

Worship at Home on PALM SUNDAY

April 5, 2020

Opening Prayer (*in unison*)

Almighty God, today we worship You at home on a Palm Sunday. We remember Your promise that where two or three are gathered in Your name, there You will be with them. We trust in Your promise that even as a few of us are gathered at home now, You are with us. As You visited Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday, please visit our home today. Make our hearts a place where You will reside in. Give us joy in worshipping You with our loved ones in our home. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Hymn of Praise (*or any other hymn/song known to the family can be sung; and a few more hymn/songs as the family may choose to sing*)

Hosanna, loud hosanna
the little children sang;
through pillared court and temple
the lovely anthem rang.
To Jesus, who had blessed them,
close folded to his breast,
the children sang their praises,
the simplest and the best.

From Olivet they followed
mid an exultant crowd,
the victory palm branch waving,
and chanting clear and loud.
The Lord of earth and heaven
rode on in lowly state,
nor scorned that little children
should on his bidding wait.

"Hosanna in the highest!"
That ancient song we sing,
for Christ is our Redeemer,
the Lord of heaven, our King.
O may we ever praise him
with heart and life and voice,
and in his blissful presence
eternally rejoice.

Intercession (each person can be encouraged to say a prayer based on the items below or one person could be assigned to pray all the items below)

1. Many Christians around the world continue to fast and pray during this season of Lent and also to see the end of the Covid-19 pandemic. Pray our time of fasting will lead us to experience God more intimately.

2. The government has given a lot of cash benefits especially, to help the people overcome this trying time everyone is faced with. Let us pray that the money that is supposed to reach the needy will indeed reach them and not be lost somewhere or stuck in some bureaucracy.

3. Many of our churches are reaching out to more people through online streaming of prerecorded worship services, children and youth ministry. Small groups and prayer meets are done online. It seems these meets are seeing an increase in 'attendance.' GOD knows what HE is doing. Indeed, no weapon formed against HIS Church will stand and even the gates of hell will not overcome it. Pray our ministries done innovatively will bear much fruit.

4. Any other prayers the family wishes to bring to God.

End the intercession with **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 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,
for ever and ever. Amen.*

Hymn of Preparation (or any other hymn/song)

Something beautiful, something good
All my confusion HE understood
All I had to offer HIM was brokenness and strife
But HE made something beautiful of my life

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Reading of the Bible (turn to your Bibles and everyone reads aloud together or one verse per person)

Matthew 21:1-17 (English Standard Version)

¹Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” ⁴This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

⁵“Say to the daughter of Zion,
‘Behold, your king is coming to you,
humble, and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’”

⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. ⁷They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. ⁸Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” ¹⁰And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred

up, saying, "Who is this?" ¹¹ And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."

¹² And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. ¹³ He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers."

¹⁴ And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. ¹⁵ But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant, ¹⁶ and they said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read,

"'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies
you have prepared praise'?"

¹⁷ And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.

Sermon (to be read aloud by one person)

Today is Palm Sunday. Today we remember our Lord Jesus entering into Jerusalem to the shouts of Hosanna and people waiving branches. In the Bible passage above, two main things are taking place. First, we see Jesus entering Jerusalem on a Sunday. And then we see the cleansing of the Temple which took place on Monday (*information derived from the Gospel of Mark*).

Our Lord entered Jerusalem on a donkey fulfilling Zechariah 9:9, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

The Lord entered the Temple to fulfil the prophecy of Malachi 3:1, "Then suddenly the Lord will come to his temple." Jesus our Lord wants the people to know that HE is the King, and the Lord of the Temple. The Lord scrutinises what goes on in the place of worship. He recognises the motives of the religious authority that are wrong. He will not tolerate their falsehood. He then proceeds to cleanse the Temple because He realises that there is a religious scam that is taking place in the temple – in the place where God is to be honoured and where authentic worship should be inculcated. They were selling animals for sacrifices, with intention to make more profit. Money changers were

allowed to make huge profits from those who were buying the half-shekel needed to pay the temple tax. Jesus therefore drove out the scammers. He chased the money changers and turned the tables because the place of worship and prayer was being desecrated. Jesus said, "My house will be a house of prayer," quoting Isaiah 56:7 but the religious authority had turned it into a "Den of robbers," quoting Jeremiah 7:11. He turned the tables because the salvation of Gentile sinners was at stake. The place designated for Gentiles to worship God had been turned into a market place. Where would the Gentiles (the non-Jews) pray then?

