



Brookline Community Church
Worshiping Apart
Reverend Catherine Merrill, Minister
Palm/Passion Sunday
April 5, 2020

Centering Ourselves for Worship:

Lord Jesus Christ,
how well you know our hearts,
and still you love us—
you have loved us to the end.

We have denied you,
and we have denied our calling
to serve one another.

We have betrayed you,
and we have betrayed your commandment
to love one another.

Pour out your Spirit of grace upon us.
Teach us to love and serve you faithfully
and to love and serve one another
by the example you have set for us;
in your holy name we pray. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 21:1-11

[\[Matthew 21:1-11 read for you\]](#). If you'd like to read the Scripture in future services, let me know and we'll get you to make a video we can upload for everyone. It would be great to see more faces in the service]

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, just say this, "The Lord needs them." And he will send them immediately.' This took place to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

'Tell the daughter of Zion,
Look, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,

'Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!'

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?' The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'

Hymn: I Danced in the Morning

[Click here](#) for a video that will give you the lyrics and someone to sing with. Many thanks to the Music Committee for pointing me in the right direction to find these.

Lifting Up Our Joys & Concerns:

Holy, holy, holy Lord,
we give you thanks for Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Our Savior comes to us humbly,
riding a donkey and proclaiming a message of peace.

We pray that Christians hear and share the word of God as true disciples,
God of mercy, hear our prayer.

That all ends of the earth receive the words of the king of peace.
God of mercy, hear our prayer.

That all people live with gratitude
for the gifts of nourishment, friendship, family,
trust, patience, and hope
with the courage and wisdom to change whatever fails to be life-giving.
God of mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for all the joys which have lifted us up in troubled times,

For realizing that this was an opportunity to be the kind of help to other
people we have always wanted to be;

For watching our boldest and brightest step up and discovering that
sometimes that's us;

For 36 miles of bike rides;

For Yi-fan's cat, who was the star of the video coffee hour as far as KJ and
Jocelyn were concerned;

For making demo after demo, so the band could practice together even as
they're apart;

For our kids who have decided that if they haven't caught flu or strep from
their kids, they might as well deliver our groceries as well;

For the time we have in our full houses with our entire family;

For being bored, and hoping that things will remain boring. Just not too
boring;

For Susan, who is going into the realtors' office every day, and keeping a
safe distance from the UPS & FedEx drivers who are keeping a safe
distance from her;

For the dogs who lick the babies behind their ears to show they've been
accepted into the pack;

For Kerry, Susan and Russell's daughter, who's home again after an emergency dash to the ER with high blood pressure a few days after delivery;

For getting out for walks. For being taken out for walks;

For Zyrtec and how it lets us get out into the garden without worrying we have something more serious

For the newly delivered iPads that allow the nursing home residents to connect with their families directly, a miraculous technology for some of them. For being able to make it possible to watch a seven-year-old great, great granddaughter open birthday gifts when they have to be apart.

For the new neighbors we're meeting, even though they've lived in the neighborhood for decades. Now we have an opening to introduce ourselves.

For still being able to work.

For seeing, siblings and nephews even as treatment continues for those who are ill.

For grandparents making a CARE package to send to their grandsons.

For the neighborhood girl who brought a lost postcard back to its rightful place.

For friends who send over a PlayStation for a stir-crazy teenage boy.

For the painters arriving to give the elevated hallway a new look.

God of mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray that all leaders, of church and of state, prefer humble service to empty power.

God of mercy, hear our prayer.

That those who see the cross starkly revealed in their lives draw strength from the name that is above every other name.

God of mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for all the concerns which have weighed us down during troubled times,
For friends recovering from hip surgery, from Covid-19;
For the extra time we thought we'd have that hasn't turned up;
For Nicu, a VA nurse, Yanelis' husband, who is currently deployed to Ft. Devens in MA, but who will be sent further afield. We pray that he is able to help the way he trained for and that he'll return home healthy and soon;
For not really having enough things to do to get moving around;
For Peter Fleming, one of Lisa's friends from the Milford Special Needs group that meets monthly, who is in the hospital with a brain tumor;
For the babies who are arriving prematurely, that they and their parents get all the attention they need;
For the worries about if we catch the virus, how hard will it hit us or the people around us;
For the virus staying out of Ledgewood, where Carol works, and all the other assisted living facilities;
For the people of Florida who have challenges ahead of them;
For Laura, Ann's daughter, whose work in the pharmaceutical industry means she is offering company orientation classes every week to new people she doesn't yet know;
For Donna and Peter returning to the office when both offices have had people with the virus;
For Mary, Jon King's relative, who has tested positive for the virus in Westchester county outside of New York;
For all the nurses and doctors who are doing amazing work;
For all those driving the vehicles with sirens which are some of the only sounds we hear in our cities.;
For New York City, facing a challenge that may just point the way for the rest of our communities;
For those who deliver our packages, so we can remain out of the stores;
For our children, suddenly at home, who have mysteriously changed their eating habits and find nothing we make appetizing;
For being able to give each other the quiet we need in our very shared spaces;
For relatives staying with us and struggling to find a comfortable and comforting situation when everything is different;

