

PREPARING AT HOME

April 8-14, 2019

Focus reading: Luke 19:28–40; 22:14–23:56 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=418978483>)

Other lectionary readings: Psalm 118:1–2, 19–29; Isaiah 50:4–9a; Psalm 31:9–16;

Philippians 2:5–11

Theme: Palm/Passion Sunday

We are challenged this week by the sheer length of our reading and the extreme poles of emotions we encounter. Add to those challenges the fact that we cannot fully grasp the realities that were part of daily life for those who formed the crowds that lined the streets. They struggled with some of the same issues we struggle with today: family relationships and illness among them. But they also lived under the thumb of the Roman Empire. They lived in fear of the very visible Roman soldiers. They daily walked past the crosses that reminded them who was in control. They knew people who did not choose their words carefully and ended up dead. They knew that Jesus may be next. So, why are they so joyful? Because they have made a choice. According to scholars Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan, there were two parades that day. The one that we celebrate was a peasant procession entering Jerusalem from the east. But from the west, Governor Pilate led an imperial procession that put military might on display and declared the power of empire. In that moment the crowds who welcomed Jesus chose to stand on the side of God's eternal power rather than the imperial power of Rome. The conflict that was demonstrated by these two different processions was one that would drive the events of the week ahead – the week known as Holy Week.

HOLY WEEK

Because many people are in worship for only one hour on the Sunday before Easter and do not attend Maundy Thursday or Good Friday services, churches now observe Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday in one service! It is a lot for any of us to take in. At this Sunday's Sensational Sunday all ages will journey with Jesus to Jerusalem and stop at stations that describe the events of Holy Week. At the worship service children will participate in a Palm Sunday Procession and bring their One Great Hour of Sharing banks to the fishnet during the offering.

TAKING A STAND

The people chose to take a stand by participating in the parade that Jesus led rather than the parade that Pilate led. It was a bold choice. Jesus boldly stood for justice, for what he knew God wanted for all of creation. Do you know of anyone who is taking a bold stand for justice today? About what kinds of things might you need to take a stand? What makes that hard to do? What might help to make it easier?

PRAYER

Gracious God,
help us to stand with Jesus
on the side of justice, peace, and love.
Amen.

Prospect Presbyterian Church, Maplewood, NJ, www.prospectchurch.org

Rita Boyer, rita@prospectchurch.org