

Peace Lutheran Church

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Rev. Dennis Wenholz

Rev. Khai Lee

PALM SUNDAY

APRIL 5, 2020

**AT THE CROSSROADS
A SERIES OF SERVICES FOR LENT
Palm Sunday: Suffering**

OPENING PRAYER

PROCESSIONAL READING ... JOHN 12:12-15

¹² The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" ¹⁴ And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

¹⁵ "Fear not, daughter of Zion;
behold, your king is coming,
sitting on a donkey's colt!"

OPENING RESPONSE

P In the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

P Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;

C Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

P For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime.

C Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

P For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.

C Therefore we give glory to God who raised him up and gave us the promise of salvation. Amen.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

P Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

C Gracious God, we confess our faithless terror at the crossroad of

suffering for your sake. We treasure the good life; we cling to the easy life; we fail to hear your call to walk in those ways that might bring us pain and suffering for the sake of others. We often choose to wrap ourselves in our self-made cocoon of personal preservation and seek to escape your call to ways that might put us among the hurting. Forgive our unwillingness to take up the cross marked with the names of the poor and vulnerable. Fill us with the Spirit so that we might overflow with the serving that proclaims your very presence with us.

P I have the honor and privilege, by the grace of God, of announcing to you the entire forgiveness of your sins. Not by anything you have done, but by everything Christ has done on the Cross. In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, you are forgiven and free—free to share the steadfast love of God with all. Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT READING ... ISAIAH 53:1-6

Who has believed what he has heard from us?

And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

² For he grew up before him like a young plant,
and like a root out of dry ground;

he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
and no beauty that we should desire him.

³ He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

EPISTLE READING ... 1 PETER 3:13-18

¹³ Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?

¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING ... JOHN 12:20-36

²⁰ Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. ²¹ So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." ²² Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³ And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

²⁷ "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." ²⁹ The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." ³⁰ Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to

myself." ³³ He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. ³⁴ So the crowd answered him, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" ³⁵ So Jesus said to them, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. ³⁶ While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light."

When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Lord.

SHORT MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

SERMON DIALOG WITH SIMON THE ZEALOT (*pages 4-5*)
(*Tom Harrison as Simon*)

A TIME OF SILENCE FOR REFLECTION

PRAYERS

P Let us bring our prayers and petitions to God, who hears and answers the pleas of our hearts. We pray for the nations and peoples of the world and own nation. Send your Spirit into our nation's communities and Him into this broken world. With your presence and power comfort those who endure violence and persecution, especially those who suffer for your name. Strengthen the oppressed, the persecuted, the victims of injustice, the victims of wars and all who cry to you for help. Inspire our nation's leaders to be about the task of service to all, especially the needy and vulnerable. Make us agents of healing in this hurting world. In your mercy,

C Hear us, Lord.

P We pray for this congregation and your church in the world. Send faithful pastors, teachers and leaders, so that they might lead and guide your people. Inspire your followers to take up their crosses of love and service. In your mercy,

C Hear us, Lord.

P Suffering Savior, inspire us by your example of self-sacrifice to willingly carry our own cross of love for you and others. Make us willing to risk in order to be your servants. Give us the strength to choose the way of the cross, even if it means danger, rejection and pain. Lead us to take your healing power to all those around us who cry out for help. Make us able to choose the good you would have us do. In your mercy,

C Hear us, Lord.

P We pray for the sick, the suffering, the grieving, the lonely, especially those we name in our hearts. We commit them to your loving care. Heal, help and comfort them according to your will. In your mercy,

C Hear us, Lord.

P These and all other petitions and requests we bring before you in the name of Jesus. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

BENEDICTION

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At the Crossroads
A Series of Services for Holy Week

Palm Sunday: Suffering
Sermon Dialog with Simon the Zealot

The **Sermon Dialog with Simon the Zealot** is delivered by the pastor (P) and another reader (R) in the role of Simon the Zealot:

P Crossroads. They are there for all of us. We may move along from day to day easily, walking in the sunshine, enjoying the view, feeling at peace. And then it comes. A crossroad. A choice point. There we stand, frozen to the spot. Which way now? Right? Left? Straight? What waits down each of those choices? Which way does our heart call us to go? Which makes sense? Which is God's way?

The answers aren't easy. A crossroad can bring daunting spiritual pain. And it can bring us to our knees. It can even bring us to destruction.

