

WORSHIP AT HOME: Week of 3/21/21
Fifth Sunday in Lent



In the event you are unable to view or hear an MPLC service, here's a brief worship order you can use at home. You might light a candle before you begin to quiet your heart and prepare to worship God. You will need a bible to look up the readings. You may read aloud or in silence to yourself.

BEGIN: (You may trace a cross on your forehead or make the sign of the cross.)

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, the keeper of the covenant, the source of steadfast love, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

CONFESS: (You may offer your prayer of confession to God with a repentant heart.)

Fountain of living water, pour out your mercy over us. Our sin is heavy, and we long to be free. Rebuild what we have ruined and mend what we have torn. Wash us in your cleansing flood. Make us alive in the Spirit to follow in the way of Jesus, as healers and restorers of the world you so love. Amen.

(Read these words to yourself and know that the grace of God in Christ is for you.)

God's word never fails. The promise rests on grace: by the saving love of Jesus Christ, the wisdom and power of God, your sins are † forgiven, and God remembers them no more. Journey in the way of Jesus. Amen.

PRAY: O God, with steadfast love you draw us to yourself, and in mercy you receive our prayers. Strengthen us to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, that through life and death we may live in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

READ: Jeremiah 31:31-34 and John 12:20-33

SERMON: by Pastor Krista Zimmerman

Grace and peace to you from our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

We join Jesus and the disciples in Jerusalem after the triumphal entry. That is, after he and his disciples receive a warm welcome parade into the city. Jesus, riding a donkey and walking on the cloaks of admirers, knows he is about to meet a very different reception. Everyone was flocking to the city of Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Even some Greeks were there. We don't know why they wanted to see Jesus but we could assume that they had heard the rumors about what Jesus was up to. Jesus turned water into wine. He cleansed the temple. He healed the paralytic. He fed 5000 with a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish. He walked on water. He gave sight to the man born blind. He raised Lazarus from the dead. Who *wouldn't* want to meet someone like that? But

when Phillip and Andrew tell Jesus about the Greek's desire to meet him- he answers in a way that his disciples might not even expect. He tells a parable about death and new life that foretells his own death. They are served a hard truth- if you want to follow the Jesus who makes miracles, you're also going to have to follow him to the cross and his brutal death. As Christ's followers, we also join him in his life and death. We cannot be fair weather believers. We can't just talk about Jesus accomplishments if we aren't also willing to stand him at the cross. It's fortunate for us, that we follow a God who doesn't just walk with us in our achievements, but in the hard parts of humanity too. Jesus has been there and done that. And literally gone to hell and back for us- all out of love and a desire for renewed relationships.

Jesus tells this parable of wheat falling into the earth and dying. I call this- The Circle of Life. In the fall, wheat and all kinds of plants are cut down. Their seeds fall into the ground for the long winter. People also plant bulbs before winter. The ground freezes and everything may look dead to us. But what's happening underground is lots of life. Now we're beginning to see the product of all of that wintering. Those bulbs are popping up their green shoots. Soon there will be flowers on those shoots. But they needed that time of darkness. That time to lay fallow in the earth. To hibernate.

Jesus is saying he is like that wheat. He must die in order to bear much fruit. What Jesus is talking about is his death on the cross. It's been the plan all along. All things that live, one day die. Jesus came to live among us as one of us. In the flesh and blood and feelings and thoughts of humanity. Though he was also God, Jesus did not hesitate to carry out his mission. He knew that by dying, lying fallow in the grave and rising again, that a more abundant harvest of believers would be formed. There were and are plenty of celebrities. People who have great talents or have made contributions to humankind. But none of them willingly give their lives for those they love.

In baptism, we believe that to become truly a member of the body of Christ, we must die and rise with Jesus. We must die to sin- that is the ways that separate us from God- and rise to new life. That is also our lifelong faithful response to the salvation Jesus so freely gives us. Jesus prays to his Father saying- God, glorify your name. And God, speaks and says- yes, I've glorified my name and I'll do it again." What does it mean to glorify God's name? It means to be a believer in the good times and the bad. To journey to the wedding at Cana and the cross. It means to deny the ways of this world that go against God and to follow Jesus even if that means temporary discomfort on our part. To engage in the gift of salvation means to continually die to the ways of the world and refocus on Christ. Christ's ways lead to life abundant. Not with cheap thrills. But with the promise that Jesus will be with us through thick and thin.

