

April 2, 2023
Palm Sunday



Welcome to
**NATIONAL
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**

Leading people to become
faithful followers of Jesus Christ
together in God's world

*The crowds that went ahead of Jesus
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!"*
Matthew 21:9

Transitional Senior Pastor
Associate Pastors

Rev. Allan Poole
Rev. Donna Marsh
Dr. Quinn Fox
Rev. Lisa Larsen

Parish Associates

Dr. Nancy Fox
Dr. Kerry Stoltzfus

Music

Dr. Michael Denham (Director)
Todd Fickley (Organist)
Joanna Zorack-Greene
(Contemporary Music Leader)

Ministry Directors

Jonathan Edwards (Serve)
Kristin Franke (Youth & Families)
Jill Meek (Children)
Leslie Saum (Connections)

HOLY WEEK & EASTER AT NATIONAL

For information about all of our Lenten and Easter events, please visit our [Easter page](#), accessible on the home page of our website.

Welcome to Palm Sunday!

Worship at 8:45 & 11:00 am

Today we celebrate Jesus' triumphal entrance into Jerusalem with a children's palm procession!

Palm Sunday Prayer Gathering

Today, 12:15 pm, Chapel

As we prepare for Holy Week and Easter, we invite you to a special prayer gathering in the Chapel. Together, we will focus on *Setting our Faces toward Jerusalem*, preparing our hearts and minds for the most important week of the Christian calendar. For prayer resources and to read more, please [click here](#) or visit our Events webpage.

Holy Week Devotional

Take a special journey to deeper relationship with God. You'll find our Holy Week devotional on pages 12-15 of this bulletin or online, accessible from our website's home page.

Maundy Thursday Worship Service

April 6, 7:00 pm

Maundy Thursday is the Thursday before Easter, commemorating the day when Jesus celebrated his Last Supper, washed the feet of his disciples and commanded them to do the same for each other. If you can't make it in person, please join us online on our [Watch webpage](#).

Good Friday Worship Service

April 7, 7:00 pm

On Good Friday we will share in reflections in word and music on the seven last words of Christ. If you can't make it in person, please join us online on our [Watch webpage](#).

Easter Worship Services

April 9

8:30, 10:00 & 11:30 am

Rejoice with us in the resurrection of our Lord! Join us on Easter Sunday at worship in-person in the Sanctuary and online on our [Watch webpage](#).

He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Matthew 28:6.

Come and discover that this is the best news of all!

Easter Egg Hunt

April 9 after 10:00 am Worship Service

Kids pre-K through 5th grade are invited for a fun Easter egg hunt! Join us after the 10:00 am Easter worship service at the Education Building (National Presbyterian School) playground.

After Worship Services, Easter Sunday:

Coffee, Cookies and Easter Garden

Meet new friends and old for delicious refreshments in Stone Fellowship Hall. The Easter garden will be a wonderful opportunity to take family photos and spread the good news of Easter!

Easter Dedication Flowers

Would you like to honor or remember a loved one by supporting NPC's Easter flower displays? You will find Flower Ministry envelopes on the tables outside the sanctuary. You may make your donation to NPC by check or online, noting "Easter Flowers" on the memo line.

8:45 AM WORSHIP

Sanctuary and Online

Welcome! Masks are optional at our services, with the exception of the balcony and the lectern-side transept (at the front on your right), where masks are required. Our ushers are happy to guide you to your preferred seating area.

WE ENTER GOD'S PRESENCE

GATHERING Improvisations Joanna Zorack-Greene, keyboard

CALL TO WORSHIP Zechariah 9:9 Rev. Allan Poole

One Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!

All ***Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!***

One Lo, your king comes to you;

All ***Triumphant and victorious is he; humble and riding on a donkey,***

One Let us lift up our hearts and worship God together.

▲ OPENING SONG Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

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 victor 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!

▲ PRAYER OF ADORATION

CONFESSION OF SIN *in unison*

Almighty God, as we worship you today,

we remember that your Son our Savior entered Jerusalem in triumph,
and was proclaimed Messiah and king.

Many spread garments and branches along his way,

but did not know that way would lead to Calvary.

