

First Presbyterian Church

Rouses Point NY

Champlain NY

Virtual Worship-April 5, 2020-

Pastor -Lori Danielson

Organist Sally Goddard

Greeting

PRAYER OF PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

O God of our Salvation we give you thanks and praise. Bless our worship, we pray, and guide our faith journey so we may grow in love for you, and share that love with the world and those in it. We pray this in the name of our Savior. Amen

CALL TO WORSHIP - from Psalm 118

This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it. Save us, we beseech you, O Lord. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you Lord.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Let us confess our sin, trusting in God's mercy to forgive us: Heavenly Father, we confess that we, may proclaim love for Jesus one moment and reject him the next. We confess that sometimes we doubt his love or power. Forgive us our sin, we pray. Have mercy on us so we may be filled with your grace, and empower us by your Spirit to faithfully honor Jesus every day. In his precious name we pray Amen

Assurance of Pardon

Readings and Proclaiming God's Word

Old Testament: Psalm 31:9-16

New Testament: Matthew 21:1-14

Sermon "False Hope Vs. Real Hope"

***Affirmation of faith: Apostle's Creed**

I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord:

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary: Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried: He descended into hell: The third day he rose again from the dead: He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty: From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead: I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church: the communion of saints; The forgiveness of sins; The resurrection of the body; And the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of the People and Lord's Prayer

*Benediction

WE ARE LIVING IN STRANGE TIMES, A TIME LIKE WE HEARD ABOUT 100 YEARS AGO, WITH THE FLU FOLLOWING WORLD WAR ONE.

BUT, NO MATTER WHAT YEAR OR TIMES WE ARE IN TODAY ON PALM AND PASSION SUNDAY, WE BEGIN A STRANGE WEEK.

IT IS A WEEK THAT BEGINS IN JOY, PASSES THROUGH CONFUSION, DISMAY, AND GRIEF, ONLY TO END THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY IN A MORE PROFOUND TYPE OF JOY, WITH CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

THERE IS A REFLECTION ON PALM SUNDAY, I SHARED IN THE PAST, BUT IT IS WORTH REPEATING, ESPECIALLY TODAY. SOMEONE ELSE WROTE:

"IT IS A STRANGE...JOURNEY WE CHRISTIANS WALK EVERY PALM SUNDAY.

A JOURNEY THAT BEGINS WITH A PARADE AND ENDS WITH ISOLATION, BEGINS WITH LOUD MUSIC AND ENDS IN SILENCE.

BEGINS WITH CROWDS JOSTLING TO SEE, AND ENDS IN DARKNESS AS WE COVER OUR FACES AND TURN OUR EYES AWAY."

IF WE WERE TO LEAVE THE MESSAGE THERE, IT WOULD GIVE US LITTLE HOPE. BUT CHRISTIANS KNOW THERE IS MORE TO THE STORY, LIFE BEGINS ANEW AFTER CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

TODAY WE CELEBRATE PALM SUNDAY, THE FIRST DAY OF HOLY WEEK. THE SERMON TITLE FOR TODAY IS: "FALSE HOPE VS. REAL HOPE."

WHEN I PICKED THIS TITLE A MONTH AGO NY STATE AND THE NATION HAD NOT YET REALIZED HOW GREATLY WE WOULD NEED REAL HOPE.

AND SO, I AM GOING TO BREAK SOME OF THE RULES OF PREACHING, AND DISRUPT THE CONTINUITY OF THE MESSAGE.

I WILL DO SO, BY FIRST ADDRESSING HOW THE PSALM RELATES TO THE CRISIS WE ARE IN, BEFORE TURNING TO ITS MESSAGE FOR HOLY WEEK.

LET'S THINK ABOUT SOME OF THE WORDS OF THE PASSAGE AND THE SENSE OF ISOLATION AND LONELINESS EXPRESSED THERE THAT LEADS TO THE PRAYER: "BE GRACIOUS TO ME, O LORD, FOR I AM IN DISTRESS."