Although we do not observe Temple-worship anymore and participate in Old Testament rituals which they observed in those days, still there is a lesson for us today. We get to learn about honouring God in the place of worship and inculcating heart-worship or authentic worship.

The problem with the people whom Jesus confronted in the Temple is that they did not think of the Temple as a place they are supposed to encounter God. They did not think of worship; they only thought in terms of rituals and obligations. They did not think of the Temple as a place that must be taken seriously to draw people to come into a deeper relationship with GOD.

Why did the Temple become a place to make profits rather than to offer prayers? Why did the place of worship become a den of robbers? Because they did not know what authentic worship is.

Even today it is possible to go to a church building and not worship GOD. It is possible to conduct just rituals – go through a motion as it were and then go back without having come into a deep awareness of God; let alone an encounter with GOD. Like two thousand years ago it is possible now to focus on the peripherals rather on the core. It is possible to turn worship into entertainment and show a few video clips to enhance our powerless sermons and send the people off feeling entertained, enthralled and enchanted rather than be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Have we also abused our church building? Have we turned our building into a place for social integration merely; a place to promote ourselves and display our talents, our achievements, our programs; and take pride in our expensive latest digital equipment, and nothing more?

Let me ask us, is it possible that because we have not understood the proper usage of the church building that God has kept us away from the church building? Think about it. In the past, He took the people away from the Temple because they abused it. He sent

the people into exile because they abused and misused the Promised Land. Is it possible that He has kept us away from the place where we usually worshipped in, so that we may learn what corporate worship is all about; what heart-worship is all about; and to teach us authentic worship, God-honouring worship?

Some of us think that instead of worshipping in a church building, worshipping in our own homes might solve all the problems as our family-worship will be God-honouring and God-centred. Really? The very thing we did in the church building will happen at home too if we are not in a relationship with GOD and not focused on truly worshipping God.

What we need to do is to work at authentic worship at home and in church premises. Authentic worship arises out of a true relationship with the living GOD. Authentic worship means everything I do flows out of my relationship with God. Authentic worship means my worship of God does not end when the worship service ends. Authentic worship means my life becomes one continual act of worship from Sunday to Saturday and every moment.

Worship services must bring people into a relationship with God. If what goes on in the church buildings cannot help achieve this, then let our church buildings remain closed.

Let me end with a clarification. I am not saying that the current pandemic is a judgment from GOD. But it appears to me that the Sovereign Lord in His wisdom has allowed the present condition to persist, if not for anything else, to at least humble His people and cause us to take our corporate worship seriously. Hopefully there will be a longing for authentic worship in our church buildings.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (to be said together unhurriedly)

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,

is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic (universal) Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

(For information only: The Apostles' Creed is the affirmation of faith most widely used. It derives its name from its use in the Christian church from as early as A.D. 150 and the early belief that it was used by the apostles. Beginning in the third century, this creed was used at baptisms. Through the years it has been used widely by Christians as the formative statement of the faith into which Christians are baptized.)

Hymn of Assurance *(or any other hymn/songs known to the family)*

Lord, I want to be a Christian
in my heart, in my heart.
Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart.
In my heart, in my heart,
Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart.

Lord, I want to be more loving
in my heart, in my heart.
Lord, I want to be more loving in my heart.
In my heart, in my heart,
Lord, I want to be more loving in my heart.

Lord, I want to be more holy
in my heart, in my heart.
Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart.
In my heart, in my heart,
Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart.

Lord, I want to be like Jesus
in my heart, in my heart.
Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my heart.
In my heart, in my heart,
Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my heart.

Closing Prayer (*in unison*)

For the privilege to worship You and for the people we worship You with, we thank You our Father. Enable us to be like our Lord Jesus, especially in doing what is right and in being humble. Keep us from arrogance. May we who have sung Your praises, behold Your goodness. May we who have heard Your word, speak Your truth. May we who have come into Your light, live in Your love with one another. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

At another time in the week the family might want to discuss the questions below which is based on the Bible reading and sermon today:

1. If Jesus were to arrive at our usual Sunday worship, would He bring a whip or would He praise the Father? Why?
2. What should we do to take our worship at home more seriously?
3. How can we help each other in this home come into a deeper relationship with GOD?
4. Do you understand what worship is? What is it? Explain.

Memorize:

He said to them, "It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer..."

(Matthew 21:13ESV)

End of bulletin