As we too raise branches of palms and voices singing, "Hosanna,"

we bow before you in humble repentance.

Help us remember that the One who came in the name of the Lord,
came for our forgiveness and redemption.

SILENT CONFESSION AND KYRIE *sung first by band, then congregation*

Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Lord, have mercy upon us.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Believe the good news of the Gospel.

In Jesus Christ we are forgiven. Thanks be to God.

▲ CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

Nettleton

Glory be to God the Father, glory also to the Son, glory to the Holy Spirit,
Ever Three and ever One;
As it was in the beginning, now and evermore shall be;
Alleluia and thanksgiving, now and through eternity.

▲ AFFIRMATION OF FAITH Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and
buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church;
the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

A TIME FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES

Jill Meek
Director of Children's Ministries

*Children ages 5 to 5th grade will then be dismissed for Children's Chapel.
Parents may take children age 4 and under to the nursery.*

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Poole

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 21:1-11

Elder Peter Hogge

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of
Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying 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. ³If anyone says anything to you, just say this, "The Lord needs them." And he will send
them immediately.' ⁴This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet,
saying,

⁵'Tell the daughter of Zion,
Look, your king is coming to you,
³humble, and mounted on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'

⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷they brought the donkey and
the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. ⁸A very large crowd spread their
cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

⁹The 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!

¹⁰When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?' ¹¹The
crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON

Rev. Donna Marsh

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S GRACE AND CALL

Children return to join their parents in the sanctuary.

THE SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION

Dr. Quinn Fox

Invitation to the Table

Words of Institution and Distribution

Music Meditation

King of Kings

Brooke and Scott Ligertwood

Prayer of Thanksgiving

CALL FOR OFFERING OF TITHES AND GIFTS

OFFERING SONG

How Great Is Our God

Chris Tomlin

The splendor of the King, clothed in majesty;

Let all the earth rejoice, let all the earth rejoice!

He wraps himself in Light, darkness tries to hide

and trembles at his voice, and trembles at his voice.

Chorus: *How great is our God! Sing with me: How great is our God!*

And all will see How great, how great is our God!

And age to age he stands and time is in his hands:

Beginning and the end, beginning and the end.

The God-head, three in One—Father, Spirit, Son.

The Lion and the Lamb, the Lion and the Lamb. **Chorus**

Name above all names, worthy of all praise.

My heart will sing how great is our God! **Chorus**

Offering plates are at the back of the sanctuary to receive your tithes and gifts as you exit.

PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Rev. Lisa Larsen

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.

▲ CLOSING SONG

Shout Hosanna

Kristian Stanfill

To the King of glory and light, all praises. To the only giver of life, our Maker.

The gates are open wide; we worship you.

Come see what love has done, amazing. He bought us with His blood, our Savior.

The cross has overcome; we worship you.

Chorus: *Shout hosanna, Jesus, he saves!*

Shout hosanna, he rose from the grave!

Come and lift him up, hosanna!

Now let the lost be found, forgiven. Death could not hold him down; he's risen.

So let the saints cry out, we worship you. We worship you! **Chorus**

The same power that rolled the stone away, the same power alive in us today.

King Jesus, we call upon your name, no other name. **(2x) Chorus (2x)**

Come and lift him up hosanna! **(2x)**

▲ BENEDICTION AND PASSING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

Rev. Marsh

▲ SENDING

NPC Band

▲ Congregation standing, as able

11:00 AM WORSHIP

Sanctuary and Online

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WE ENTER GOD'S PRESENCE

PRELUDE

What Wondrous Love Is This
All Glory, Laud, and Honor
Overture

arr. Nielsen & Young;

G. F. Handel

John Varcoe & Todd Fickley

CHIMES

CALL TO WORSHIP

Zechariah 9:9

Rev. Allan Poole

One Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!

All **Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!**

One Lo, your king comes to you;

All **Triumphant and victorious is he; humble and riding on a donkey,**

One Let us lift up our hearts and worship God together.

▲ HYMN

Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

Ellacombe

Choir

Hosanna to the King of Kings! Hosanna, let the praises ring!