In Jesus death, God and humanity were reconciled to one another. Jesus dies for restoration of relationship. Jesus death is necessary and life giving. We know that his death is not the end. It is just the beginning.

We don't ever find out what happened to the Greeks looking for Jesus. But we can imagine that they heard, along with everyone else in Jerusalem, that Jesus had suffered a

criminal's death on the cross. The Bible says they were proselytes- that is, converts. I wonder if they continued in their faith in Jesus after that. I wonder if they hung on to hear the news of Jesus resurrection. I can imagine that it's not easy being a new believer and wrestling with the death of Jesus on the cross. But ultimately, I would much rather have a savior who knows me and loves me through thick and thin instead of simply a celebrity who did some cool things. When we die to the world's ways and commit to Jesus ways- we are part of that abundant and eternal life. Amen.

PRAY: For the whole church and its leaders, that the voice of Christ may lead us forward boldly in mission; for new life taking root, especially in fields sown for food, and for the livelihoods of all who tend the land; for world leaders and local government officials, that the needs of the poorest among us would guide their decisions; for the criminal justice system, law enforcement, victims of crime and all who advocate for them; for our congregation and God's mission among us to grow our relationships with God, each other, and our neighbors in the way of Jesus, and for those we name before God:

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.

BLESS: We are what God made us to be: created in Christ Jesus for good works, chosen as holy and beloved, freed to serve our neighbor. God bless us ☩ that we may be a blessing, in the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity. Amen.

Go in peace. Share the good news. Thanks be to God.



Liturgy from Sundays and Seasons.com. Copyright 2021 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.
Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #SAS006880.



WORSHIP AT HOME: Week of 3/28/2

Palm/Passion Sunday

In the event you are unable to view or hear an MPLC service, here's a brief worship order you can use at home. You might light a candle before you begin to quiet your heart and prepare to worship God. You will need a bible to look up the readings. You may read aloud or in silence to yourself.

BEGIN: Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

READ: Mark 11:1-11

¹When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, [Jesus] sent two of his disciples ²and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. ³If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.' " ⁴They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, ⁵some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" ⁶They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. ⁷Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. ⁸Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. ⁹Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

"Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

¹⁰Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

¹¹Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

PRAY: O God of mercy and might, in the mystery of the passion of your Son you offer your infinite life to the world. Gather us around the cross of Christ, and preserve us until the resurrection, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

READ: The Passion of Our Lord, according to Mark, chapters 14 and 15.

REFLECT: See the provided "Daily Discipleship" Bible Study handout for Mark 14:1 – 15:47.

PRAY: In Jesus you came among us as a suffering servant. Give your church humility.

Redeem your people from pride and the certainty that we always know your will. Heal us and empower us to confess Christ crucified.

In creation, life springs from death. Redeem your creation awaiting resurrection: restore lost habitats and endangered species. Create new possibilities for areas affected by climate change, grant relief from natural disasters, and nurture new growth.

Jesus was handed over to the powers of this world. In all nations, instruct the powerful, that they would not exploit their power but maintain justice. Sustain soldiers, and guide those who command them, that they serve those in greatest need.

On the cross Jesus joined all who feel forsaken. Abide with those who are condemned to death. Defend those who are falsely accused. Console and strengthen those who are mocked or bullied. Accompany all who suffer; grant respite and renewal.

You called followers to tend Jesus' body in death. Sustain hospice workers and funeral directors. Bless this congregation's ministries at times of death: those who plan and lead funerals, those who prepare meals, all who offer support in grief.

You inspired the centurion to confess Jesus as your Son. We praise you for the faith you have given to people of all places and times. Give us also such faith to trust the promises of baptism and, with them, to look for the resurrection of the dead.

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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.

BLESS: We are what God made us to be: created in Christ Jesus for good works, chosen as holy and beloved, freed to serve our neighbor. God bless us ☩ that we may be a blessing, in the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity. Amen.

Go in peace. Share the good news. Thanks be to God.

