

Knox Presbyterian Church
Rev. Emma Duncan
April 13, 2025

PALM SUNDAY

Greetings

Call to worship (PWS&D Lenten Liturgy)

One: Jesus enters Jerusalem as a humble king, riding on a donkey.

All: The disciples proclaim the one who comes in the name of the Lord,

One: but the powers that be see a troublemaker, challenging their authority.

All: The prophetic traditions envision the peaceable kingdom,

One: but the empire sees a disturber of the peace, so death awaits him.

All: Give thanks to God who overcomes all the powers of death!

Music: All glory, laud, and honour (#214, all verses)

Prayer of Lament

This is the final prayer of lament that I will be doing for the season of Lent. I have chosen to use Psalm 130 which is called a "Psalm of Ascent." This is one of several Psalms that were sung by pilgrims traveling to the religious feasts at Jerusalem. And because Jerusalem sits on a hill, they were literally ascending or going up to Jerusalem. Psalm 130 is a Psalm that expresses penance or sorrow for sin. It also reminds us to keep our eyes on God as we cry out for His mercy.



Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD;
Lord, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my supplications!
If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,
Lord, who could stand?
But there is forgiveness with you,
so that you may be revered.
I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,
and in the Lord's word I hope.
My soul waits for the Lord
more than those who watch for the morning,
more than those who watch for the morning.
O Israel, hope in the LORD!
For with the LORD there is steadfast love,
with the Lord is great power to redeem.
It is the Lord who will redeem Israel
from all its iniquities.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your steadfast love which is new each morning. Send your Holy Spirit into the Church and all believers as we watch and wait for the resurrection.

We now pray the prayer that our Lord Jesus Christ taught us to pray, saying...

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, for ever and ever. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, receive the Good News of the Gospel with these words of hope that come from Psalm 118 – **the stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.** Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of our faith and through his death and resurrection, we have been redeemed and forgiven. Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Amen.

Announcements

1. Welcome!
2. Join us in the Fellowship Hall after worship for refreshments and conversation.
3. Thank you to Ian MacIntyre and Ovidio di Cesare for participating in our worship service.
4. Thank you to all of those who helped at the Easter Eggstravaganza yesterday. Special thanks to Deb Settle, Cathie Davidson, Janet MacIntyre, and Dawn Flood for their leadership.
5. Holy Week

Maundy Thursday – April 17th at 7:00 p.m.

Sacrament of Holy Communion at **Knox**

Joint service with Port Nelson United Church

Good Friday – April 18th at 11:00 a.m.

Worship service at **Port Nelson United Church**

3132 South Drive

Joint service with Port Nelson United and Burlington Baptist Churches

Easter Sunday – April 20th at 10:30 a.m.

Worship service at **Knox**

6. Upcoming Events

Sunday May 4 after worship service

Annual General Meeting

Sunday May 25 in the afternoon

Concert - Circle of Harmony women's *A Capella* choir

Children's Time: Palm parade

Music: Hosanna, loud hosanna (#218, all verses)

Readings for
Holy Week



Palm Sunday
Jesus enters Jerusalem – John 12:12-26

Monday
Washing the disciples' feet – John 13:1-14

Tuesday
In my Father's house – John 14:1-14

Wednesday
I am the True Vine – John 15:1-13

Thursday
Jesus is betrayed and arrested – John 18:1-12

Good Friday
Jesus' crucifixion and death – John 19:13-30

Saturday
Jesus' burial – John 19:31-42

Easter Sunday
The resurrection story – John 20:1-18

In John's gospel, there are 9 chapters dedicated to Jesus' final days.
You may wish to read John 18-20 fully.

Knox Presbyterian Church
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Prayer of Illumination

Let us pray. Merciful God, as we enter Holy Week and turn our hearts again to Jerusalem – towards the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Stir up within us the gift of faith that we may not only praise him with our lips, but may follow him in the way of the cross. We pray this in the great name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Old Testament reading is Psalm 118, verses 1-2, and 19-29.

Leader: O give thanks to the Lord, for God is good; God's steadfast love endures forever!
Let Israel say,

People: "His steadfast love endures forever."

Leader: Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the Lord.

People: This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it.

Leader: I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation.

People: The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

Leader: This is the Lord's doing;

People: it is marvelous in our eyes.

Leader: This is the day that the Lord has made;

People: let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Leader: Save us, we beseech you, O Lord!