Hosanna to the King of Kings! Hosanna, let them ring!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna!

Hosanna to the King of Kings! Hosanna to the King!

Congregation and Children

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 victor 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.

▲ PRAYER OF ADORATION

▲ CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

Ellacombe

“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!

CONFESSION OF SIN *in unison*

Almighty God, as we worship you today,

we remember that your Son our Savior entered Jerusalem in triumph,

and was proclaimed Messiah and king.

Many spread garments and branches along his way,

but did not know that way would lead to Calvary.

As we too raise branches of palms and voices singing, “Hosanna,”

we bow before you in humble repentance.

Help us remember that the One who came in the name of the Lord,

came for our forgiveness and redemption.

SILENT CONFESSION AND KYRIE *sung first by choir, then congregation*

Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Lord, have mercy upon us.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Believe the good news of the Gospel.

In Jesus Christ we are forgiven. Thanks be to God.

▲ RESPONSE OF PRAISE

Truro

Lift up your heads, you mighty gates, behold, the King of glory waits;
the King of kings is drawing near; the Savior of the world is here.

▲ AFFIRMATION OF FAITH Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and
buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church;
the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

A TIME FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES

Jill Meek

Director of Children's Ministries

Children ages 5 to 5th grade will then be dismissed for Children's Chapel.

Parents may take children age 4 and under to the nursery.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev. Poole

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 21:1-11

Molly Beste

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying 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. ³If anyone says anything to you, just say this, "The Lord needs them." And he will send them immediately.' ⁴This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

⁵'Tell the daughter of Zion,

Look, your king is coming to you,

³humble, and mounted on a donkey,

and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'

⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; ⁷they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. ⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

⁹The 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!

¹⁰When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?' ¹¹The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON

Rev. Donna Marsh

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S GRACE AND CALL

CHORAL RESPONSE

The King's Majesty

Ride on! Ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die:
Bow thy meek head to mortal pain, then take, O God, thy power to reign.

Children return to join their parents in the sanctuary.

THE SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION

Dr. Quinn Fox

Invitation to the Table

Words of Institution and Distribution

Music Meditation

Benedictus

Franz Schubert

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.

Mass in G, D. 167

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord

based on Psalm 139:23-24

Tess Ottinger, soprano, Sam Scarrow, tenor, Paul Grosvenor, baritone

Prayer of Thanksgiving

CALL FOR OFFERING OF TITHES AND GIFTS

There are offering plates at the back of the sanctuary to receive your tithes and gifts as you exit.

OFFERTORY

Sanctus

Charles Gounod

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth.

Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua. Hosanna in excelsis! Amen.

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty.

Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest! Amen.

with Sheri Jackson, soprano

PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Rev. Lisa Larsen

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.

▲ HYMN 88 *verses 1, 3 and 4*

All Glory, Laud, and Honor

Valet will ich dir geben

▲ BENEDICTION

Rev. Marsh

▲ CHORAL RESPONSE

Winchester New

Ride on! Ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die:

O Christ, thy triumphs now begin o'er captive death and conquered sin.

▲ PASSING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

Rev. Larsen

▲ POSTLUDE

Processional

Grayston Ives

Mr. Fickley, organ

▲ Congregation standing, as able

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

There will be no Sunday School on Easter, April 9. Classes resume April 16.

Sundays at National

Our worship services are in the Sanctuary and online on our [Watch](#) page.

- **8:45 am:** Contemporary Worship
- **9:55 am:** Sunday School for all ages
- **11:00 am:** Traditional Worship

Adult Sunday School

Spring semester is **February 5-May 21**, with the exception of April 9, Easter. For more detailed class descriptions, please [click here](#) or visit our adult Classes webpage.

