
LENT 2023
LISTEN
ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



Palm Sunday
Finding Your Purpose: Listening to Your Heart

Prelude

Open the Gates of the Temple

Gathering—Come and rest. Come and listen. Lay the fullness of your lives before our Maker.

Music Refrain: Come and Find the Quiet Center, #477, verse 1
Come and find the quiet center in the crowded life we lead,
Find the room for hope to enter, find the frame where we are freed:
Clear the chaos and the clutter, clear our eyes, that we may see
All the things that really matter, be at peace, and simply be.

Jesus' prayer life was described most often in the scriptures as something he did "away" from the crowds or disciples. And as we come to the last week of this Lent journey, we have experienced the blessings of turning away from the noise of the world in order to turn inward to hear that "still small voice" of God and finding our own voice of wisdom there as well. This Sunday begins the story of the end of Jesus' human life and the scripture contains one of the rare examples of how Jesus prayed. It was honest, it was gut-wrenching, and it finally was a letting-go of expectations about life and turned toward the acceptance that gives us courage to move onward.

Music Refrain: Come and Find the Quiet Center, #477, verse 2
Silence is a friend who claims us, cools the heat and slows the pace,
God it is who speaks and names us, knows our being, touches base,
Making space within our thinking, lifting shades to show the sun,
Raising courage when we're shrinking, finding scope for faith begun.

A Time of Prayer— God of humble entries, we lay down our branches on the path ahead and give thanks for this day you have created. For this is the day you have made, and we rejoice in it together. As we walk with Jesus and his followers into

Jerusalem today, open the gates of our hearts that we might enter your realm with joy and thanksgiving.+

The Lord's Prayer (unison)—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.

Listening—After the crowds had dissipated, as Jesus was preparing to face the cross, he needed to go find time to be in the quiet, to clear out the noise, and to turn to God. Sometimes when we listen for God in the quiet, it can be hard to focus. It sometimes helps to have a specific word or phrase to focus in on to help settle things down so we can hear more clearly. Today, if the chatter in your mind is distracting you from hearing God's voice, try repeating to yourself what the crowds did that first Palm Sunday: "Hosanna" which means save us. You could use it as a breath prayer—breathe in and say to yourself "Hosanna" and then breathe out and say to yourself "save us." Let's listen to what God has to say this day.

Silence

We Hear God's Word

Matthew 21:1-11 (NRSV)

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 fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

⁵ '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.'

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.’

Matthew 26:36-46 (NRSV)

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.” And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.” Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, “So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Again he went away for the second time and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.” Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.”

Meditation

“Finding Your Purpose: Listening to Your Heart”

Hymn

All Glory, Laud and Honor, 265

We Gather at the Table

Set Your Place at the Table—Whatever you have on hand to celebrate communion will work just fine, because this ancient ritual is not about what we use for this meal or where we partake of it. Instead, it is about the act of remembrance. So, gather around the table, prepare your place, and remember that Christ is in our midst.

Our Invitation—During that last week of Jesus’ life, he gathered with those he loved around the dinner table, to hear, once again, the story of God’s redeeming love. Amazing things happen when we gather around Christ’s

table. It is here where we too listen for God's grace revealed. If you are longing to experience for yourself how expansive and wide God's love really is, find your place at this table where there is always room for you.

A Prayer for Transformation— Righteous One, we often ignore the desire of our hearts. We long to sing hosannas with a cheering crowd, but we turn aside at the sight of an angry mob. We yearn to dine lovingly at your table, but we retreat into the courtyard shadows. We hope to defend the one we love, but we succumb to the limits of our strength. It is so easy to betray you with a kiss. Forgive our fickle faith and heal our hesitant hearts, for our spirits ache to be found worthy. Amen.~

Assurance of Grace— The one the builders rejected has become our cornerstone, the very foundation of our salvation. Christ offers us forgiveness and fullness of grace.~

The Words of Institution— On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." And so, we remember...we offer ourselves...we proclaim God's love...

Blessing Our Meal—God we pray that this bread and this cup be for us the nourishment and sustenance we need to make this Holy Week journey with you. May they reveal to us your forgiveness and mercy and grace. Bless them with the power of your Holy Spirit, consecrate them, and in doing so consecrate our lives as well. Amen.

We Share the Bread and the Cup – As you eat the bread, remember, "This is the body of Christ broken for you." Take and eat. As you drink the cup, remember, "This is the blood of Christ shed for you and the forgiveness of sins." Take and drink.

We Give Thanks—Almighty God, we give you thanks for the gift of our Savior's presence in the simplicity and splendor of this holy meal. Unite us

with all who are fed by Christ's body and blood that we may faithfully proclaim the good news of your love and that your universal church may be a rainbow of hope in an uncertain world; through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.`

We Respond to God's Word with Our Giving

Invitation—Kindred, God is good, and God's steadfast love endures forever and ever. Because of God's enduring love, we cherish and give thanks for every good gift in our lives. Today, on this day God has made, we come to share out of the abundance of God's love and light among us so that the world may know this boundless love that knows no end.+

April Benevolence—Chicago, United, Eden (CUE) Seminaries

Doxology

We Give Thanks—O God of Welcome and Waving Palms, as the crowd offered to you their praise and the palms on the road, so we share these gifts out of the abundance you have provided. May they be for the healing salvation and work of justice you are bringing about in the world through your unending love. Amen and Amen.

Hymn

Ride On, Ride On in Majesty, 268

Benediction—As we enter into this holiest of weeks, listen every day until we meet again. Get quiet enough to hear the still small voice and to find your own. And may the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer be with you all. Amen.

Postlude

Hosanna!