

Good Palm Sunday morning from a hill in Rockport!

The birds have awakened, yet the sun has not yet risen. One of my favorite quotes comes from Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore – “Faith is the bird that feels the light when the dawn is still dark.” Feeling the light when darkness is all around us is what we need nowadays, don’t you think? Especially as we begin Holy Week tomorrow – traveling through the story of the darkness of Jesus’ last five days on earth before, as the story goes, he is crucified and rises to heaven – we need to focus on the birds who “feel the light when the dawn is still dark.”

I suppose the birds feel the light because of instinct. How do we feel the light each day? By awakening and knowing we want/need our first cup of coffee? By shuffling off to the bathroom before we are quite awake? By thinking sleepily of our daily “to do” lists before we have gotten out of bed? By praying softly to ourselves these words, “This is the day the Lord has made! Let us rejoice and be glad in it!”?

I need to focus on that last one more often, and less often on the first three! Perhaps this is the week to begin each early morn with that prayer rather than the first three actions. Perhaps it would become a new morning habit that would take me through each day of ups and downs with more hope and less despair over the tragedies and trials, the turmoil and terror that too many are experiencing these days.

It is, indeed, a trying time for so many. How shall we prevail? With the poet’s passionate words, with the prayer of promise that this is, indeed, the day the Lord has made.....

I’ve made the decision to offer on line meditations for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday this week, rather than offering in person services. We don’t often have more than two or three attend in person services for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, and I did receive some positive responses for offering an on line service for Ash Wednesday! So stay tuned for those meditations on Thursday and Friday this week....

Also, Alice and I have made the decision we will NOT have a choir sing on Easter Sunday. We have both been made aware of too many new cases of covid occurring over these past two weeks among people we know. And, we know that singing is one of the major ways of spreading these covid germs. I will again ask that you wear your masks when we are singing in church unless there is a medical reason you are unable to do so. Thank you for your consideration of those around you who may be more compromised medically than you are....

Let’s hope that as the days grow warmer, and we can have the doors open around the sanctuary, that we can have our choir sing once again this summer.

Blessings to each one this Palm Sunday morn.... I hope to see many of you in church in a few hours.... Susan

**“Praise God for Jesus!” \***

**A Palm Sunday Reflection for the Federated Church of Thomaston**

**Thomaston, Maine**

**Sunday, April 10, 2022**

**Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet**

**Scripture: Luke 19:28-40**

After [Jesus] had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, saying, “Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ just say this: ‘The Lord needs it.’” So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” They said, “The Lord needs it.” Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!”

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.”

Luke 19:28-40

Pray with me. Traveling God, you brought Jesus to Jerusalem on his final earthly journey. You invite us to come along for the ride, and so much more. You call us to remember the price to be paid for speaking out for justice, for those less fortunate than us, for acting on your behalf for the greater good of all your people. Help us to be up to the task of your invitation this day. Amen.

How many of you have ever been to a parade? How many of you have ever been IN a parade? It’s hard to go to a parade and not be in it, isn’t it – as the people and bands march by in the parade we always want to cheer them on, don’t we? So that’s what I want you to do as I retell the story Alice told us just a moment ago from the Gospel of Luke.

This might sound hokey, but go with me on this! When I raise my hand, I want you to wave your palm crosses and shout out, **“Praise God for Jesus!”** Now if you forget the words, they’re written in your bulletin next to where it says “Sermon.”

Ready? As the story goes, Jesus and his friends were almost in Jerusalem. They could see the big gates of the city just in front of them. Jesus said, “I hear the people calling out,” (raise hand) **“Praise God for Jesus!”**

Then Jesus turned to two friends and said, “Please go ahead. You will find a young donkey which has never given anyone a ride before. Please bring it to me. I want to ride it to Jerusalem.”

So Jesus’ two friends ran ahead to a little village just outside Jerusalem. There they found a young donkey tied to a post. Quickly they untied the donkey and began to lead it back to Jesus. But the owner of the donkey called out, “That’s my donkey! What are you doing?”

Jesus’ friends said, “We need this donkey for Jesus.” The owner wondered if something important was happening, so he let them take the donkey.

Soon Jesus was riding on the donkey toward the city, and more and more people came out to welcome him. Their voices grew louder and louder. (raise hand) **“Praise God for Jesus!”** the people shouted. (raise hand) **“Praise God for Jesus!”**

The donkey’s footsteps came closer and closer. “Listen,” the people said. They heard the donkey’s hooves on the road. Clip-clop, clippity-clop. Clip-clop, clippity-clop.