Class	Teacher(s)	Location
<i>Confessing and Believing: The Apostles' Creed as Challenge and Gift</i>	Dr. Quinn Fox	Chapel and online Zoom: click here or visit our Classes webpage
<i>Matthew: The Promised Messiah Has Come</i>	Donna Duss, Margaret Gardner, Holly Novak	Garden Room C
<i>Racial Reconciliation: Looking Back to Move Forward</i>	Peggy Lewis, Lewrene Glaser, Nancy Fox	Room #209
<i>Into the Sunrise of Eternity: Reflections on the Journey Home</i>	R.V. Seep	Garden Room A
<i>Parent Gathering</i>	Kristin Franke and others	Jones Hall, Education Building
<i>The Marriage Course, by Alpha (starting April 16)</i>	Lisa Larsen, Ed & Lisa Stucky	Stone Fellowship Hall

Youth Sunday School

Please [click here](#) or visit our [Youth webpage](#) online for more information about Sunday School and other youth events. Youth grades 6-12, please come to the Multipurpose Building for Sunday School. We'll meet there briefly then split to smaller groups by age.

Children's Sunday School

Please [click here](#) or visit our [Children's webpage](#) to read about our Children's Ministry.

- The Nursery rooms are available for all infants to walkers, up to age 4, 8:30 am-noon, including during the Sunday School hour.
- Children ages 2-3 years have their Sunday school program in the Toddler Room in the main church building.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

For more information about all our events, please visit the Events page on our website at nationalpres.org. Questions? Email us at info@nationalpres.org!

The Marriage Course, by Alpha Beginning Sunday, April 16 9:55 am in Stone Fellowship Hall

Do you want to learn practical tools and techniques to strengthen your marriage? If so, then this course is for you! Over the course of 7 weeks, the two of you will engage with video teachings that provide valuable insights and practical tips for building a healthy marriage in all ages and stages of life. Please [click here](#) or visit our Events webpage to register.

Serve Our City: Little Lights Saturday, April 15, 10:00 am-1:00 pm

Join us as we partner with Little Lights for their Saturday Program to provide a safe, fun, and encouraging space for their students to spend their unstructured weekend hours. Whether it's playing games, making a craft, or helping with homework, this will be an excellent opportunity to encourage our city's youth and allow them to bless you as well. For more information, contact Serve Director Jonathan Edwards at jedwards@nationalpres.org.

2nd Sunday Sandwich Making April 16 after 11:00 am Worship

Join us in Stone Fellowship Hall to make 400 sandwiches for Martha's Table. McKenna's Wagon delivers food to the hungry on the streets of DC every day of the year. This is a great event for the whole family!

Women's Brunch Saturday, April 29, 11:00 am

All women are invited for a delicious brunch, faith-building conversation and fellowship! Childcare is provided. Please register for brunch and childcare by April 26 by [clicking here](#) or visiting our Events webpage online.

This Coming Week at a Glance

For information about all of these events, please see the [Events page](#) on our website.

Palm Sunday, April 2, Communion

- 8:45 am: Contemporary Worship
- 9:55 am: Sunday School for all ages
- 11:00 am: Traditional Worship
- 12:15 pm: Prayer Gathering in the Chapel
- 6:30 pm: Youth Group

Thursday, April 6

- 7:00 pm: Maundy Thursday Service

Friday, April 7

- 7:00 pm: Good Friday Service

Easter Sunday, April 9

- **8:30 am:** Easter Worship Service
- **10:00 am:** Easter Worship Service
- Easter egg hunt following 10:00 am worship
- **11:30 am:** Easter Worship Service

Monday, April 10

- NPC offices closed for Easter holiday

Visit Our Library

If you're looking for more C.S. Lewis books or Lent resources, please visit our library on the 2nd level. If you have questions, our friendly librarians would be happy to help! There's also a wide selection of children's books available.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

How can we pray for you?

Our new prayer cards are a way to share your prayer requests with us. You'll find these small cards in the guestbooks in the pews. You can drop cards in the offering plates or place them in the prayer box in the Welcome Center. We believe in lifting each other up in prayer times of need. Please know that your prayer request is kept confidential and will be treated with the utmost care and respect. Thank you for entrusting us with your prayers, and we look forward to supporting you on your spiritual journey.

Pathway of Christian Discipleship Class Saturday, April 22, In-person

Becoming a church member here at National can be a meaningful step forward in your spiritual journey. To inquire about membership or just learn more about Christian faith, please attend the one-day in-person Pathway of Christian Discipleship class on Saturday, April 22. Please [click here](#) for more information or contact Kemet Rakiatu to register by April 12th at 202.537.7578 or krakiatu@nationalpres.org.

