

Psalm 118

¹ Give thanks to the LORD, for God is good;
God's love endures forever.

² Let Israel say:
"God's love endures forever."

¹⁹ Open for me the gates of the righteous;
I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.

²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD
through which the righteous may enter.

²¹ I will give you thanks, for you answered me;
you have become my salvation.

²² The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;

²³ the LORD has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes.

²⁴ The LORD has done it this very day;
let us rejoice today and be glad.

²⁵ LORD, save us!
LORD, grant us success!

²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.
From the house of the LORD we bless you.

²⁷ The LORD is God,
and he has made his light shine on us.
With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession
up^[c] to the horns of the altar.

²⁸ You are my God, and I will praise you;
you are my God, and I will exalt you.

²⁹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

Mark 11:1-11

¹ As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, ² saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'"

⁴ They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, ⁵ some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" ⁶ They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. ⁷ When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. ⁹ Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

"Hosanna!^[a]"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"^[b]

¹⁰ "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"

"Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

¹¹ Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

“Hail the Incarnate Deity”
The Rev. Lisa J. Durkee
March 28, 2021

Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, Oh Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

“Christ by highest heav'n adored Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come Offspring of a Virgin's womb
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with man to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel
Hark! The herald angels sing "Glory to the newborn King!"

No, I don't have my seasons messed up. I know that this is Palm Sunday and not somehow a flashback to Christmastime. Still, with all of us poised on the edge of Holy Week, remembering today Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, I want us to think about just who it is that is marching into town in this parade.

Somehow, Christmas and all of its celebrations don't seem too far behind us. Doesn't it feel like barely the blink of an eye since we were, in fact, singing Christmas Carols that celebrate the birth of the little baby Jesus? In the past couple of weeks, thinking about Palm Sunday and Easter, and also thinking a lot about holiness because of a conversation with a friend, I have found myself considering this person Jesus quite a bit.

You see, we know what some of the people lining the streets didn't know. This prophet, teacher, holy man was even more, even bigger and better than they thought. We were singing about it very clearly just a few months ago. Let me read those words for you again . . . **Read the stanza again.**

Wouldn't we join in a parade to get a glimpse of God, on earth as a human being?
Wouldn't we join in singing out with all the strength of our collective voices, “Hail

the Incarnate Deity!” That’s what those words mean! It’s both a simple greeting, like hello, and more importantly, a way of acknowledging that you acclaim the person, or hold them in high esteem. So, we are saying and singing that we greet God, made human. Wow.

I want us to be thinking about Jesus in this very particular way, because without our stopping to recognize this very consciously, we can miss out on the best of this coming week’s significance. We can miss out on just how great a trial we are on the brink of; we can miss out on just how great a gift we receive next week. I believe that this is true whether you are someone who conceives of Jesus as fully human, but somehow a holy man, or whether you believe that Jesus is one with God, incarnate as human.

Jesus became one of us. As the words of a pop song relate, “just a slob like one of us.” Yet somehow, in a miracle that only God could perform, Jesus was both a slob like one of us, and perfectly holy; perfectly God. *God marched into Jerusalem, knowing that at the end of this very human journey was a very painful human betrayal and death.* Still, with unwavering step, Jesus walked into town, and into the plan laid out for him from the beginning.

I look forward to an opportunity here in Blue Hill that may be just the place for a particular, creative look at Holy Week that requires a creative and musical group, a cast. I have been looking forward to this opportunity since 2007, when during the final semester of my studies toward the MDiv, my dear friend Jen and I wrote a musical Passion Play. I hope we may stage this play sometime in the future. For now, though, I want to tell you about how we envision the scene on Palm Sunday. We remember the sounds and songs of Hosanna. What song would Jesus be

singing as he entered Jerusalem? What might have been on his mind as he rode the lowly colt toward his elected fate? Jen and I have in mind a song some of you will know.

Elvis Costello wrote these lyrics in 1979, and I wish I didn't still wonder right along with him: "As I walk through this wicked world, searching for light in the darkness of insanity. I ask myself: Is all hope lost? Is there only pain and hatred, and misery? And each time I feel like this inside, there's one thing I wanna know: What's so funny 'bout peace love & understanding?" Ten people are dead after the shootings last week in Boulder, following the death of eight in Atlanta the week before. I didn't want to look at the reckoning of gun deaths in 2021, but I looked anyway, and had to scroll through pages of *data* before finding those that were elevated to the front pages of newspapers. What's so funny or what's so disturbing about the readily available *data* regarding gun deaths? Toward what certain fate would Jesus walk, accompanied by those who shout words of praise, in order to save us from ourselves? For what great reckoning would Jesus sacrifice himself today? What is the resurrection we need today that will reveal all of the hope and all of the joy that God wants for us? What are our glad shouts, and what is our betrayal? Just what is it that we want to rule in our lives?

We know how the rest of this week goes. Jesus will dine with his best friends, and one of his very best friends will betray him. Jesus will be tried in a mockery of court *injustice*, and will be crucified. It's almost easy to say these words, isn't it? They're so familiar. It's a story we know by heart. Still, let's put it into perspective. "God will dine with his best friends, and one of God's most devoted followers will betray him. God will be tried in a mockery of court injustice and will be crucified."

We also know, though, that this isn't the end of the story. Because Jesus was no ordinary man, and because God loves us even more than we can imagine, we look forward today to Easter. But we aren't there yet.

All hail, Jesus, King of the Jews and our King! Happy Easter! Nope. That isn't the story line. We have a lot of remembering to do this week. There are other very human voices in this story that is our story. We will hear them in thinking about Maundy Thursday, as we remember this last supper of Jesus, God with us. We will remember the story of our own part in the betrayal of Jesus; of our own part in the betrayal of God on Good Friday. I invite you to come to the church pathway between 12:30 and 2:30 that afternoon to walk the stations of the cross as they will be set up on various trees, remembering Christ's passion along with our sisters and brothers from St. Francis Church. We will read the words of scripture that tell us what humans are capable of, even while we look forward to Easter; to what God is capable of.

Hail the Incarnate Deity! What part in the story will we play this year? Will we remember the sacrifice that God has made for us, or will we remember only the gift of grace that is eternal life? I invite you to make this a truly Holy week, conscious of the definition that tells us what is *Holy* is *set apart*. Let's set apart this Holy Week to remember the gift that calls us to discipleship in Christ. No, not just the birth of a beautiful little baby boy child; the birth of God in our lives, sacrificing everything *for our eternal lives*. Let's set apart this Holy Week to prepare ourselves for Easter—for the holiest of holies as, by Grace, God prepared to make us wholly one with Christ. May it be so for us.

Let us pray: Oh, God, give us the strength and the courage to greet you, and the wisdom to listen to your word for our lives. Grant us peace, in Jesus' name. Amen.