Then they saw Jesus. And all in the crowd called out again, (raise hand) **“Praise God for Jesus!”** And again, (raise hand) **“Praise God for Jesus!”**

The people waved their hands and jumped up and down. And some of them helped spread clothes on the dusty road. Everyone watched as Jesus rode the donkey along the road and over the people’s coats.

The people cheered again, “Jesus shows us the way to God. (raise hand) **Praise God for Jesus! Praise God for Jesus!**”

Some of the city leaders saw Jesus coming on the donkey. They heard the excited crowd shouting. “Tell the people to be quiet!” the leaders said to Jesus.

But Jesus shook his head. He said to the leaders, “There’s so much happiness here. If the people were quiet, the stones on the road would jump up and shout for joy.”

The people continued to shout out, (raise hand) **“Praise God for Jesus!”**

Then, on Jesus traveled to the big city, riding on a little donkey that no one had ever ridden before.

So that is the story of Jesus' final ride into Jerusalem at the beginning of what we call Holy Week in the Christian faith. It began with a parade and people proclaiming, (raise hand) **"Praise God for Jesus!"**

Today is known as Palm Sunday in the Christian tradition, although some churches designate today as Passion Sunday on which the long text detailing the final days of Jesus' life and his crucifixion are read and pondered. That story is also told on Good Friday, five days from today.

It's a hard story to read, to hear and to think about. And many people don't. They go from Jesus' ride into Jerusalem on a donkey, or two donkeys depending on which version of the story you read, with people waving palms and shouting (raise hand) **"Praise God for Jesus!"** and then jump right to Easter next Sunday with triumphant songs of "He is risen!"

The thing is, though, you can't get from the praising of Jesus on Palm Sunday to the proclamation of the risen Jesus on Easter without learning of the six days preceding Easter. Many people do, though. We don't like hearing sad and difficult stories, do we?

I didn't have a clue what Holy Week was before I began seminary in 1995. I knew Good Friday was some sort of Christian "holiday," but I had no idea what it really meant. I was married on Good Friday in 1973. Who knew that wasn't a very good day to get married, from a Christian perspective. It was simply a convenient day for my fiancé and me. We were on spring break from college.

And when I was a little girl, Easter was the morning I got to eat all the leftover chocolate my father brought home from the five and ten store, G. C. Murphy Co., which he managed in Washington, D.C. during my growing up years! Easter didn't have anything to do with Jesus for me. Easter was about the yearly opportunity I had to sit on the dining room floor, surrounded by chocolate bunnies and eat all of them I could stuff into my little mouth!

And today, after these past two years of enduring the covid pandemic and now the horrific events taking place in Ukraine, who wants to focus on Jesus' last excruciating days before his crucifixion? We need a joyful distraction, don't we..... something to take our minds off of a horrible disease that has killed millions of people and the daily news of an evil dictator who is bent on killing and threatening world order.

It's a hard time. Each day we have to decide how we will focus our energy, what news networks we will tune into, what items on our "to do" lists we want to

tackle, what worries we choose to consider, what moments of joy we want to experience.

Today, Palm Sunday, is a day to find affirmation in the promises of Spring, to give thanks for the human and divine Jesus who rode to his death on a donkey, or two, and to never forget we are a part of that great cloud of witnesses who proclaim (raise hand) **“Praise God for Jesus!”**

Let the people say, “Amen!”

Let us prepare for this parade and celebration by singing, “Rejoice, the Lord Is King,” #142 in the red hymnals.

\* Much of the dialogue in this writing is from the *Seasons of the Spirit Congregational Life* material for Sunday, March 28, 2010, p. 74-75.

**Federated Church in Thomaston  
United Church of Christ    United Methodist Church  
All Are Welcome  
Sunday, April 10, 2022 – Palm Sunday**

Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet, Pastor    Alice Billheimer, Organist/ Choir Director  
Lector: Alice Billheimer

*Please be respectfully silent once our worship service has begun.  
An asterisk (\*) indicates where you are invited to stand.  
**Bold print** indicates that the people speak these responses & prayers.*

**GATHERING FOR WORSHIP**

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Prelude** The Palms -- Jean Baptiste Faure

Pastor: May we be your disciples this day, O Jesus.

