**Modified Service Palm Sunday-April 5, 2020**

**Zion Lutheran Church, Philipsburg**

Some good news to share! Bob and Yvonne are grandparents! Baby Darius Theodore Heipel arrived safe and sound yesterday weighing in at 7 lbs 6 oz. Mom Tasha, and Dad Derreck are overjoyed! We also give thanks that my nephew Zach has finished his radiation treatments.

Welcome to all on this Palm Sunday. Usually we would gather and to sing and wave our palm branches together. This year it will not happen, so I encourage you if you are able to go outside and cut off a branch to place in your window or on your door to celebrate the journey of our Lord Jesus Christ on this Palm Sunday.

May God bless this time we spend together in spirit.

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

**Hosanna in the highest.**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us pray.

We praise you, O God,

for redeeming the world through our Savior Jesus Christ.

Today he entered the holy city in triumph

and was proclaimed messiah and king

by those who spread garments and branches along his way.

Grant us grace to follow our Lord in the way of the cross,

so that, joined to his death and resurrection,

we enter into life with you;

through the same Jesus Christ,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

As we now enter into the contemplation of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ and meditate on the salvation of the world through his sufferings, death, burial, and resurrection, let us pray.

Everlasting God, in your endless love for the human race you sent our Lord Jesus Christ to take on our nature and to suffer death on the cross. In your mercy enable us to share in his obedience to your will and in the glorious victory of his resurrection, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**GOSPEL: Matthew 21:1-11**

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

1When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, 2saying to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. 3If anyone says anything to you, just say this, ‘The Lord needs them.’ And he will send them immediately.” 4This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, 5“Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”
6The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; 7they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. 8A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,
 “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!”
10When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, “Who is this?” 11The crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**reflection**

 I was watching tv last week and there was a clip on the news showing a past held music festival filled with crowds of people celebrating, laughing, and singing. As I watched the folks enjoying themselves, an uncomfortable feeling came over me, I wondered to myself, would I, would we, ever feel comfortable being in a large group of people again. I love going to concerts, I love the energy of being in the crowd and listening to thousands of folks singing and enjoying themselves, but would I be able to do so when this pandemic is over. Would my fear override the joy and celebration that I had traditionally felt at such events, or would I go on with courage?

 Then I began to read over the gospel for this week my mind immediately again went to the crowds. This time it was no music festival, it was the crowds that had gathered around Jesus, both on his journey to Jerusalem and in the city as well. And it is interesting to note, that in both crowds there was courage and fear.

 Jesus started his journey from the Mount of Olives, the place where it is stated in Zechariah 14:4, that the Messiah would return. He rode into the city on the back of a donkey, also fulfilling the prophet Zechariah as stated in our reading this morning. One would think that the Messiah would ride into the city on the back of a great stallion or steed, but Jesus was a messiah of humility and compassion, not a king of power, force, and control.

 Many of those in the crowd had become disciples of Jesus, thy had seen and heard about the good news, they had seen and heard of the miracles and the healings, and that he ate with tax collectors and outcasts. These new disciples were courageous, they believed and trusted in Jesus, they believed and trusted in his word and in his actions. And in doing so they found hope and promise for the future.

 As he neared the city, the crowds began to flank him on all sides. They were throwing down their coats and cloaks and cutting branches from the trees to make a path. They were shouting Hosanna (which means save us) blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord! The crowd was getting louder, and some began waving their branches to welcome him. There was excitement in the air as the city grew closer in sight.

 As they drew near to Jerusalem, another crowd had gathered but they gathered in turmoil and fear. Some in the crowd may well have heard about this man named Jesus, but many wondered who was this man riding on a donkey? The political and religious leaders of the city considered Jesus to be a threat to their safety, an enemy to their survival. Jesus needed to be stopped, but he pushed onward, on towards the cross, towards his death, towards his resurrection. Jesus came to challenge the powers of the times; he stood with those who could not stand on their own and for those who had no voices. He showed complete trust and courage in God as he journeyed towards the cross.

 In these days we cannot gather as a crowd to wave our palms branches and sing and shout Hosanna to the Lord at our normal place of worship. We are safely sequestered in our homes heeding the pleas of our political and medical leaders. We like the crowds in Jerusalem may be feeling emotions of fear; fear of the unknown and things that are out of our control. We hear news conferences stating new models, projections, and numbers. It is uncertain and scary.

 But we too have courage, we have the courage to trust and know that we are loved, and that God is with us in these times. I say that each week because I do not think we can hear it enough, and I know that I cannot hear it enough. God is with us. We are loved and we are not alone. We are courageous when we stay home and only go out for essential items. We are courageous when we call one another offering words of comfort, peace, tears and laughter. We are courageous when we share good news and gratefulness with one another, and we are courageous when we pray for one another, when we call out to God with our Hosannas, Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.

 Jesus made his journey; it was the journey he was destined to make. It was a journey to the cross, to his death and his resurrection. As we end this journey of Lent and begin our journey through this Holy Week of 2020 we do so with courage, trust, and hope in God. The journey will be different this year, we cannot be together, but know that we are still following Jesus. We are still a part of the crowd who worship him, a part of the crowd who believe and trust in him and a part of the crowd who have hope and courage amidst the fear that we are feeling.

May the peace and courage of Christ be with each of you this Holy Week. Amen

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Turning our hearts to God who is indeed gracious and merciful, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are feeling broken and in need.

God of mercy, awaken your church to new proclamations of your faithfulness. By your Spirit, give us bold and joyful words to speak, that we sustain the weary with the message of your redemption. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of mercy, quiet the earth where it trembles and shakes. Protect vulnerable ecosystems, threatened habitats, and endangered species. Prosper the work of scientists, engineers, and researchers who find ways to restore creation to health and wholeness. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of mercy, drive away fear and anger that cause us to turn against one another. Give courage to leaders who seek liberation for the oppressed. Bring peace and hope to those who are in prison and those who face execution. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of mercy, send your saving help to all who suffer abuse, insult, discrimination, or contempt. Heal the wounded. Comfort the dying. Bring peace to those suffering chronic or terminal illness. Tend to all who cry out for relief especially Eddie, Elaine, Betty, and those we name aloud or in the silence of our hearts. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of mercy, we give thanks for the good news in our congregation. We welcome Baby Darius into the world, son of Derreck and Tasha, and give thanks that Zach has finished his radiation. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of mercy, we pray for all affected by Covid-19,for those who are sick, for those who have died, for family members in long-term care, for front line service workers, for doctors, nurses and all medical staff who are fighting this virus, for those living in anxiety and fear. Send your courage, love, and presence to all who are in need of comfort and strength. Hear us O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of mercy, we pray for all who will prepare and lead worship in this Holy Week during these uncertain and challenging times. In all things, show us the ways that you call us to die to self, to live for you, and to give of ourselves for the sake of others. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of mercy, when we breathe our last, you raise us to eternal life. With all your witnesses in heaven and on earth, let us boldly confess the name of Jesus Christ, our resurrection and our hope. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

According to your steadfast love, O God, hear these and all our prayers as we commend them to you; through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**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**

**BLESSING**

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord’s face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.

**Amen.**

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

**Hosanna in the highest.**

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