of baseball for the Tigers, and now for the Astros. And Lang Lang (pronounced Long Long) committed himself to the disciplines of piano playing from the earliest of ages. But beyond (or even within) career disciplines, there are faith disciplines in which we devote ourselves to living out a belief system. In our case, it is embodied in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ - that we too may embody in us the life and teachings of Jesus. So wherever we go, others see Christ in us, and we will see Christ in them.

**Make disciples**

The modern English connotation of the word “*making*” may imply force. I’ve heard it preached that way before -- we don’t *offer* discipleship, we don’t *encourage* discipleship, we don’t *introduce* a new life style -- we ***make*** disciples like you *make* your child make their bed. This is not what it means. Based on Jesus’ sermon (in Matthew 5:13ff) we make disciples in the way seasoning makes a steak. It's not about forcing the steak to be the kind of steak we want it to be, but preserving and flavoring it by our very presence, our example, our words and our deeds... To make, to salt, (and Jesus adds, to be light) happens as a natural influence of who we are as we work with or in our schools, homes, shops, hospitals, and offices -- wherever we find ourselves. Do our lives whet the spiritual thirst of people, creating within them a desire to be more like Christ?

It is as the old saying goes -- a cowboy can’t force a horse to drink water and trying to will probably make them buck and fight every step of the way, causing frustration for both the horse and the cowboy. But if you put a salt lick on the way

to the stream, the horse takes from that salt, it will want to make its way to the stream and willingly take a gulp. In the same way, by the quality and character of our life, we can become salt that will make someone want to drink in Christ's living waters.

Speaking of water, then, we baptize. While it refers to the sacrament, don't think only of the ritual, think of its meaning -- that it communicates an initiation, a welcome, into the family of God. No program or ritual, in and of itself can make God's people a warm and welcoming family, only people can do that for each other and make others want to be a part of the family.

**Baptizing**

We go, we make disciples, we baptize, we teach. Maybe a better understanding is to say it this way: We "keep on going, we keep on discipling, we keep on being immersed in the new life Christ offers, and we keep learning and teaching what devoting ourselves to a discipline of faith is all about - what a relationship with Christ involves. To be disciples together means taking the time to enter into caring relationships with each other, where our mutual life grows as a group, where more is caught by our lives lived together, even more than is learned by the words we speak, although it includes them. Never stop paying attention to and living out what we have learned in our spiritual journeys with each other.

**Teaching**

You may wonder how teaching helps us establish a rock solid relationship with God. It has to do with how we grow (how we learn). Some of us learn best by reading, some by hearing, some by hearing in combination with writing notes, some by seeing it done, some by doing things hands on. There are many facets of learning, and most of us learn best by incorporating multiple and varying methods and by using as many senses as possible to put it all together. But in my opinion, nothing helps us learn better than having to teach it to someone else. Because if you need to explain it to someone else, then you have to get it figured out yourself first! I remember a Steven Covey exercise where he had people who were on opposite sides of an issue teach the opponent's side to the opponent's satisfaction. To be able to do that, they had to listen carefully and really understand the opponents beliefs. They couldn't rely on their own side's opinions and characterizations and cliches and stereotypes -- those straw men that they normally throw at each other. They had to truly understand what the opponent felt and thought if they were going to convince their opponent that their opponent's side is true. They had to listen in ways they never had to listen before.

If you want to explain what it means to be in relationship with Christ, we have to have a workable understanding of what that means for us. Learning and teaching build on each other as we continue to explore what it means to follow Christ. As we teach others about our relationship with Jesus, about our faith experiences, it not only shares the new with them, shares God's love with them, share's the hope for humanity with them, it also reinforces what we believe because the teaching helps nail it down for us, because we have to understand it well. Be devoted to the discipline -- of the commission -- that will build our faith to maturity.

Paul sums up our argument as he writes about his ministry to the Gentiles -- that he can only speak of what Christ has done through him... which was done simply be speaking and living and serving with those he was with, who may or may not yet have come to believe. (See Romans 15:15-19) He did it by his lifestyle. He couldn't *make* them believe, he couldn't make them do anything. He just lived with them and talked with them, and expressed his own experience of how Christ had worked with him. We don't have to be an expert in this or that, we only need to be an expert in what Christ is doing with us. We are witnesses, we are not scholars (necessarily). We are not called to be religious salespeople. We are called to be witnesses. (See Acts 1:8) A witness isn't responsible for the verdict in the courtroom -- or in life. A witness is only responsible for honestly reporting - teaching others - what they have personally seen and heard and learned and experienced.

God may well have placed you in the lives of other people so that they too can have an opportunity to respond to God's love, and mercy, and grace, and truth as is seen in Jesus. And as you do these things, Jesus concludes, "never forget that I am with you every day, even to the [very end] of this age." (Matthew 28:20b (TPT)[NIV]) You never know what God might do as we share the seeds of his discipling in our lives *wherever* we find ourselves.

**Prayer** Lord, as we have heard from Isaiah of your Son Jesus, may we also have ears that are quick to learn and spirits that are determined to live your will, empowered by you to share our faith -- simply by how we speak and live in our world, entering into deep relationships -- sharing the life-giving, life-liberating, death-defying relationship of Jesus Christ and ourselves. It is in Jesus name that we pray. Amen.

**Music Leader:** The book of Revelation describes a future Palm Sunday of sorts. A Palm Sunday where all know what Christ as king truly meant and is recognized by all in the heavenly courts. So instead of crying out to save, they recognize that true salvation belongs to God and his Son, the Lamb. John saw a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." And all [the heavenly beings] fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!" And then the promise to these faithful is pronounced: 'Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them,' nor any scorching heat. [or in Michigan, you won't be frozen out 😊!) For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; 'he will lead them to springs of living water.' 'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'"

Let's stand and join in the song of these redeemed from all over the world, those who lived on the basis of what Jesus has done for us -- victorious over darkness and death.

### **Music My Savior Lives**

(Primary lyrics):

Our God will reign forever and all the world will know his name.

Ev'ryone together sing the song of the redeemed.

I know that my Redeemer lives and now I stand on what he did.

My Savior, my Savior lives!

Ev'ry day a brand new chance to say, "Jesus, you are the only way."

My Savior, my Savior lives!

The King has come from heaven and darkness trembles at his name,

Victory forever is the song of the redeemed.

I know that my Redeemer lives and now I stand on what he did.

My Savior, my Savior lives! CCLI # 2561297

**Blessing** Now go - established in the rock solid love of God by [seeing, knowing, listening, speaking, and serving, living, and sharing], nurturing a growing relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who leads our old lives to the cross, and through it delivers us to new and eternal life. Amen.