THE DISTRESS IS BOTH PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL, AN ATTACK ON THE BODY, AS WELL AS REJECTION BY OTHERS, INCLUDING SOME FLEEING FROM HIS PRESENCE.

TODAY MANY ARE EXPERIENCING FEAR OF CONTRACTING THE VIRUS, WHICH LEADS TO A DESIRE TO NOT GET CLOSE TO FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS.

THE LAMENT OF THE PSALMIST IS LOUD AND CLEAR, IT IS ONE SOME WHO HAVE BEEN STRUCK WITH THE VIRUS, OR KNOW ANOTHER SUFFERING FROM IT, MAY WELL HAVE ECHOED.

IT IS A LAMENT OTHERS VOICE IN THEIR HEARTS OR EXPRESS OUT LOUD IN FEAR OF WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN.

SO LET US REMEMBER THIS KIND OF LAMENT IS LEGITIMATE A CRY TO GOD, NOT WHINING. THE LORD WELCOMES ALL OF OUR EXPRESSIONS, INCLUDING THOSE SOME PEOPLE MAY DISTAIN.

IN FACT, THE BIBLE SHOWS US THAT TIME AND TIME AGAIN, A LAMENT IS A DEEPLY FELT CALL TO THE LORD FOR HELP.

CONSEQUENTLY, IT IS A WAY TO SEEK COMMUNION WITH GOD IN TIMES OF DISTRESS, AND THUS AN ACT OF FAITH.

NOTICE, IN THE MIDST OF THE PSALMIST'S DISTRESS, HE GIVES US A REMINDER OF WHERE WE CAN TURN: "BUT I TRUST IN YOU, LORD."

THEN IN VERSE 15 WE ARE GIVEN A STATEMENT, ONE PROFOUNDLY IMPORTANT FOR US TO REMEMBER: "MY TIMES ARE IN YOUR HAND."

IT SPEAKS TO US AS WE TAKE CARE OF OURSELVES AND OTHERS DURING THIS PANDEMIC, AND ALSO PRAY FOR DELIVERANCE.

DURING A CRISIS SUCH AS THE ONE WE ARE NOW IN, THE REMINDER OF GOD'S PRESENCE AND WILL FOR US IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER.

TRUSTING IN GOD, AT ALL TIMES, AS WE DO OUR PART, IS WHERE TRUE HOPE IS FOUND. THIS KIND OF HOPE IS NOT ALWAYS EASY FOR US TO HOLD ONTO, YET IT IS IMPORTANT.

THIS IS THE HOPE THAT CALLS TO GOD FOR HELP, WHILE DOING WHAT WE CAN, AND THEN TRUSTING THE LORD WITH WHATEVER THE OUTCOME WILL BE.

SO, WITH THESE THOUGHTS IN MIND, LET US NOW TURN TO HOW THE PSALM RELATES TO JESUS AND HOLY WEEK.

FOR CHRISTIANS, THE WORDS OF PSALM 31 PLAY AS BACKGROUND MUSIC DURING THE PALM SUNDAY PARADE, AND IF WE LISTEN, THEY MAY BE HEARD QUIETLY PLAYING IN THE MIDST OF CHEERING.

“HOSANNA TO THE SON OF DAVID...BE MERCIFUL TO ME, O LORD, I AM IN DISTRESS.

BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD... THERE IS TERROR ON EVERY SIDE, THEY CONSPIRE AGAINST ME AND PLOT MY DEATH.”

THE DAY JESUS RODE INTO JERUSALEM FOR THE LAST TIME, WAS A DAY OF JOY AND HOPE, WONDER AND EXPECTATION.

HOWEVER, AS THE WORDS OF THE PSALM FORETELL, IT WASN'T REALLY REAL, BECAUSE GOD'S PLAN WAS FAR DIFFERENT FROM WHAT HIS PEOPLE WERE PLANNING.