Today we have an expert on the crossroad that Jesus faced as he moved toward the cross. We have a Simon, a disciple of Jesus who was with him throughout his years of ministry and at the last, as he went toward the cross. This Simon is not Simon Peter. This is Simon, sometimes called the Zealot.

(Simon enters. He is dressed well or in biblical costume.)

P Welcome, Simon. I am sure that what you have to share with us will be helpful for us, but tell us, why do they call you Zealot?

R *Zealot? You would probably say rebel or revolutionary. I had joined a group seeking to get rid of the Romans. Some of my group were marked as wanted by the Roman authorities for acts of what you might call terrorism. The rest of us were quieter about our desire to see Rome out of our country and out of our lives.*

P And how were you going about your rebellion?

R *At first, I was not sure how to act, but then I came upon Jesus of Nazareth. Here was one with power and authority, one who could act. I saw him feed thousands. I saw him still a storm. I saw him*

escape the religious leaders who were lackeys of the Roman government. He kept talking about the coming of the Kingdom of God. I wanted to be in on that kingdom. I thought he could do it.

P But what about Jesus' words about his path toward suffering and death?

R *I was so sure he was going to overthrow the Romans and establish the new rule of King David, I didn't even hear those things. I thought he was talking in images.*

P How could you have missed what he was saying?

R *I was not alone. Most of his disciples were hoping for a new ruler and thought Jesus could be that ruler. Look at what we were seeing. Jesus was immensely popular. People flocked to him. Thousands sought him out. His name was on every lip when he raised Lazarus. Even Greeks, foreigners were attracted to him. Then he did exactly what we thought he should do, he paraded into Jerusalem on a donkey, just like the Scriptures said the new king would do. He came into Jerusalem with the shouts of people proclaiming him the Messiah, the new king.*

P Is that what people thought as they welcomed him?

R *Certainly. They shouted a kingly greeting, they threw their cloaks in his way, they called out: Hosanna! God saves! At that moment, he could have been everything we wanted him to be. He could have called the people to rebellion, he could have moved the masses against the Romans, against the corrupt religious rulers, but ...*

P But he did not.

R *I understand now, but I did not then. I did not understand how a leader with his authority, with his place as the chosen one of God, with his connection with the Father, could fail to act against the evil around us. How could he do nothing but drive some money-changers out of the temple? And after that, nothing.*

P Nothing?

R *We did nothing except share the Passover meal and go to the Garden to pray. No speech to the crowd, no commands to act. And worst of all, when we went to the Garden, he was arrested.*

P And moved to trial before the High Priest.

R *I was in complete confusion then. I saw Jesus, with the chance to be ruler, choose to allow himself to be arrested, choose to allow himself to be taken to a mock trial, choose to allow himself to be humiliated before the council and before the Roman governor, choose to go meekly to the cross. How could he make the choice to suffer and die? I could not understand.*

P And do you understand now? Do you understand his crossroad choice now?

R *Jesus once said, "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (Matt. 10:39). After his resurrection I understood. When he invited us into his kingdom, he was not asking us into a place of rule on earth, he was inviting us into a spiritual kingdom, marked by believers who would follow him, even to the cross.*

P You faced your own crossroad then, you faced your own choice whether to continue to follow the risen Christ or seek another leader who might give you the success in rebellion that you sought.

R *Yes, I faced that crossroad. So did all the other disciples. We could have gone our own way, sought our own successes, found what we thought we needed. But we chose to stay with him. By the power of the Spirit we stayed, even though we knew that it might cost us our lives. Jesus warned us that we would be persecuted, hated and even put to death, but we joined him in his choice, we chose to follow.*

P But we have not walked with Jesus, seen his miracles, heard his voice. How can we make that kind of choice?

R *Oh, but you have seen him in the hands of those who have loved and helped you. You have seen his miracles in the hearts of those changed by his power. You have heard his voice in the voice of those who have brought you the Word. You have been touched by*

the same Spirit and can make the same choice.

P It isn't easy to choose the way of discipleship if it leads to dissention, danger, oppression, suffering.

R *But Jesus calls you to follow, to lose your life for his sake, to take the narrow road of discipleship. And he promises to walk with you, to give you his strength and to receive you into his eternal kingdom. Remember St. Paul wrote: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us ... For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we await for it with patience. Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness ... because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:18, 24-28). With that kind of power going for us, how can we fail?*

P Indeed, how can we fail? "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:37-39).

