

Palm Sunday  
Service of Daily Prayer -- Morning  
March 28, 2021

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

P: O Lord, open my lips,

C: **and my mouth will declare Your praise.**

*Psalm 51:15*

P: Make haste, O God, to deliver me;

C: **Make haste to help me, O Lord.**

*Psalm 70:1*

P: Restore us, O God;

C: **Let Your face shine, that we may be saved!**

*Psalm 80:3*

**All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

**Scripture Readings**

*Zechariah 9:9-12*

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.

I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim

and the war horse from Jerusalem;

and the battle bow shall be cut off,

and he shall speak peace to the nations;

his rule shall be from sea to sea,

and from the River to the ends of the earth.

As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you,

I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope;

today I declare that I will restore to you double.

*Hebrews 7:11-22*

Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.

This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. For it is witnessed of him, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."

For on the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness (for the law made nothing perfect); but on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. And it was not without an oath. For those who formerly became priests were made such without an oath, but this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever.'" This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.

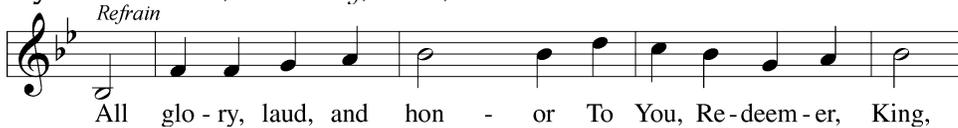
*John 12:12-19*

The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!"

His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."

**Hymn:** *LSB 442, All Glory, Laud, and Honor*

*Refrain*



All glo - ry, laud, and hon - or To You, Re-deem - er, King,



To whom the lips of chil - dren Made sweet ho - san - nas ring.



- 1 You are the King of Is - rael And Da - vid's roy - al Son,
- 2 The com - pa - ny of an - gels Is prais - ing You on high,
- 3 The mul - ti - tude of pil - grims With palms be - fore You went;
- 4 To You be - fore Your pas - sion They sang their hymns of praise;
- 5 As You re - ceived their prais - es, Ac - cept the prayers we bring,



*Refrain*

Now in the Lord's name com - ing, Our King and Bless - ed One.  
 And we with all cre - a - tion In cho - rus make re - ply.  
 Our praise and prayer and an - thems Be - fore You we pre - sent.  
 To You, now high ex - alt - ed, Our mel - o - dy we raise.  
 O Source of ev - 'ry bless - ing, Our good and gra - cious King.

## Sermon

Today's reading from the book of Hebrews touches on one of those great Biblical mysteries -- who exactly is this Melchizedek guy? We first hear about him in Genesis, during the time of Abraham. In fact, he appears to be the king of Jerusalem at that point, something like 2000 BC, and he's also described as a priest of God. Abraham meets him, receives his blessing, and gives him a tithe. He's mentioned again in the Psalms, and then most of all here in Hebrews. Otherwise there's

not much said about him, but the mystery lies in: who is this guy? Why and how is he a priest, an apparently faithful priest of God who has nothing whatsoever to do with the Levites and descendants of Aaron who were Israel's priestly family? And most importantly, what does this have to do with Jesus?

The lack of explanation in Genesis combined with Hebrew's emphasis on him has led to a lot of theories about him, and I won't get into that. Let me just say that if Melchizedek is one of those things in the Bible you've always wondered about, I can't answer all those questions today either so you'll just have to keep wondering. And in a way, it's not critical to the point of this passage; it's an illustration of the point, which is how we are brought close to God, how we have access to the Father.

That's really the basic role of a priest in religious jargon: to be an intermediary, to be the go-between for other people on one side and some kind of deity on the other. When we talk about "priesthood of all believers" in Christianity, that's what we mean: not that every Christian serves as a public minister, to get up and preach, but that every Christian can go directly to God in prayer without any other human. That's the point about Jesus as a priest: he's the only intermediary we need, the only priest we need between us and God the Father.

When people approach the Bible, there are a lot of different lenses that shape how we understand what we read. A personal devotional reading is going to be vastly different from a scholarly academic reading: the first might focus on "what does this mean for me," versus "what's the historical context, who's the author," and so forth. But it is our conviction that the Bible is only read correctly when Jesus himself is the central, primary lens through which we understand and interpret everything else. Last week from Colossians we heard it said that Christ is the substance, and everything else is a shadow.

The Old Testament is not just important for historical background for Jesus. It actually helps point us to Jesus and explain him and his work for us. These are shadows, while Christ is the substance, but the shadow help us understand. Here in Hebrews, the point is that the Old Testament laws and regulations and sacrifices were a shadow pointing forward to the sacrifice of Christ; the covenant God made with Israel was a shadow of the covenant with all the faithful through Jesus; this mysterious figure of Melchizedek points to a more universal priesthood through Jesus than the Levites were for Israel. Jesus is the center of Scripture, and the Bible as a whole is only correctly grasped by reading it in light of him.