For Elly, Amy's neighbor, who started chemo last week for bladder and prostate cancer;

For holding ourselves back from hugging or touching when all we want to do is convey support. And when we want hugs ourselves;

For Janet, Carol's colleague, who hurt her back and is clearly in a lot of pain, but is still working, since she's the only one working in her household;

For the curiosity, patience, discipline to remember the overlooked, gratitude for all the good things that are happening, for strength and faith, for mindfulness, for hope. We ask for all that we need to get through the coming week.

God of mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray that we might live with gratitude for our ancestors whose faith and witness have nourished our own,

that all who mourn today will be comforted,

and that we, who hope to greet Jesus when he comes again, will be ready and filled with joy.

God of mercy, hear our prayer.

Holy, holy, holy Lord,

we give you thanks for Jesus Christ, our Savior:

betrayed by a friend

he remained faithful to the last;

denied by a disciple

he claimed us as his beloved;

condemned without cause

he forgave without condition;

stripped of all dignity

he clothed us with compassion;

mocked by the crowds

he spoke only truth and grace;

broken on the cross

he died to make us whole;

buried in the tomb

he would rise to give us endless life.

Therefore we cry to you: Hosanna! Lord, save us!
Blessed is the one who comes in your name.

Holy, holy, holy Lord,
we give you thanks for Jesus Christ, our Savior, who taught us to pray:

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

[For next week, please feel free to send me your joys & concerns and I'll include them in our prayers: minister@bccnh.org or call/text (978) 494-6953.]

Reflection on the Scripture:

[Either read or [watch the video](#) of me offering the reflection.]

The readings for Palm Sunday are always long. Under normal circumstances, I would try to break them up into smaller pieces, highlight portions of the text, so that the wave of words doesn't just roll over you. I'd point out in both the passage about Jesus' triumphal entry and the story of his death, Matthew is returning, again and again to his theme that Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Hebrew Bible, Jesus is the Messiah.

Obviously, this is the point where you expect me to say, "But we're not living in normal circumstances." Which is true enough. But you don't need me to point that out to you.

Every year when we read of Jesus' triumphal entry, we want to believe we'd be there slinging our coats and the palm fronds in Jesus' path as he enters Jerusalem. Every year, we hand out palm fronds and try, as best as a group of New England Congregationalists can, to shout "Hosanna."

And every year, when we read the story of Jesus' betrayal, we try to convince ourselves that we would not betray him. We would not abandon him to his fate. We would not disappear into the crowd, leaving him to die alone, humiliated, in agony. Every year, we try to believe that we would have been different when the Messiah was killed.

I don't know. I do know for sure that Peter loved Jesus with all his heart and honestly believed he would never betray him. And still he did and when the cock crowed for the third time, Peter's heart was broken with the realization. I'm confident that James and John and Thomas and all the rest were sure they had stood by Jesus in the very worst of times, in the face of the most vile accusations that the religious hierarchy and imperial power could throw at them. And then came Good Friday, and they slipped into the back ground.

Part of what we do as Christians is look at the stories recounted in the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, and we connect them to our lives. We see ourselves as the prodigal son, or the older brother, or, as we age, the father welcoming his lost son home. We see ourselves as Mary or Martha and wish we were a little bit more like the other one. Every week we time travel between back then and here today, and we see some similarities that help us navigate our lives today because of what happened back then.

So, here we are. We like to believe that we'd shout "hosanna" when someone lifts up the doctors and nurses, the EMTs and grocery clerks and pharmacists and delivery drivers. We'd even get past our polite New England Yankee selves and be loud about it.

But this pandemic is going to bring a whole series of Good Fridays to us. The authorities are going to offer us choices. The mob is going to shout out what it wants. Leaders are going to want to wash their hands of responsibility. Some people are going to name an uncomfortable truth to us. We're going to have the opportunity to decide whether we stand with Jesus or we're going to fade into the crowd. We're not going to make the perfect decision every time. We are assured of God's forgiveness when we fall short. But as Christians, we don't get to say that we didn't see it coming. Because the story of the Covid-19 pandemic is our sacred story.

