

The Sunday Missive – March 28, 2021



dorothy tomilson's camellias greet the spring

Palm Sunday

Greetings, one and all, and welcome home to St. Peter's by the Sea. Jan Swanson, Thelma Huchthausen, Nancy Castle, Jeff Wheelwright and I bring you this service of prayer, scripture and song with love. If you go to our facebook page, you can watch and participate from home: [facebook.com/StPetersMorroBay](https://www.facebook.com/StPetersMorroBay) Scroll down until you see today's Sunday Missive, anytime after 11 A.M. on Sunday, March 28. No facebook account is needed! The links that follow each hymn will take you to youtube videos of a wide range of people around the world singing those hymns – enjoy them! Please direct any questions or comments to The Rev. Sidney Symington via: (203) 209-2339 or sssymington@gmail.com. **Let us pray:**

Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, **Amen.**

Almighty and everliving God, in your tender love for the human race you sent your Son our Savior to take upon him our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, and also share in his resurrection; through the same Jesus, who is Christ our Lord, and who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Hymn 154 – All Glory, Laud and Honor Vss. 2, 4 & 5

All glory, laud, and honor to thee, Redeemer, King!
To whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.

The company of angels are praising thee on high;
And we with all creation in chorus make reply.

To thee before thy passion they sang their hymns of praise;
To thee, now high exalted, our melody we raise.

Thou didst accept their praises; accept the prayers we bring,
Who in all good delightest, thou good and gracious King.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxzhFsuBijs>

A Reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah, Chapter 50

The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he wakens — wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught. The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backward. I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me. It is the Lord God who helps me; who will declare me guilty? All of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.

Psalm 31

Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am in distress* Tears have wasted my eyes, my throat and my heart.

For my life is spent with sorrow and my years with sighs.* Affliction has broken down my strength and my bones waste away.

In the face of all my foes I am a reproach* An object of scorn to my neighbors and of fear to my friends.

Those who see me in the street run far away from me* I am like a dead man, forgotten, like a thing thrown away.

I have heard the slander of the crowd, fear is all around me* As they plot together against me, as they plan to take my life.

But as for me, I trust in you, Lord; I say: You are my God.*My life is in your hands, deliver me from the hands of those who hate me.

Let your face shine on your servant. Save me in your love* Let me not be put to shame for I call you; let the wicked be shamed!

Let them be silenced in the grave, let lying lips be dumb* That speak haughtily against the just with pride and contempt.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gWK3HCBVyEQ>

A Reading from The Letter to the Philippians, Chapter 2

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Hymn 435, At the Name of Jesus Vss. 1, 2 & 5

At the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow,
Every tongue confess him King of glory now;
'Tis the Father's pleasure we should call him Lord,
Who from the beginning was the mighty Word.

Humbled for a season, to receive a Name
From the lips of sinners, unto whom he came,
Faithfully he bore it spotless to the last,
Brought it back victorious, when from death he passed;

In your hearts enthrone him; there let him subdue
All that is not holy, all that is not true:
Crown him as your Captain in temptation's hour;
Let his will enfold you in its light and power.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2RjleFnKIY>

A Reading from The Gospel according to Mark, Chapters 14 and 15

“It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; for they said, ‘Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people.’”

While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. But some were there who said to one another in anger, “Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.” And they scolded her. But Jesus said, “Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.”

Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray Jesus.

On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, “Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?” He sent two of his disciples, saying, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, ‘The Rabbi

asks, "Do you have a guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?" He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.' So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

When it was evening, he came with the twelve. And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.' They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, 'Surely, not I?' He said, 'It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.'

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup of wine. After giving thanks he gave it to them, and all drank from it. He said to them, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'

When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them, 'You will all become deserters; for it is written, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.' Peter said to him, 'Even though all become deserters, I will not.' Jesus answered, 'Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.' But Peter said more vehemently, 'Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you.' And all the others said the same.

They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.' And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, 'Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.' He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him. He came a third time and said, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough. The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.'

Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man.' So he went up to Jesus at once and said, 'Rabbi!' and kissed him. Then they laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled.' All his followers deserted him and fled.

They took Jesus to the high priest; and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled. Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the guards, warming himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree. Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, saying, 'We heard him say, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands."' But even on this point their testimony did not agree. Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, 'Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?' But he was silent and did not answer. Again the high priest asked him, 'Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?' Jesus said, 'I am; and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.'

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?' All of them condemned him as deserving death. Some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to strike him, saying to him, 'Prophecy!' The guards also took him over and beat him.

While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, 'You were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth.' But he denied it, saying, 'I do not know him or understand what you are talking about.' And he went out into the forecourt. Then the cock crowed. And the servant-girl, on seeing him, began again to say to the bystanders, 'This man is one of them.' But again he denied it. Then after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, 'Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean.' But he began to curse, and swore an oath, 'I do not know this man you are talking about.' At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, 'Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.' And he broke down and wept.

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' He answered him, 'You say so.' Then the chief priests accused him of many things. Pilate asked him again, 'Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you.' But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. Then he answered them, 'Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?' For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate spoke to them again, 'Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?' They shouted back, 'Crucify him!' Pilate asked them, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Crucify him!' So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in mocking homage to him. Then they stripped him of the purple cloak, put his own clothes on him and led him out to crucify him.