Join Our Easter Welcome Team

Easter is just around the corner and we are looking for friendly volunteers to serve as a warm and welcoming presence on this joyful day! To join our Easter Welcome Team, please visit our Serve at Church page or [click here](#). You can also contact Leslie Saum directly at LSaum@nationalpres.org or 202.537.7494 for more information.

Living & Giving Generously in God's World: The NPC Fund for Charitable Giving can help!

Are you thinking about philanthropic strategies for planned giving? The NPC Fund is here to help you design or implement a Donor-Advised Fund or Charitable Trust structure to meet your giving goals. Please email npcfund@nationalpres.org or contact Rick Hawthorne at 301.452.8269 or Jonathan Dickey at 443.722.4840 for more information. You may also [click here](#) to visit our Giving webpage.

Vacation Bible School Sign up today!

Join us June 26-30 for *Stellar VBS: Shining Jesus' Light*. We'll have fun with friends and explore God's Word through games, crafts, music, and more! VBS is open to kids aged 4 years–rising 5th graders. We also need adult volunteers to lead crews of campers or activity stations. Campers and volunteers can [sign up online](#) or contact Jill Meek at jmeek@nationalpres.org.



Called to Care

Are you grieving the loss of a loved one?

GriefShare is a 13-week video and small group Christian based program for those who are grieving a loved one. The material focuses on practical tools for healing. Please visit www.griefshare.org for more information or to find a location currently offering this ministry. Contact the Care Office at careoffice@nationalpres.org or call 202.537.7540 if you have questions or need prayer.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 2 Corinthians 1:3



SETTING OUR FACES TOWARD JERUSALEM

A National Presbyterian Church Holy Week Devotional

*When the days drew near for Jesus to be taken up to heaven
he set his face to go to Jerusalem. Luke 9:51*

Our focus is on *Setting our Faces toward Jerusalem*, as we prepare our hearts and minds for the most important week of the Christian calendar. Join us in this time of reflection and contemplation as we delve deeper into the events that led to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through these daily devotions, meditation questions and prayer, we hope to draw closer to God and renew our commitment to follow in His footsteps.

Palm Sunday: Matthew 21:1-11 Triumph

As we enter into Holy Week, let us reflect on Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Can you imagine the excitement and joy that filled the air as Jesus rode in on a donkey while the crowds waved palm branches before him? It was a moment of victory and triumph! But let's not miss the deeper meaning behind this event. The people of Jerusalem thought that Jesus would be the king who would banish the Romans and restore their people to glory. However, God had a bigger plan in mind. Jesus came to save the world and reign as Lord of all.

Questions: How do you celebrate a success? What did Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem mean to his disciples? To the crowd? What does it mean for your walk with him? In what ways do you miss the mark on how you understand God's plan for your life?

Next step: Ask God to show you what it is He wants you to learn, grasp, or experience as you set your face towards Jerusalem. Ask God for your heart to be open to what it is God wants for you this week. Can you decide now to set aside some time daily to listen and write down what you hear God saying to you this week? Challenge: Journal your experience with this devotion this week.

Prayer: *God Most High, just as the crowd praised you on Palm Sunday, we offer our praise to you. Help us to enter into this Holy Week in ways that allow us to understand you more fully and to grow more faithful. May your vision for our lives come to pass. Amen.*

Monday: Matthew 21:12-17 Idolatry

Passover is the holiest day of the year for the Jewish people. Families would travel long distances to Jerusalem to celebrate, worship, and sacrifice animals in offering to God. Merchants capitalized on this by exchanging foreign currency and selling animals in the temple. They often took advantage of those who had traveled far to worship God. This angered Jesus because they perverted the purpose of the temple. Jesus came to reorient our hearts to worship God alone.

Questions: Are we very different from the moneychangers in the temple? What desires have we put before our worship of God? How do we substitute outward signs of worship for real worship? How are we spending our time, energy, and money, and how does that show what we love? How can we reorient our worship to put God first in our hearts?