Let us listen to the account of the death of Jesus of Nazareth as told in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 27, verses 11 to 54.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 27:11-54

[\[Matthew 27:11-54 read for you\]](#). If you'd like to read the Scripture in future services, let me know and we'll get you to make a video we can upload for everyone. It would be great to see more faces in the service]

Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus said, 'You say so.' But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. Then Pilate said to him, 'Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?' But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, 'Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?' For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over. While he was sitting on the judgement seat, his wife sent word to him, 'Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him.' Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. The governor again

said to them, 'Which of the two do you want me to release for you?' And they said, 'Barabbas.' Pilate said to them, 'Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?' All of them said, 'Let him be crucified!' Then he asked, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Let him be crucified!'

So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, 'I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.' Then the people as a whole answered, 'His blood be on us and on our children!' So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.'

Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, 'You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.' In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, "I am God's Son." ' The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way.

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'This man is calling for Elijah.' At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.' Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'

Hymn: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty

[Click here](#) for a video that will give you the lyrics and someone to sing with.

A Prayer to Send us Back Out into the World

Holy, holy, holy Lord,
pour out your Spirit upon us,
that we might be made one
in the body and blood of Christ our Savior.

Give us the same mind as Christ Jesus:
who emptied himself
that we might have fullness of life;

who humbled himself
and so became highly exalted;

who gave up his own birthright
to receive the name above every name;

who suffered and died in shame
to put an end to sin and death forever.

Therefore we cry to you: Hosanna! Lord, save us!
Blessed is the one who comes in your name. Amen.

[CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE: # 839 "God Be With You Till We Meet Again; by his counsels guide, uphold you, with his sheep securely fold you; God be with you till we meet again."](#)

[The Music Ministry crew made this bit of video for us, so we could all sing together, with each other and our former selves!]

Here ends our worship, now let our service begin.



PRAYER LIST (4/5/20)

If you know those on this list, call on them & tell them we are praying for them. If you know others who should be added to this list please give their names to the minister or a deacon.

- Rev. Tom Atherton, failing from Parkinson's
- Friends & family of Nell Smallwood, Beatrice Maude Charewicz, Win Hall, Bruce Garvin, Louise Price, Eddy Whitcomb, Shirley Jeffreys, Hazel Corey, Jean & Duke, David & Dougy Connors, Jerry King, Tre Rouse, Tasha Feller, and Pat Tiner.
- For those who are struggling with depression, addiction, mental health issues, and in their marriages
- Luca, Amy's nephew, as his new treatment appears to be having effect
- Ethel Long who is recovering from hip replacement surgery while she helps Ron get back on his feet after breaking an ankle and getting a pacemaker put in
- God's grace and healing for us all
- Dave, continuing to recover now that he is in remission
- Those affected by the corona virus around the world and those working to limit its impact
- The homeless, who have nowhere to shelter in isolation, and whose places of refuge (libraries, malls, shelters) are closing down, that we may find a more productive approach to homelessness.
- Those suffering from domestic violence, who are caught at home with their abusers at a time of rising stress, and therefore rising abuse, that they might find safe havens.
- All those who are dealing with health problems at the moment, all those whose surgeries have been postponed, all those who need medical attention and worry they are taking attention away from the pandemic response.
- For Wisnadine and Quebin, our Compassion International children, from Haiti and Mexico. We pray for their health, the health of all those who are helping them in Haiti and Mexico and all those unable to work in Haiti and Mexico during this trying time;
- For the friends and family of Terry House, Bill's brother, who passed away recently;
- For Tim Stewart, Barbara's relative, whose Covid-19 test came back positive, but her is recovering well.
- For friends recovering from hip surgery, from Covid-19.

- For Nicu, a VA nurse, Yanelis' husband, who is currently deployed to Ft. Devens in MA, but who will be sent further afield. We pray that he is able to help the way he trained for and that he'll return home healthy and soon.
- For Peter Fleming, one of Lisa's friends from the Milford Special Needs group that meets monthly, who is in the hospital with a brain tumor.
- For the babies who are arriving prematurely, that they and their parents get all the attention they need.
- For the worries about if we catch the virus, how hard will it hit us or the people around us.
- For the virus staying out of Ledgewood, where Carol works, and all the other assisted living facilities.
- For the people of Florida who have challenges ahead of them.
- For Laura, Ann's daughter, whose work in the pharmaceutical industry means she is offering company orientation classes every week to new people she doesn't yet know.
- For Donna and Peter returning to the office when both offices have had people with the virus.
- For Mary, Jon King's relative, who has tested positive for the virus in Westchester county outside of New York.
- For all the nurses and doctors who are doing amazing work.
- For all those driving the vehicles with sirens which are some of the only sounds we hear in our cities.
- For New York City, facing a challenge that may just point the way for the rest of our communities.
- For those who deliver our packages, so we can remain out of the stores.
- For our children, suddenly at home, who have mysteriously changed their eating habits and find nothing we make appetizing.
- For being able to give each other the quiet we need in our very shared spaces.
- For relatives staying with us and struggling to find a comfortable and comforting situation when everything is different.
- For Eli, Amy's neighbor, who started chemo last week for bladder and prostate cancer.
- For holding ourselves back from hugging or touching when all we want to do is convey support. And when we want hugs ourselves.
- For Janet, Carol's colleague, who hurt her back and is clearly in a lot of pain, but is still working, since she's the only one working in her household.
- For the curiosity, patience, discipline to remember the overlooked, gratitude for all the good things that are happening, for strength and faith, for mindfulness, for hope. We ask for all that we need to get through the coming week.
- Individuals serving in our military & their families