YES JESUS CAME AS THE PROMISED MESSIAH, BUT HE WAS NOT COMING TO OVERTHROW ROME AS THE PEOPLE HAD HOPED.

INSTEAD JESUS CAME TO MEET AND OVERTHROW THE REAL ENEMY- SIN, AND THE EVIL THAT PROVIDES THE ATMOSPHERE FOR SIN TO LIVE AND GROW IN.

WHAT NO ONE WHO PUT THEIR HOPE IN HIM COULD IMAGINE, WAS THAT THE SAVIOR'S WEAPON WOULD NOT BE A SWORD, BUT THE CROSS, ON UPON HE WOULD BE LIFTED UP AND DIE.

AND SO IT WAS IN THE MIDST OF A FALSE HOPE THAT THE EXCITEMENT OF THE DAY WAS FOUND.

AND WHAT A DAY IT WAS WHEN JESUS ROAD INTO THE HOLY CITY ON A DONKEY, TO CHEERING CROWDS.

THEY LOVED HIM. THEY WERE GLAD TO SEE HIM THERE AND FOR THE FACT, BY HIS ENTRANCE, HE WAS SHOWING HE HAD COME AS THE MESSIAH.

YES HE HAD COME TO DELIVER HIS PEOPLE, BUT NOT THEM ALONE. IRONICALLY, ROMANS AND ALL OTHER PEOPLES WOULD BE ABLE TO BE SAVED THROUGH JESUS.

THUS HE CAME WITH GREATER HOPE AND POWER THAN ANYONE REALIZED OR COULD EVER MATCH.

TWO NEW TESTAMENT SCHOLARS WROTE A SYMBOLIC DESCRIPTION ABOUT THAT DAY, SHOWING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THOSE OF THE WORLD.

THEY ENVISIONED TWO PARADES, THE ONE WITH JESUS ON A DONKEY, SURROUNDED BY THE CROWD ENTERING JERUSALEM THROUGH THE EASTERN GATE.

AND THE OTHER PARADE WAS OF PONTIUS PILATE, THE ROMAN GOVERNOR RIDING INTO THE CITY FROM THE WEST, ON A HORSE, ACCOMPANIED BY A SQUAD OF SOLDIERS.

NO, AS FAR AS WE KNOW, IT DID NOT HAPPEN THAT WAY, BUT SYMBOLICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY, PICTURING IN OUR MINDS THE TWO PARADES CAN BE HELPFUL.

TOGETHER THEY REMIND US ABOUT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FALSE AND REAL HOPE.

ON THE ONE HAND, THERE IS PILATE WHO SYMBOLIZES THE PAX ROMANA, OR PEACE OF ROME, ENFORCED BY HER LEGIONS.

ON THE OTHER HAND THERE IS JESUS, WHO CAME AS THE PRINCE OF PEACE. HE CAME TO MAKE PEACE BETWEEN SINNERS AND GOD, BY DYING FOR US, NOT BY WORLDLY CONQUEST.

OF COUSE, WHEN THE CROWD AROUND JESUS CRIED “HOSANNA”, WHICH IN HEBREW MEANS “SAVE US”, THEY WERE HOPING FOR SALVATION FROM ROMAN OPPRESSION AND OCCUPATION.

JESUS, HOWEVER CAME TO DELIVER THEM FROM THE REAL ENEMY SIN AND DEATH.

HE CAME TO BRING A HOPE THAT WOULD NOT END AT PHYSICAL DEATH, BUT BE ETERNAL, FOR THE SOULS OF THOSE WHO LOVE AND BELIEVE IN HIM.

JESUS CAME TO DEFEAT THE REAL ENEMY- SATAN, AND THE POWER OF SIN AND DEATH, DISEASE, AND EVIL THAT CONTINUES TO ATTACK CREATION.

