

To the members of St. John's

Again, we will not meet this Sunday Morning and we may not meet on Easter either. We will follow what the Dunkerton School System does. If they start classes on April 13th, we will have service on Easter, April 12th. I doubt that we will meet but that is the plan until we hear otherwise. **But**, the true church, we the people of God, is still alive and well and maybe a little isolated but thanks be to God for phones, TV, internet and mail!!

St. John's now has a Face Book. Check it out. I am hoping to post a video soon. I am an old dog trying to learn some new tricks but thanks to Pam and Bobbi this may/will happen.

I hope that you all are well and able to keep busy doing something. I am working mainly from home, but occasionally I go to the office when no one is there to gather a few of my pastor tools. You are welcome to call, text or email me: phone: 319-464-2895, email: jblank24582@gmail.com

Below are the Gospel texts for Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday. Because of the length of the Passion text, I have not included all of it – just verses 27:45-66. Please use your Bible to read the rest.

In the devotion I do not say anything about COVID-19. Because we are entering Holy Week, I think that it is important to remember who we are in the eyes of God. It is important to hear the story of Jesus' passion and his love for us in all times and situations in life.

Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Prayer of the Day

Everlasting God, in your endless love for the human race you sent our Lord Jesus Christ to take on our nature and to suffer death on the cross. In your mercy enable us to share in his obedience to your will and in the glorious victory of his resurrection, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Processional Gospel: Matthew 21:1-11

Jesus enters Jerusalem

1When 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,

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."

Gospel: Matthew 26:14--27:66

The closing of the Passion Text:

45From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. 46And 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?" 47When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "This man is calling for Elijah." 48At 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. 49But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." 50Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. 51At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. 52The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. 53After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. 54Now 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!"

Devotion

It is normal not to say anything or very little after reading the Passion of Jesus. It speaks for itself. It reveals to us the love of God for us all. The Son of God, Jesus, loves us even unto death. That is the greatest story that can be told about anyone. And to know that we are so loved that Jesus, or that anyone, would lay down their life for us is very humbling and powerful. Their story never dies. They live forever in our hearts and that is where Jesus wants to live.

The story ends with his death, but the story isn't over! And that is the Good News of Jesus the Christ.

Prayers of Intercession

Turning our hearts to God who is gracious and merciful, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

God of mercy, awaken your church to new proclamations of your faithfulness. By your Spirit, give us bold and joyful words to speak, that we sustain the weary with the message of your redemption. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God of mercy, quiet the earth where it trembles and shakes. Protect vulnerable ecosystems, threatened habitats, and endangered species. Prosper the work of scientists, engineers, and researchers who find ways to restore creation to health and wholeness. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God of mercy, drive away fear and anger that cause us to turn against one another. Give courage to leaders who seek liberation for the oppressed. Bring peace and hope to those who are in prison and those who face execution. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God of mercy, send your saving help to all who suffer abuse, insult, discrimination, or contempt. Heal the wounded. Comfort the dying. Bring peace to those suffering chronic or terminal illness. Tend to all who cry out for relief: (*you are welcome to add your own prayers here*). Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God of mercy, in all things, show us the ways that you call us to die to self, to live for you, and to give of ourselves for the sake of others. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

God of mercy, when we breathe our last, you raise us to eternal life. With all your witnesses in heaven and on earth (*Think of those who have shared their faith with you*), let us boldly confess the name of Jesus Christ, our resurrection and our hope. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

According to your steadfast love, O God, hear these and all our prayers as we commend them to you; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Blessing

Now is the acceptable time. Now is the day of salvation. Holy God, speaking, spoken, and inspiring, bless you, unbind you, and send you in love and in peace. Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Share the good news. Thanks be to God.