Next step: God wants your whole heart, mind and spirit. What is one thing you place above God that you want to address today? What positive step can you take today to reorder your priorities so Jesus is in the place of honor?

Prayer: *Holy God, we often don't get it right. We worship the wrong things, sometimes, anything but you. Please orient our hearts to align with yours. Fill us with a desire to seek you first always. And may the Holy Spirit fan the flames of our heart so our worship of you is full, rich, and alive. Amen.*

Tuesday: Matthew 21:18-22 Bearing Good Fruit

Typically, fig trees bear leaves and fruit at the same time. However, in this particular instance, the fig tree had plenty of leaves, but no fruit. This lack of fruit made the tree barren, and it serves as a powerful symbol for the nation of Israel. You see, the Israelites might have appeared to be doing all the right things on the surface, but in reality, their hearts were spiritually barren. They were going through the motions of worship, but their hearts were far from God. May we remember that it is not just our actions that matter, but the condition of our hearts as well.

Questions: Jesus surprises and shocks the disciples by cursing the barren fig tree. What kind of fruit do you bear? Do you show God's love, mercy, grace and joy? Or do you bear fruit that shows your pride, selfishness or greed? What attitudes, behavior, characteristics or sin get in the way of your ability to bear good fruit?

Next step: Is there a habit or behavior that you feel led to change? Try writing it down. Ask God for wisdom on how to make that a lasting change. Is there a friend you can ask for help or a resource you can turn to?

Prayer: *Gracious God, sometimes we think we are bearing good fruit, but in reality, we are dry and barren. Prune what needs to be cut back so we can bear good fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, gentleness and self-control. May we radiate your goodness to others through our faithful walk with you. Amen.*

Wednesday: Matthew 26:1-16 Discipleship

Mary, the sister of Martha, makes an extravagant display of her love and devotion to Jesus by anointing him with costly perfume. Despite the beauty of this gesture, the disciples were critical, believing the perfume should have been used differently. Sadly, one of the disciples, Judas Iscariot, became disillusioned with Jesus and looked for ways to enrich himself at Jesus' expense. We may never fully understand his motivations, but we can learn from his example the dangers of allowing greed and our own expectations to overcome our love and devotion to God. Let us strive to follow Jesus' example of selfless love and sacrifice, and never allow greed or selfishness to cloud our judgment.

Questions: What do these examples tell us about what is important in being a follower of Jesus? How are you like the woman, lavishing God with praise? How are you like the disciples in the way you judge others? How are you like Judas Iscariot in the way you seek to change or control the outcome to meet your expectations?

Next step: Gratitude is a powerful way to reorient our hearts towards God. Today, look around and thank God for the beauty, blessings and good things you see. Name 5-10 things that you are grateful for right now. Be lavish and generous in your praise! Challenge: See how many people you can genuinely thank or appreciate today.

Prayer: Blessed God, we want to be lavish with our praise for you, but most often, we allow our vision of how things should be get in our way. Empower us to follow you with love, joy and devotion. Amen.

Maunder Thursday: Matthew 26:17-56 Betrayal and Denial

Jesus and his twelve closest followers gathered in the Upper Room for a meal and a time of fellowship. It was a moment of deep significance, where Jesus revealed to them the true meaning of his mission on earth at this Last Supper. Jesus foretells Peter's denial and later, after a time of prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, Judas betrays Jesus to the Jewish authorities and Jesus is arrested. As we reflect on this story, let us be mindful of the challenges that come with following him, including the painful moments of betrayal and denial.

Questions: Have you been betrayed by a friend? What did that do to your friendship? How did you recover? Have you betrayed another? Why? How did things turn out? Have you denied a friend? Why do other people's opinions matter so much? How do we deny or betray our relationship with God? Why?

Next step: Do you have some unfinished business to address? Do you need to ask forgiveness or forgive someone? Bring this to God in prayer today. Ask Him for wisdom for a possible next step.

Prayer: Lord God, too often we allow the opinions of others to dictate our walk with you. We hide our faith, we deny our relationship with you, or we betray you because of our own fear and weakness. Fill us with courage to proclaim you boldly. May we glorify you this day. Amen.