NOTICE, WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE SAVIOR ENTERED JERUSALEM, HE DID NOT GO TO EITHER THE RESIDENCE OF KING HEROD OR THE ROMAN GOVERNOR PILATE.

INSTEAD JESUS WENT INTO THE TEMPLE, AND CLEARED OUT THOSE WHO WERE USING THE FAITH OF GOD’S PEOPLE FOR THEIR OWN BENEFIT.

THEN AFTER, HE PROCLAIMED THE HOUSE OF GOD WAS ONE OF PRAYER NOT THIEVERY, JESUS HEALED THOSE WHO CAME TO HIM.

AND WHILE SOME DID RECEIVE A MIRACULOUS HEALING, JESUS ACTUALLY DID NOT COME TO OFFER A QUICK FIX FOR THE WORLD.

INSTEAD HIS PURPOSE WAS TO PROVIDE THE REAL HOPE THAT GOD WILL WIN IN THE END.

IN FACT WITH CHRIST’S DEATH AND RESURRECTION THE TRUTH IS GOD HAS WON THE WAR ALREADY.

BUT REMEMBER WHAT HAS OFTEN HAPPENED IN WARS BETWEEN NATIONS OR PEOPLES, THERE ARE BATTLES FOUGHT EVEN AFTER THE OUTCOME OF THE WAR HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED.

TRULY, THE WORLD IS STILL FIGHTING SOME BATTLES WITH SIN AND EVIL, AMONG THOSE ARE THE FACT WE ARE STILL PLAGUED BY THINGS LIKE OPPRESSION, VIOLENCE, AND DISEASE.

THEREFORE, WE ARE CHALLENGED TO TRUST IN GOD EVEN WHEN WE DO NOT LIKE OR UNDERSTAND THE OUTCOME OF CERTAIN EVENTS, PERSONAL OR OTHERWISE.

WE ARE CHALLENGED TO HOPE IN GOD’S PRESENCE AND LOVE TO, AND TRUST IN HIS WILL TODAY, AS WE FACE THIS UNSEEN ENEMY.

INDEED, SOME AMONG US WHO HAVE BEEN HEALTHY AND HAVE HAD ALL OF OUR PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS MET, MAY NOW BE CRYING OUT FOR DELIVERANCE.

AND THOSE FOR WHOM LIFE HAS BEEN BASICALLY “GOOD”, NOW NEED TO REMEMBER ALL OF OUR TIMES ARE IN GOD’S HAND.

AROUND THE WORLD, PEOPLE OF VARIOUS FAITHS, PERHAPS EVEN SOME OF LITTLE OR NO FAITH, CRY OUT TO BE SAVED FROM THE COVID-19 VIRUS, AND ESPECIALLY TO BE SPARED FROM DEATH.

MANY OF THESE PRAYERS, ARE NOT ONLY FOR OURSELVES, BUT ALSO FOR ALL PEOPLES AND NATIONS.

INDEED LET US PRAY ALONG WITH THE PSALMIST: BE GRACIOUS TO US, O LORD, FOR WE ARE IN DISTRESS.

BE GRACIOUS, O LORD, TO OUR FRIENDS AND ENEMIES, PEOPLE FROM EVERY TRIBE, RACE, NATION, SOCIAL STATUS, POLITICAL VIEW.

BE GRACIOUS, O LORD, TO PEOPLE OF EVERY LIFE STYLE AND ORIENTATION, INCLUDING THOSE WE MAY NOT AGREE WITH.

THE TIMES OF ALL OF US ARE IN YOUR HANDS. O LORD, BE GRACIOUS US ALL, TO PEOPLE OF EVERY RELIGION, AND THOSE WITH NO FAITH.

BE GRACIOUS, O LORD, TO THIS WORLD FOR WHOM JESUS DIED, AND BY HIS RESURRECTION HAS TRUE HOPE IN HIM.