People: O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!

Leader: Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

People: We bless you from the house of the Lord. The Lord is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.

Leader: You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;

People: you are my God, I will extol you.

ALL: O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Amen.

Our New Testament reading is taken from the Gospel of John and we will be reading chapter 12, verses 12-26.

The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting,

“Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel!”

Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written:

“Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion.

Look, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!”

His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him.

So the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify. It was also because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to meet him.

The Pharisees then said to one another, “You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!”

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip went and told Andrew, then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.”

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Reflection: Look, your king is coming!

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, as we ponder the stories of Jesus' final days yet again, help us listen as if we have never heard them before. By the power of your Spirit, engage us, shock us, and pierce our hearts, so that your undying love overwhelms us with mercy and grace through Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Amen.



It is interesting to note that the festival of the Passover - which is one of the most important celebrations in the Jewish faith tradition – began last night at sundown and ends after nightfall on Easter Sunday. The convergence of Passover and Holy Week do not happen very often and this means that billions of people around the world - Christians and Jews alike – are worshipping and celebrating this week. One of the challenges for us as Christians is that the story of the last week of Jesus' life has often resulted in anti-Semitism. Christians throughout the millennia have blamed Jews for the death of Christ which has resulted in persecution and great suffering. To put it plainly, many people believe that Christians are right and Jews are wrong.

This is not true.

Never forget that the historical Jesus – who we worship and serve as our Lord and Saviour – was a Jewish man. His disciples were all Jews, including the Apostle John who wrote the Gospel narrative that we have been exploring since January. The religious leaders were Jews. The crowds who waved their palm branches and shouted “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” were likely all Jewish pilgrims on their way to celebrate the Passover festival. Even Judas Iscariot was a Jew.

To complicate the history of Christianity, we must add the Islamic faith into the picture. Jesus was born in Bethlehem which is now located in the West Bank of Palestine.

Bethany – where Jesus was travelling from when our story begins in John chapter 12 – is also now located in the disputed West Bank.

Complicated, isn't it?

The history of the three great monotheistic religions – Judaism, Islam, and Christianity – are intertwined in ways which we will never fully understand. The global Church must confess its part in the persecution of other faith traditions and as individual people of faith, we must strive towards mutual understanding, respect, and commit ourselves to the work of reconciliation among people of all faiths.¹ We grieve the conflict, violence, and loss of life in the Holy Lands that has been going on for a very long time!

I tell you all of this because this has been something that I have struggled with in my preparations for Holy Week. Indeed, the reflection that you are hearing right now is version #2 because when I started editing version #1, I realized that I was falling into the dangerous trap of 'us' versus 'them.'

As we heard in Psalm 130 at the beginning of the service, I am just another pilgrim on a journey, seeking forgiveness from God. I yearn to experience the steadfast love of the Lord who has the great power to redeem. (Psalm 130:7)

So where do we go from here?

It's really important for ALL of us – especially me as I stand up here in the pulpit – to acknowledge that it is very easy for us to place blame on others. We do this as

¹ <https://presbyterian.ca/worship/>

Committee on Church Doctrine of the Presbyterian Church in Canada
Report on Addressing Anti-Judaism in the Lectionary during Lent and Eastertide
January 2025

individuals and as a society. Indeed, in today's society, it is EXTREMELY easy for us to blame others rather than identify our own role in the complex problems of our world.

And so, I invite you today to use your 'holy imagination' and ponder what it would be like to be in the crowd of people who were welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem that day. That's why the picture on the screen doesn't show any faces because I want you to picture yourself in the crowd. There were many different groups of people in that crowd...some were curious to see Jesus, a great teacher and healer. Others wanted to see Lazarus with their own eyes. Did Jesus really raise him from the dead? Others hoped that Jesus was really the new King of Israel who would overthrow the Roman Empire. There were religious leaders in the crowd watching Jesus' every move. There were foreigners – Greeks – who were also curious to learn more about this Jesus fellow. And let's not forget the disciples – confused and overwhelmed by the day's events. Philip and Andrew trying to control who spent time with Jesus. And John, who wrote this Gospel. And then there's Judas Iscariot, who would soon betray Jesus for a few pieces of silver.

Who would you be in the crowd?

Are you curious?

Do you feel threatened?

Are you waiting to see what will happen so that you can decide who to believe?

