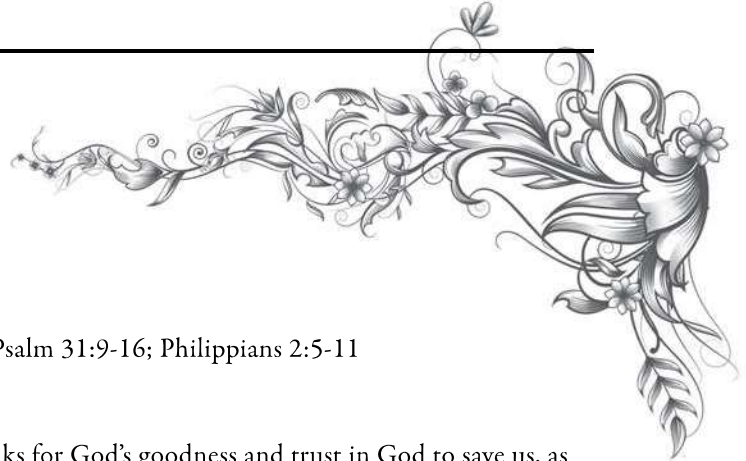




Response actions:

- For a ritual of cleansing, provide several stations with a basin of warm water and a towel. Invite people to these stations to dip their hands into the water and dry them with the towel. Hosts for each table (pastors, elders, Sunday school teachers, etc.) could say to each person as she or he comes to the table: “May God indeed restore to you the joy of your salvation.” Hosts could also pour water from a pitcher over people’s hands, or people could wash each other’s hands.
- Find someone in your congregation or community to teach the congregation sign language for Psalm 51:10-12.
- Stamp hands with a heart stamp or heart sticker as each person comes forward or as each leaves the sanctuary. Accompany this action with a word of blessing: “May God create a clean heart in you, _____.”

Where do I sign?



Lent 6 (Passion/Palm Sunday) – April 1, 2012

Text: Mark 11:1-11; Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11

Focus statement:

With the psalmist and the prophet Isaiah, we give thanks for God’s goodness and trust in God to save us, as Jesus did. Jesus’ mindset of servanthood led to a ride down into Jerusalem, toward scorn and suffering, an authentic sign of God’s steadfast love. Even when we break the covenant, its initiator is willing to pay the price to keep it.

Song suggestions:

Theme songs

SJ 44 *The love of God*
Chris Tomlin *I will follow*

Hymnal and supplements music

HWB 19 *Open now thy gates of beauty*
HWB 43 *Christ is our cornerstone*
HWB 58 *This is the day*
HWB 106 *All hail the power of Jesus’ name*
HWB 235 *My song is love unknown*
HWB 238 *Hosanna, loud hosanna*

HWB 239 *Ride on, ride on in majesty*
HWB 297 *Jesus came—the heavens adoring*
HWB 321 *Lift high the cross*
HWB 342 *At the name of Jesus*
HWB 530 *What wondrous love is this*

Contemporary worship band music

Hosanna Carl Tuttle
You are holy (Prince of Peace) Mark Imboden & Tammi Rhoton
Arms of love Craig Musseau
Come thou fount, come thou king Thomas Miller
Forever Chris Tomlin
Look what the Lord has done Mark David Hanby



Call to worship:

Leader: Give thanks to the Lord, who is good,
People: whose steadfast love endures forever!
Leader: The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.
**People: This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.**
*All: We give thanks to the Lord who is good,
whose steadfast love endures forever!*

Children's time:

Supplies: A “Jesus Crossing” sign and a sand bucket to hold it up. See www.leaderonline.org for graphic files.

Unlike in past Sundays, have the children's time before the drama. Hold up the “Jesus Crossing” sign and ask the children what Bible story would need a sign like this one. Tell the children that they are going to help with the drama that tells the story of the triumphal entry—from a donkey's point of view! Review the story with the children, having them repeat after you the words of the crowd (“Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest heaven!”) Then pass out pieces of cloth (cloaks) and palm branches to each child, and invite them to lay the cloaks down and wave the palm branches when you give them a cue. Practice these actions a few times. Invite the person who is doing the dramatic monologue to come forward, and help the children enter into the monologue at appropriate times (cues for the children are noted in the drama).