BE GRACIOUS, O LORD, FOR WE ALL ARE IN DISTRESS. O LORD,
DELIVER US AND GIVE US PEACE. AMEN

AND NOW LET US TRUST IN THE LORD LIKE THE PSALMIST DID AS
WE CONTINUE TO PRAY FOR DELIVERANCE FROM OUR UNSEEN
ENEMY.

BUT LET CHRISTIANS ALSO NOT LOOSE SIGHT OF OUR NEED TO
PRAY FOR THE ETERNAL SALVATION OF ALL PEOPLE, ALONG WITH
THEIR PHYSICAL PROTECTION OR HEALING.

LET US SEEK BOTH PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL DELIVERANCE SO
THAT OUR HOPE IN THE LORD MAY BE SEEN AS REAL AND LASTING
BY THE WORLD.

AN OLD PALM SUNDAY HYMN REMINDS US THAT JOY AND
SORROW, CHEERS AND JEERS, THE REALITY OF DEATH, AND THE
HOPE OF RESURRECTION ARE ALL PRESENT IN THE WORLD.

I SHARE THE TWO VERSES OF IT THAT REMIND US ABOUT THE
IMPORTANCE AND POWER OF THIS DAY, AND HOW GOD
TRANSFORMED FALSE HOPE IN TO REAL HOPE BY HIS SON'S DEATH
AND RESURRECTION.

AS YOU LISTEN TO THE MESSAGE OF THESE VERSES, REMEMBER
CHRIST'S SACRIFICE. PUT YOUR HOPE IN HIM AND HIS PROMISE TO
BE WITH US ALWAYS.

"RIDE ON RIDE, ON IN MAJESTY! HARK ALL THE TRIBES HOSANNA
CRY; O SAVIOR MEEK, PURSUE THY ROAD WITH PALMS AND
SCATTERED GARMENTS STROWED.

RIDE ON, RIDE ON IN MAJESTY! IN LOWLY POMP RIDE ON TO DIE;
BOW THY MEEK HEAD TO MORTAL PAIN, THEN TAKE O GOD, THY
POWER, AND REIGN!"

THE WORDS OF THE HYMN REMIND US THAT BETWEEN THE
MESSAGE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE FIRST VERSE, AND THAT OF
END OF THE LAST, JESUS PASSED THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE
SHADOW OF DEATH.

THAT VALLEY, FAMILIAR TO US THROUGH PSALM 23, CAN ALSO BE
TRANSLATED:

"THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE DARKEST VALLEY, I FEAR NO
EVIL, FOR THOU ART WITH ME."

EITHER WAY THAT POINT OF THIS VERSE FROM PSALM 23 IS- WE
MUST CROSS THROUGH THE VALLEY TO GET TO THE OTHER SIDE.

JESUS HAD TO DO IT, NOT FOR HIS SAKE, BUT FOR OURS. AND
BECAUSE HE HAS TAKEN THE JOURNEY BEFORE US, WE CAN BE
CONFIDENT HE KNOWS THE WAY AND WILL GUIDE US.

TODAY WE ARE IN A DARK VALLEY, TODAY WE BEGIN HOLY WEEK.
BOTH CIRCUMSTANCES INVITE AND ENCOURAGE US TO PRAYER
AND FAITH.

THEY CALL US TO REMEMBER AND BE THANKFUL THAT OUR TIMES
ARE IN GOD'S HANDS, AND JESUS WALKS WITH US.

THIS IS REAL HOPE, NOT A PROMISE OF A QUICK FIX, BUT THE
PROMISE OF HOPE FOR THE JOURNEY, NO MATTER HOW IT ENDS.

THANKS BE TO GOD, THAT OUR TIMES ARE IN HIS HANDS ,AND
JESUS CAN BE TRUSTED TO BE WITH US ALWAYS. AMEN

Sermon Summary-Psalm 31:9-16 and Matthew 21:1-14

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