**People: Where we know what we cry, where we take to heart the hosannas and live them beyond the parade.**

**All: May we be your voice today, O Jesus, where we stake our faith and lives on what you begin here today within each of us. Let us worship God!**

\***Opening Hymn** “Hosanna, Loud Hosanna” #278 (Blue Hymnal)

**A Prayer of the People** (from *Seasons of the Spirit*)

**Among the crowds so busy with the moment can we spot the woman shouting hosanna as she tries to forget the lack of food for her table? We pray for the hungry.**

**In the chaos of the people laying coats on the road, busy with the moment, do we notice the one who remains silent, lonely, even in a crowd? We pray for the lonely.**

**In the moving hordes crying for salvation, busy with the moment, can we see the person who isn't out for the day but whose home is that street? We pray for the homeless.**

**In the sway of the masses eager to see, busy with the moment, will we spot the one looking among the crowd for someone long gone? We pray for those grieving.**

**In the movement of the pack caught up in hysteria, busy with the moment, can we recognize the one with wounds and hurt from a different violence? We pray for those in conflict.**

**In the baying of the mob cheering without knowing why, will we notice the change from hosanna to crucify and those who must suffer? We pray for ourselves and why we are here. Amen.**

**A Moment of Silence**

## **SERVICE OF THE WORD**

**Scripture Reading** Luke 19:28-40

**\*Gloria Patri No. 70 Glory Be to the Father....**

**Message** "Praise God for Jesus!" Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet (and congregation!)

**\*Hymn of Meditation** "Rejoice, the Lord Is King" #142 (Red Hymnal)

## **RESPONDING IN FAITH**

**Sharing Our Joys and Concerns with God and Each Other**

**Pastoral Prayer & The Lord's Prayer.....**

**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 debts as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.**

**Offertory** Ride On, Ride On In Majesty -- hymn tune "St. Drostan"

**\*Doxology No. 95 Blue "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow...."**

**\*Prayer of Dedication**

**\*Closing Hymn** “All Glory, Laud, and Honor” #280 (Blue Hymnal)

**Benediction**

**Postlude** Break Forth into Joy -- Caleb Simper/ Carl F. Mueller

**Revised Common Lectionary Readings for Sunday, April 17, 2022**

**EASTER!**

**Isaiah 65:17-25; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Acts 10:34-43; Luke 24:1-12**

**Especially we continue to hold in prayer our Ukrainian brothers and sisters....** Please hold in your prayers all those affected by the coronavirus and the families of those who have died from the virus... **And** all those families affected by the use of addictive drugs among their members...**And** all those dealing with the ravages of cancer near and far..... **And** all those affected, which should be every one of us, by the cruel condition of racism which continues to take the lives of too many of our Black brothers and sisters....**And** all those who have worked tirelessly for the building and rebuilding of our nation into one people, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.....**And**, from Jackie a request for prayers for Kyle Cloudier, continued prayers for Ursula recovering...and for “Cody,” who doesn’t live locally but needs prayers for guidance; Kristin Parker O’Neal, Jo Ann Parker’s daughter, who has had brain surgery and is home now!; Enid, Ann Foster, Carol Moss, Julie Pollitt, Zeke Bryant, Helmut Steger, John Flaherty, BJ Thomson & family of Mimi’s Uncle Doug, Heather Van Buskirk, and for Tiffany, Lucy’s granddaughter..... **And** for Arlene from NH.....

*Please feel free to contact Susan by phone (207)322-1948 or by email at [freerangepastor@gmail.com](mailto:freerangepastor@gmail.com) to have her add or drop any names from the prayer list AND to let her know if you would like for her to stop by for a visit sometime. She’s always glad to have a chat with you!*

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Friday-4/15/22.....Good  
Friday .....10:00 am: Assemble cookie plates .....11:00 am: Deliver cookie plates  
Saturday-4/16/22.....10:00 am - 12:00 pm: Church open to drop off Easter flowers  
Sunday-4/17/22.....6:00 am: Sunrise Service at the Weymouth Cross on Water Street .....9:30 am: Easter Church Service  
Suggested Food Pantry Donation.....Rice

Deacon for April, 2022: Sandra Caron

Reminders for next Sunday, 4/17/22

Greeter/Usher: Claudia Rosti and Richard Kortright

Coffee Host: Julie Brooks and Coretta  
Cooper  
r: Mimi Zwick  
Flowers: Easter  
Flowers

Lecto

Collection Total for Sunday, April 3, 2022:

Pledges - \$1195.00  
Loose - \$ 128.00 of which \$100.00 is for Eukraine Relief,  
Deacon's Sunday - \$ 21.30  
Total - \$1344.30

The 2022 weekly budgeted operating cost for the Church and parsonage is \$1623.00 per week.

**Federated Church of Thomaston  
United Church of Christ  
&  
United Methodist Church  
Together Since 1929**

***Sunday, April 10, 2022***

*The answer must be, I think, that beauty and grace are performed*

*whether or not we will or sense them.*

*The least we can do is try to be there."*



~ Annie Dillard, in *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, 20th century

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WiFi password is #1Church