Sunday, April 5, Palm Sunday Household Prayers:

Morning

I rise, O God, awakened by your Word, to live another day. Lead me in your path. Show me the steps to take toward greater faith. Hold me in your care as I move through this Holy Week where the shadows deepen even in the daylight. Hosanna! Save me now, dear God! Amen.

Evening

I come to the darkness of night, O God, tired and ready for a sweet respite in your care. Keep me safe from all harm, and bring me to the morning light with renewed strength. In Jesus' holy name, I pray. Amen.

Thursday, April 9, Maundy Thursday Household Prayers:

Morning

O Lord, as I live for you this day, keep me faithful. Let my living and my dying be precious in your sight, so that I may live for you forever; I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Evening

O Lord, as I rest in you this night, keep me faithful. Let my dying and my living be precious in your sight so that I may rest in you forever; I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, April 10, Good Friday Household Prayers:

Morning

God, on this most challenging day, be with me. Open my eyes to see moments of pain and suffering around me into which I may carry your loving presence. Amen.

Evening

Holy One, into your hands I commit this day that I have lived. Salvage what needs saving in me. Strengthen what is good in me. And in all things bind me closer to you through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Questions for Reflection

As this week unfolds, spend some time each day pondering the mind of Christ. What is the shape of his compassion? Describe the image of such great love. Finally, what does it feel like, physically, to be so utterly cared for?

Daily Awareness Reflection

At the end of the day, I've been asking myself the following questions. I jot down the answers and ask them again the next evening. I've found it helps me to remain centered as well as increasing my awareness of God in my life. It takes about 10 minutes.

1. Slow down. Stop. Prepare yourself to pray by becoming aware of the love with which God looks on you ...
2. Note the gifts God has given you today. Give thanks to God for them ...
3. Ask God that the next few minutes be a time of special grace and revelation ...
4. With God, review the day. Look at the stirrings of your heart, your thoughts, and your choices as the day progressed. Which have been of God? Which have not? What does God want to say to you about both? ...
5. Ask God for forgiveness for any failure or omission, and for healing from their effects ...
6. Look forward to the following day, and plan concretely with God how to live it according to God's desire for your life ...

From Elizabeth Liebert's *The Soul of Discernment* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2015), p. 31.

Announcements:

This time of isolation can be very difficult. You may know someone who needs some support beyond what you can provide. We're in this together.

- Suicide prevention: 1-800-273-8255
- Sexual assault: 1-800-656-4673
- Domestic violence: 1-800-799-7233

Melanie, our state senator asked to pass along the following two pieces of information:

- If people want to know the latest status of COVID 19 in NH and the Emergency orders to date, go to <https://www.nh.gov/covid19/>
- A great video explaining Covid-19, what and how we fight it and why what we are doing is so important:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fgBla7RepXU>

Brookline Food Pantry

Although we cannot be together physically at this time, Outreach is continuing to work with Rebecca Purdin through the Brookline Welfare office & CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) to address any needs in our community.

One of the needs we are working on is for a young pregnant woman who is currently out of work and is in need of a baby monitor. If you or anyone you know has a baby monitor they are not using and can donate please contact me at arazz3914@gmail.com or 603-801-9210.

The Brookline food pantry is now open on Tuesdays & Thursdays from 10-2:00 for drop-offs only. There is a list on the [Brookline Food Pantry's Facebook page](#) that is being updated as items are needed. The current list includes:

Tissues

Ziploc Bags (The pantry uses these to divide up larger donations)

Foil and Plastic Wrap

Mayonnaise

Bread and Frozen Vegetables

Coffee

Tissues

Hot Chocolate

Feminine Pads

Pet Food

Cat Litter

Donations can be dropped off downstairs at the Town Hall during regular hours of operation. There are large boxes for donations if there is no one in the Food Pantry. There is also a drop off at the Brookline Post Office.

If you are not on Facebook you can contact Amy and she can get the list to you.

Thank you for your continued support to our church and our community.