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, 'The King of the Jews.' And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, 'Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!' In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe.' Even those who were crucified along with him also taunted him.

When it was noon, a sudden darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'Listen, he is calling for Elijah.' And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.' Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'

There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and Joses, and also Salome. These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid." This is the Gospel of the Lord.

“Make sweet hosannas ring,” we joyfully sing, echoing and reiterating the eager and giddy shouts of those people long, long ago and far, far away whose excitement and hunger for good news welcomed Jesus on his dramatic, theatrical burro ride into Jerusalem. They lay palm branches in the roadway, in an exuberant, sacred gesture acknowledging the presence of divinity in their midst. “Save us,” is a translation of the root words of “Hosanna.”

Of course there’s a difference between us and those long-ago palm bearers. We let our sweet hosannas ring, well-knowing that those cries will turn into shouts of “Crucify him!” before the week is out. Imagine how Jesus must have felt, receiving the ecstatic reception of the people but knowing all the while how the week would progress. Our palm bearing today, and indeed our entire lives as Christians are aslant with the same kinds of paradox: self-forgetting in order to gain, forgiving in order to be forgiven, dying to attain life as subjects in a kingdom not of this world. Our triumphs are gained through humility.

The ethicist Margaret Farley observes: “...the shadow of Good Friday transforms the light of Palm Sunday, for only with them both together do we learn that dignity is sustained with integrity; that the forces of false judgment and suspicion, servile fear and violence, are to be named for what they are and resisted, even unto death. But they are not to be resisted by adopting the patterns of evil they represent. Through the death of Jesus, all death is overwhelmed; through the humiliations of Jesus, all humiliations can be transformed, not because of the death or the humiliation, but because of the love that was not broken.” Such is the enduring love of which Isaiah speaks when he says, “But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, ‘You are my God.’ My times are in your hand. Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love.”

God saves us by allowing – insisting – that we pay attention to the facts of what makes goodness grow. That we boast to have been made, “in the image and likeness of God,” means we must continually be seeking godliness. We have the obligation to be co-creators with God and to empty ourselves of self-oriented power. The animals, the plants, even the rocks can just go about their business of being weasels, rhododendron bushes or dolomite, but not us. Jesus came to show us our business. We all and always have choices in many matters – that’s our defining feature, our niftiest attribute and our biggest hassle: choosing. Our choices are ours and ours alone; it’s a lonely business. Imagine how lonely Jesus felt, deserted, abused and condemned.

What is our business? What does the life look like, what is the frame of reference, the point of view, the foundational attitude of such a life?

Novelist David Mitchell writes, “Why fight against oppression, selfishness and injustice? Because of this: One fine day, a purely predatory world will consume itself. Yes, the Devil shall take the hindmost, until the foremost is the hindmost. In an

individual, selfishness uglifies the soul. For the human species, selfishness is extinction.

“If we believe humanity may transcend tooth and claw, if we believe diverse races and creeds can share this world peaceably, if we believe leaders must be just, violence muzzled, power accountable, and the riches of the earth and its oceans shared equitably, such a world will come to pass. I am not deceived; it is the hardest of worlds to make real. Tortuous advances, won over generations, can be lost by a single stroke of a myopic president’s pen or a vainglorious general’s sword. But a life spent shaping a world I want my child to inherit, not one I fear my child might inherit, this strikes me as a life worth living.”

Prayers

In the wake of seemingly endless violence in our land, your children are crying, “How long, O Lord?” Your people are wailing, “Not again, O Lord.”

In these moments when we don’t have words, send your Spirit to intercede. In these moments when we don’t know how to react, open our hearts to feel the hurt.

In these moments when we don’t know how to respond, guide our hands and our voices to work and speak for justice. Call us to pain, to action, to love so that your children can stop repeating “How long, O Lord. Not again, O Lord.”

Grant us wisdom, grant us courage...for the pain and loss, for the actions we must take, for the truth we have to accept and speak out loud, for the works our hearts and hands and feet must do to bring about change. Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the facing of this hour; for the living of these days. **Amen.**

Gracious Creator, giver of life and health: Comfort and relieve all who are ill, recovering from surgery, in mourning or otherwise suffering this day, especially Jane, Bob, Latifah, and those we name now, silently in our hearts or fervently with our voices. Give your power of healing to those who minister to their needs, that all for whom our prayers are offered may be strengthened in their weakness and have confidence in your loving care. **Amen.**

Give us understanding, O Lord our God, to know thy ways; open our hearts to welcome you, and forgive us so that we may be redeemed. Keep us far from sorrow; satisfy our needs on the produce of your land, and gather our scattered loved ones from the four corners of the earth. Let those who go astray be judged according to your will. And wave your hand over the wicked. Let the righteous rejoice in the building of your kingdom and in the nourishment of your church. Even before we call, you answer, O God; blessed are you who hearken unto prayer. **Amen.**

LEVAS Hymn 37, Were You There?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
O! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?
Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?
O! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?

Were you there when He rose up from the grave?
Were you there when He rose up from the grave?
O! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when He rose up from the grave?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uhGYD1svTM4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRaFdfkOVyY>

Now, may the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify God and care for all Creation. And the blessing of God Almighty, Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer be amongst you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