I think we can be even more broad than that, though. Not only do we have to read the Bible through Jesus, but the way we understand the whole world, the way we understand ourselves, our entire comprehensive worldview has to be filtered through that lens of Christ. For me, this figure of speech of a "lens" is a very personal and important one: I've worn glasses since I was in third grade, and I'm so extremely nearsighted that I literally cannot function without them. For the world to make any sense to me, I have to see it through a lens.

That is the role that Jesus plays for us. Christian faith is not just about "you know Jesus, you had a 'come-to-Jesus moment', you got saved -- now go have fun." It's a worldview, it's the central fact of existence. Jesus is the lens through which we have to see everything in the world and in our lives for it to really come into focus.

Today we have the confirmation of two young people. If you have learned anything in confirmation classes, I hope that more than information about the Bible, more than memorizing the Ten Commandments or the Creed, more than anything else I hope it is this perspective: it's all about Jesus, and how to view the world through a Christ-tinted lens. There are uncountable influences out there, all kinds of ideological, political, philosophical, social lenses that people use to make sense and understand the world. I hope the one you use is Jesus, and what you have learned about him and Scripture in confirmation.

In a few minutes, you will come forward and will affirm your Christian faith, the faith which was given to you in your baptism. You will profess before this congregation and before the world that you share the belief of the Christian Church that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and to remain true to this faith through your entire life. You are not joining the Christian Church right now – you have already been a part of it since the day of your baptism into that holy Triune name of God. But the faith that was first given to you in baptism, you are now accepting as your own, as you have been instructed in what it means to be a Christian.

As we soon proceed with the rite of confirmation, I will ask you several questions. You will be asked to confess the Apostles' Creed, to remember and declare in front of everyone that you believe that God the Father created you and all things; that God the Son has redeemed you; that God the Holy Spirit now sanctifies you. You will be asked whether or not you intend "to remain true to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, even to death."

So I want to both warn you and encourage you as you make this declaration of faith and accept this responsibility. I want to warn you not to take this lightly or dismiss these words as just some kind of pointless ritual that you have to go through because your parents are making you or it's just expected. I hope and pray that you will continue in this faith and belief in Christ as your Savior for your entire life, even if you do face persecution for it someday, whatever form that might take. None of us can see the future, but it may well be that it's not going to be as easy for your generation and mine to live as a Christian as it has been for our parents and grandparents.

If you take seriously this promise that you will make to "continue steadfast in this confession and Church and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it," that promise may be put to the test. I don't know in what ways you might be called to suffer for Christ's sake, to bear your own cross as you follow him, but I do believe that you will certainly be tempted to forget about Christianity or be quiet about it by pressure from society. Being a Christian is not easy. Being faithful is not easy. Christ does not promise that it will be; rather, he calls us to pick up our own cross and follow him. It is not easy, but it is worth it.

So after that warning, I also want to encourage you. When the apostle Paul wrote to his young friend and fellow missionary Timothy, he said this at the end of the letter: "Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." You have been called to this eternal life in your baptism, and now in this confirmation you are about to do exactly what Paul describes, making "the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." Also remember as you make this good confession that Jesus promised his followers, "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven." May you always fight the good fight of the faith, and run the race faithfully, always keeping your eyes on the prize of eternal life to which Christ has called you.

I also want to remind you of a verse from Philippians, "I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me." Indeed you, like Paul, can say the same thing in confidence. Whatever may come in life, in the good times as well as the bad, you can persevere through all things in Christ, remembering his promise to never leave you or abandon you.

Rely on Christ for your salvation, ask and seek what is his will for you and your life, and be strengthened by his Body and Blood in the Lord's Supper. Rely on the Holy Spirit, the Helper Christ promised, who has created faith in you from your baptism. Turn to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the places that He has promised that you may always find Him, in Word and Sacrament.

As we welcome and confirm these two young people, I say the same to all of you. As God the Father has created you, as God the Son has redeemed you, and as God the Holy Spirit has sanctified you, rely on Him and turn to Him in Word and Sacrament, where He has promised to be for you.

### **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  
forever and ever. Amen.**

**C: Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.**

**P: Almighty and everlasting God, You sent Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take upon Himself our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross. Mercifully grant that we may follow the example of His great humility and patience and be made partakers of His resurrection; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.**

**C: Amen.**

**All: I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.**

**P: Let us bless the Lord!**

**C: Thanks be to God!**

**P: The almighty and merciful Lord, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless and preserve you.**

**C: Amen.**