

# Palm Sunday- 5<sup>th</sup> April 2020



Bright sunshine, the streets cleaned, people are wearing their best suits and lining the streets. Cheer everywhere. Palm leaves in their hands. A symbol to greet the Emperor. But the hands with the palm leaves are already clenched to fists. The tune is treacherous. The atmosphere will change in just a short while. The same people who greet Jesus and shout “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” will shout a few days later “Crucify, crucify him!” (Luke 23, 21b). The **Gospel Reading from John 12, 12-19** tells us:

*12 The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 13 So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!”*

*14 And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, 15 “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!” 16 His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him.*

*17 The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. 18 The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign.*

*19 So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.”*

Palm Sunday is a Sunday with two faces. On the one hand, we feel the nice atmosphere: Jesus Christ comes with his disciples to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover feast. It is the most important feast for the Jews, when they commemorate the begin of the Exodus, the liberation from slavery in Egypt. Sometimes Palm Sunday services begin with a procession with palm leaves and a special blessing. The atmosphere is nice, the Gospel Reading joyful, it is easy to follow the message of the coming king, even for children. We sing “Hosanna!” which is Hebrew and means “Help us!” but is meant as a welcome greeting; the same as the Greek “Kyrie eleison!” – “Lord, have mercy!”

On the other hand (the last verse of the Gospel Reading indicates the other tune), every worship praise is omitted. If we take a close view on the liturgy, the sadness can be sensed everywhere. The bells of the churches will ring for a last time before they keep silent until the Great Song of Praise is sung during the Easter liturgy. The service ends in silence. A silence which calls us to look at ourselves. The sadness is the background of the scene. Jesus Christ’s way leads him into darkness – into our darkness. The way leads to Cross and grave, a place where everyone of us is alone - individually. There is just one who can join us there: the almighty God of Life. And by his entry to Jerusalem he was on his way to this place: the place where we would have been totally alone and dead forever, but we are no more alone because of his great mercy and love. God is very close now. He is on His way into our alienation from Him to take us home again in His presence.

This salvation describes the **Epistle Reading** for Palm Sunday. We think that it is one of the first pieces of Christian liturgy tradition, a very ancient hymn, which is quoted here by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Christians in Philippi (**Philippians 2, 5-11**):

5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,

6 who, though he was in the form of God,  
did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,  
7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,  
being born in the likeness of men.

8 And being found in human form,  
he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death,

even death on a cross.

9 Therefore God has highly exalted him  
and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,  
10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

Palm Sunday tells us that God is on His way to rescue us from a world full of death and failure. He wants to set us free. But this is not a heroic, patriotic march packed with armour, weapons and flags as we expect or like it or would show it in films. The scenery of the Gospel Reading for today shows us how false this idea is. We just must think about history how it ended when people cheered to their great leaders, may they have been brown, or red, or black, or blue... No, God is different. He doesn't need weapons. His power is different and therefore so effective. He comes with humbleness, with mercy, with love, with peace and therewith breaks through the violent power of our world, our hard hearts, our egoism – our sin against God and against others. **The Old Testament Reading** shows us with words of the Prophet **Isaiah, chapter 50, verses 4-9** how God is and how Jesus acted to redeem us:

4 The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. 5 The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward. 6 I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.

7 But the Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. 8 He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me.

9 Behold, the Lord God helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.

Let us then go into this Holy Week with silence and evaluate ourselves: Where am I in the scenery of Palm Sunday? Do I cheer Jesus with "Hosanna, my King!" with full belief, my heart and mind? Or do I cheer him but in my heart I remain cold and stony? Does the message reach me and do I act according to Jesus' words? Or do I stand offside and does it not affect me at all? Examine yourself! And as a thought-provoking impulse you may pray the **Introit, the Psalm of the new week: Psalm 69, 1b-3.7-9.13.20b-21.29**

1b Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck.