Are you hoping for change in government?

Or are you just visiting, wanting to get in on the action?

Just like this diverse crowd, we all have different reasons why we are here today. Whether you are in this sanctuary or watching this service online, you have your own story and your own experiences of Jesus.

And only you and God know who you would be like if Jesus came to town.

And in the midst of the chaos of this procession, Jesus was calm. The Son of Man was focused. Jesus understood that this crowd didn't really understand who he was and in response, he offered honour and praise to God the Father. Even when we continuing reading chapter 12, Jesus said that his heart was troubled, but his fear did not distract him from focusing on his Heavenly Father. The Messiah knew that God was with him.

As we enter into Holy Week, we - like Jesus - know what's coming. He said it himself - *The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies it bears much fruit.* (John 12:23-24). We know that he will be betrayed by Judas; we know that he will be arrested and beaten for a crime that he did not commit; we know that the crowds will change their tune from Hosanna to Crucify him; we know that the disciples will abandon him; we know that Jesus will suffer a cruel and painful death.

We know all of the details.

Even though we know what is coming, I encourage you not to be just a spectator, but enter into this divine drama and see where God leads you. Journey with Christ through the loneliness and betrayal and pain. Grieve with his mother and the women as they watched him die a cruel and horrific death. And then celebrate the greatest miracle of them all – Christ's resurrection. When we enter into this divine drama, the forgiveness, salvation, and the promise of eternal life that we receive is all the more beautiful. The grace of our risen Lord Jesus Christ becomes something that you can actually taste. It becomes part of the fibre of your soul so that when your heart is troubled by challenges in your life or the state of the world, you can say these words of hope with confidence and faith - **do not be afraid, O sons and daughters. Do not be afraid for your king is coming.** Amen.

Dedication of our Tithes and Offerings

We will now sing our song of thanks, - Holy, holy, holy (#303, verse 1)

Holy, holy, holy.

My heart, my heart adores you!

My heart is glad to say the words:

You are holy, Lord

Let us pray.

In glad thanksgiving for all the blessings of this life, we honour and glorify you, O Triune God. Receive our offerings and bless them and us for the building of your kingdom in this world. In Jesus's name we pray, Amen.

Prayers of the People

Heavenly Father, in whom we live and move and have our being, we offer you our worship today. We praise you for a love so deep that you created the universe out of nothing. We thank you for a love so high that you emptied yourself into a human body. We bless you for a love so wide that Christ stretched out his arms on a cross and said, "It is finished." No prayers or hymns or sermons could ever express our gratitude for the perfect gift of salvation that you offer us.

O God of care and compassion, we remember that going up to Jerusalem cost Jesus his very life. With this story in our heads, we acknowledge that we prefer to take the easy road. So often we speak the words of faith and then fail to live into them. We throw stones at others in judgment rather than welcoming others into the fellowship of the Church. Send your Holy Spirit into our lives this week as we remember the great sacrifice that Christ made on our behalf. Guide our feet to walk where Jesus walked.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

O God of power and might, we pray for your Church. We pray for Christians around the world who will make the same journey as we are making this week. We remember especially our brothers and sisters in Ukraine, Palestine, and Syria who will be worshipping you under the weight of crumbling buildings and the rocky roads of war. We pray for all Christians who are persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ. Restore their joy, O God, and help them to build a firm foundation on you.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

O God of grace and transformation, we pray for our world. There is so much suffering and pain around us. There is so much fear with little joy to be found. Father, we pray for all those who are struggling right now. Be with victims of war. Be with those struggling because of economic pressures of unemployment, lack of affordable housing, and the ongoing trade war. Be with those who suffer because of climate change. We remember those who grieve the loss of a loved one. We pray for people of all ages and all walks of life who see no hope in the Easter story.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Today we remember your beloved children by name...

O Triune God, as we imagine ourselves standing at the gates of Jerusalem watching Jesus go by, give us strength for the road ahead. Open our eyes to see Jesus for who he really is – the divine Son of God, the Messiah, and Saviour of all of creation. Focus our attention during Holy Week on your divine plan of redemption. May this story be shared far and wide so that the whole world will dance and sing for joy – blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! We pray all these things in the exalted name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Music: Ride on, ride on in majesty (#217, verses 1, 2, 4, 5)

Blessing (Philippians 2:5-11)

Sung Amen