Drama:

See www.leaderonline.org for the story of the triumphal entry told from the point of view of a donkey who may know more of Jesus' heart than the cheering crowd.

Confession:

Jesus, we confess that we are fickle in our relationship with you. We join in when the crowds shout praises, but when identifying with you means sharing in your suffering, we run away, hide, or deny you outright. We lack the resolve to stand by you to the bitter end, to face ridicule, rejection, and persecution.

Thank you, Jesus, for paying the price to keep the covenant that God initiated and that we in our sin have broken. Thank you for emptying yourself and humbly suffering and dying for our reconciliation with God and our adversaries. We confess that you are Lord. Amen.


Assurance:

Leader: We shall not be put to shame,
because God vindicates us.
People: Who could contend with us?
Leader: Who are our adversaries?
*All: It is the Lord GOD who helps us;
who then can declare us guilty?*

Sermon starter:

If your church does not celebrate Holy Week services, instead of preaching a sermon, invite the congregation to experience the Stations of the Cross as suggested in the introductory essay. Scripture references for the Stations of the Cross can be found at www.leaderonline.org.

If you prefer a more traditional Palm/Passion Sunday service with a sermon, today is a good day to examine our “political” expectations surrounding Jesus. We recall the suffering servant who rode into Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey (Mark 11), took the form of a slave (Philippians 2), rejected violence (Isaiah 50), accepted ridicule (Psalm 31), and was obedient to the point of death on a cross. How different from the expectations of the crowds who sang his praises as he entered Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday.



For the nation of Israel, the actions along the route Jesus took into Jerusalem are probably connected to an event many Christians know little about. Less than two hundred years earlier, in 175 BC, a Syrian named Antiochus IV Epiphanes (which means “God manifest”), ransacked the temple treasury, set up an altar to Zeus and sacrificed a pig in the temple, made Jewish religious practices illegal, and began to force Jews to offer sacrifices to idols. In 167 B.C., an old man named Mattathias (a Levite) killed a soldier who tried to force him to sacrifice to an idol and also killed a fellow Israelite who was willing to offer the sacrifice. His four sons led an armed revolt that eventually liberated Jerusalem. The subsequent cleansing of the temple is still celebrated as Hanukkah (probably the “festival of the Dedication” referred to in John 10:22-23.). Two passages from the books of the Maccabees mention palm branches as part of the celebration (see 1 Maccabees 13:51, 2 Maccabees 10:7 in the *Apocrypha*).

The crowd’s expectation was for a political king who, like the Maccabees, would overthrow their Roman oppressors. But when Jesus entered Jerusalem he didn’t go to Fort Antonia; instead he went to the temple, which he then “cleansed” (Mark 11:15-19). When Jesus failed to meet their political expectations, those in the crowd may have felt as if they lost their voice. Perhaps some of the same people became the voices that, a few days later, were crying, “Crucify him!” and “We have no king but Caesar.”

Response actions:

- Print this question in the bulletin: How have you signed on with this Jesus? How might the Spirit be inviting you to sign on more deeply or fully than you have up until now? Allow time during the worship service for silent reflection.
- Invite people into a time of silent reflection. Then ask them to kneel if they are able and to “confess with their tongue that Jesus Christ is Lord.” You might consider using the Christian pledge of allegiance written by June Alliman Yoder and J. Nelson Kraybill: “I pledge allegiance to Jesus Christ, and to God’s kingdom for which he died—one Spirit-led people the world over, indivisible, with love and justice for all” (Peace pledge cards are available at <http://peace.mennolink.org/resources/toorder/index.html#pledgecard>. You might want to order one for each person or household and pass them out as a reminder of where our ultimate allegiance lies.) Alternatively, you can frame this invitation more along the lines of a traditional call to faith: “If you have never surrendered before, today is a day for a new beginning to sign on and submit on bended knee to Christ.”

Where do I sign?

Easter Sunday – April 8, 2012

Text: Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; John 20:1-18

Focus statement:

God said “Yes” to the world’s “No,” putting a stamp of approval on Jesus’ commitment to God’s way of life. We rejoice in the sign of the empty tomb. By the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, we are commissioned to witness to the new covenant. Will we, like the disciples and apostles, fully sign on and commit ourselves to proclaim and embody this good news to all nations?

Song suggestions:

Theme songs

SJ 44 *The love of God*

Chris Tomlin *I will follow*