2 I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold;  
I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me.

3 I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched.  
My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God.

7 For it is for your sake that I have borne reproach,  
that dishonor has covered my face.

8 I have become a stranger to my brothers,  
an alien to my mother's sons.

9 For zeal for your house has consumed me,  
and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.

13 But as for me, my prayer is to you, O Lord.

At an acceptable time, O God,  
in the abundance of your steadfast love answer me in your saving faithfulness.

I looked for pity, but there was none,  
and for comforters, but I found none.

21 They gave me poison for food,

and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.

29 But I am afflicted and in pain;

let your salvation, O God, set me on high!

## Prayer for Palm Sunday (resource from the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, [www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org))

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Brief silence

For the Holy Church as she marks Holy Week, especially for those who are not able to gather in person, that we would rejoice greatly over our King, who saved us with His perfect life and sacrificial death, and who comes to us humbly and continually in His Holy Word and Sacraments, let us pray to the Lord: Lord, have mercy.

For our Christian lives, that we would be granted faithfulness in times of temptation, repentance and forgiveness when we fall, love for all our brothers and sisters in Christ, reconciliation with those from whom we are alienated, and boldness to confess the faith we have in Christ, let us pray to the Lord: Lord, have mercy.

For the members of our congregation, that we would be given faithful and generous hearts to prayerfully and financially support the mission and ministry of our Lord in this place and abroad, let us pray to the Lord: Lord, have mercy.

For all whom our Father has given authority in civil governments, that He would guide their decisions and desires so that life is defended, justice upheld and the will of Him before whom all knees will bow is done, let us pray to the Lord: Lord, have mercy.

For those who live without faith in Christ, that the Holy Spirit would call them to repentance and give them the gift of faith to believe in the One who comes in the name of the Lord, let us pray to the Lord: Lord, have mercy.

For those stricken by disease, especially the novel coronavirus; for those enduring famine, unemployment, scarcity and other disaster; for those in bondage; and for the lonely, isolated, fearful and those in any need, [especially those who have requested our prayers, including \_\_\_\_\_,] that our heavenly Father would hear our pleas and spare us, leading us to rejoice in Him who never fails us in our time of need, let us pray to the Lord: Lord, have mercy.

For those who have departed this vale of tears in faith and now sleep in Jesus, let us give thanks to the Lord; that He would shepherd us in that same faith until our last hour, bringing us, with them, into His Kingdom, which has no end, let us pray to the Lord: Lord, have mercy.

Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

# Hymn for Palm Sunday

## Ride On, Ride On in Majesty

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1 Ride on, ride on in maj - es - ty! Hark! All the  
 2 Ride on, ride on in maj - es - ty! In low - ly  
 3 Ride on, ride on in maj - es - ty! The an - gel  
 4 Ride on, ride on in maj - es - ty! Thy last and  
 5 Ride on, ride on in maj - es - ty! In low - ly

tribes ho - san - na cry. O Sav - ior meek, pur -  
 pomp ride on to die. O Christ, Thy tri - umphs  
 ar - mies of the sky Look down with sad and  
 fierc - est strife is nigh. The Fa - ther on His  
 pomp ride on to die. Bow Thy meek head to

sue Thy road, With palms and scat - tered gar - ments strowed.  
 now be - gin O'er cap - tive death and con - quered sin.  
 won - d'ring eyes To see the ap - proach - ing sac - ri - fice.  
 sap - phire throne A - waits His own a - noint - ed Son.  
 mor - tal pain, Then take, O God, Thy pow'r and reign.

Text: Henry H. Milman, 1791–1868, alt.

Tune: *Musicalisch Hand-Buch der Geistlichen Melodien*, Hamburg, 1690, alt.;  
 setting: William H. Monk, 1823–89, alt.

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ALL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF BRUSSELS

This compilation comes from **All Lutheran Church of Brussel**, [www.alcb.be](http://www.alcb.be)  
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