Good Friday: John 18:1-19:37 Death of a Dream

Jesus has been arrested and appears before the High Priest, King Herod, and the Roman governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate. In the midst of those appearances, Peter denies knowing Jesus three times. Jesus is tried, convicted of blasphemy (for claiming to be the king of the Jews), flogged, stripped, and hung on the cross to die. The disciples scatter, and a few of the women, including Jesus' mother, Mary, stand at the foot of the cross to watch his painful death.

Questions: Have you had to deal with the death of a dream - the vision you had for your future? Looking back, how was that necessary to allow God to show you the bigger dream he intended for your future? Are you still waiting for God to show up in that way?

Next step: Sometimes our unmet expectations turn into irritation with God. And that irritation and disappointment can grow into anger and bitterness. Today, bring your disappointment and discouragement to God. Let God know how you feel! The lament psalms are a good source for how to do that: see Psalm 13, Psalm 70, Psalm 73:21-26 or Psalm 102:1-2 for inspiration. Challenge: Select a verse or two from the Psalms above. Write it down and place it in a place where you'll see it frequently. Bonus challenge: memorize it!

Prayer: Merciful God, Jesus went to great lengths to show us how much you love us. Jesus was obedient to the point of death to save us from our sins, and to give us eternal life with you. May we fully appreciate the depth of your love for us, and may we honor you by walking faithfully as your beloved children. Amen.

Saturday: Matthew 27:57-66 Quiet Waiting

Today we reflect on the somber moment when Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for Jesus' body so he could lay him to rest in a tomb. The stone was rolled in front of the tomb, and for many, it felt like the end. The future they had envisioned was dead, and their hearts were heavy with grief.

As we remember this part of the story, let us be reminded of the power of God's love and the hope that we have in Jesus. May we hold on to this hope, even in the darkest moments of our lives, knowing that God is with us and that nothing is impossible with Him.

Questions: How do you move on when your vision of the future is not coming true? What do you do in your waiting? How do you approach God in this liminal time?

Next step: Take a moment to reflect on something you are waiting for: a job offer, a relationship, a diagnosis, an answer to prayer. This week, whenever you feel impatience rising, take a deep breath and turn to God for strength and guidance. Reflect on how that practice of refocus helps you as you wait for results.

Prayer: *Loving God, sometimes we don't fully understand your ways and your plans and we give ourselves up to despair. We think it's over rather than trusting your love and goodness. In our times of waiting, help us to have patience and be still to allow you full reign to work everything out for your glory. Amen.*

Easter Sunday: Matthew 28:1-10 He is Risen!

Early in the morning, a few women gathered in front of the tomb because they wanted to prepare Jesus' body for burial. But an angel appeared before them, declaring that Jesus was alive! The angel even invited the women into the tomb to see for themselves - the burial clothes were neatly folded, and Jesus' body was nowhere to be found. It was true - Jesus had risen from the dead!

Filled with excitement and joy, the women ran to tell the disciples the good news. Jesus was not dead, but alive and well. The resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate victory over sin and death, and it gives us hope for our future, eternal life with God.

May we be filled with the same joy and wonder that the women felt that day. And may we be reminded that the resurrection of Jesus is not just a historical event - it is a powerful reality that can transform our lives today.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Questions: What do you feel when you read this story? What does it tell you about God's plans and actions? What does it mean for you that God has a future and a hope for you? ("For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11) What does Jesus' resurrection mean for your walk with God?

Next step: As you enter into worship today, praise God with a full heart. Be engaged with the music, the prayers and the emotions of the morning. Reflect back to God the joy of being one of God's own people.

Prayer: *Almighty God, we praise you! You have broken the power of sin and death over our lives. Thank you for your incredible grace and mercy. May we always reflect your grace and glory! Amen.*

The Great Commission

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:16-20

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Today's Flowers

The flowers in the Sanctuary are given to the glory of God in memory of G. Joseph Sears, on the occasion of his April 3rd birthday, with love from his wife Margaret Smith Sears.



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