R *Amen and amen.*

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

NOTICE:

The "Shelter in Place" has been extended to Sunday, April 12th.

Worship will be available through live-stream on Facebook.

Our pastors will be LIVE on Sundays to nourish us with God's Word!

You can watch our live-streams here on our Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/plcfresno

** Community & Congregational Easter Egg Hunts,
and Easter Breakfasts has been cancelled. **

*** The LWML Meeting for April has also been cancelled. ***

**** The Men's Fellowship that was rescheduled to May 2nd will be
rescheduled to a later date in time. ****

CORRESPONDENCES

We are updating our mailing list at this time. Please let us know which method of receiving correspondence do you prefer: mailed copies or e-mails. You may call the church to update your preference and/or update your contact information if needed. Thanks!

THE LUTHERAN WITNESS

It is time for the Lutheran Witness subscription renewal. Please call the office if you would like to cancel, renew, or be added onto the subscription list. Let the office know by **April 22nd**. The cost for the publication is **\$16.00** for the year. Please make your check payable to Peace and put "Lutheran Witness" on the memo line or address your payment envelope with "Lutheran Witness."

HOLY WEEK & EASTER SERVICES

Join us LIVE on Facebook for our Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services this week on **April 9th & 10th** at **7 PM**.

The Lenten series theme for this year is "**At the Crossroads.**" Each service in the series reveals in some way how Christ and his cross lead us to decide the path of God's will in our many crossroads in life.

For **Thursday**: In this service we remember that when Jesus institutes the first Lord's Supper, he grants forgiveness to his disciples through the bread and wine. When we receive the bread and wine of Communion in remembrance of him, we receive that forgiveness and in turn forgive others. The service will help us to approach the crossroads of forgiveness with reverence and relief.

For **Friday**: In this service we are reminded that when Jesus is on the cross, he accepts the power of death upon himself and does not turn away from it. We, too, must face death when it comes and not turn away from it, knowing that his salvation awaits us on the other side. The service will help us to face the inevitable crossroads of death with the certain hope of everlasting life through Christ and his cross.

For next **Sunday (Easter Sunday)**: In this service we recall that after the risen Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene, she responds by telling the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!" We who know that our Redeemer lives must share that news with others too. The service will help us to fix our eyes on the crossroads of life at the threshold of heaven, where our risen Lord is eager to escort us into eternity.

THOSE SERVING TODAY

Counters: Bev & Jen Malvestuto

Elders: Joe Lino

Altar Guild: Nancy Jane Mazi, Georgiean Peters, Jan Turpin, Sandra Wendland

BIRTHDAYS THIS WEEK

8th Pat Aschenbrenner 11th Pastor Wenholz

ANNIVERSARIES THIS WEEK

6th Michael & Tresa Varlas (46)

8th Ralph & Judy Stecker (59)

ALTAR FLOWERS are dedicated to the glory and honor of God in thankfulness and praise for His many blessings.

Given by: The Pendergrass Family

Next Week: Jean Arend

* We have suspended the order of Altar Flowers until further notice. *

For our Web Page, we are removing the weekly Prayer list for privacy of our members. Please contact the Church Office for the current list.

*** THIS WEEK'S SCHEDULE OF EVENTS—4/5 - 4/11 ***

- SUN** 9:00 A.M. Worship Service (via livestream on Facebook)
(At The Crossroads—Simon the Zealot | Tom Harrison)
12:00 P.M. Hmong Worship Service (via live-stream on Facebook)
- MON** 6:30 P.M. Youth & Young Adult Bible Study
(via live-stream on Facebook)
- THUR** 7:00 P.M. **Maundy Thursday Service**
(via live-stream on Facebook)
(At The Crossroads—Marie & Tom)
- FRI** 7:00 P.M. **Good Friday Service** (via live-stream on Facebook)
(At The Crossroads—Mary, Mother of Jesus | Emylee Her)
- SUN** 9:00 A.M. **Easter Worship Service** (via live-stream on Facebook)
(At The Crossroads—Mary Magdalene | Hunter Xiong)
12:00 P.M. **Hmong Easter Worship Service**
(via live-stream on Facebook)

Prepare for next Sunday,
The Resurrection of Our Lord (Easter Day),
by reading:

First Reading: Isaiah 25:6-9
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 15:12-26
Holy Gospel: John 20:1-18

