

Welcome to Lord of Life as we worship online!

Dear siblings in Christ, welcome to worship!

Today is Palm Sunday – a celebration of the day Jesus entered Jerusalem to the cries of “Hosanna” from the crowd. Today is the start of Holy Week – and it’s the stuff that our faith is founded on. Christmas was God’s “next step” in drawing near to us, Holy Week is God’s final word of love and forgiveness to us.

If you’d like to read along with today’s worship, for our prayers and readings, visit our website: lordoflifeak.com click on the PDF document.

It is our practice to begin worship with a moment to quiet our minds and hearts, to push aside the noise and to-do items around us, so we can be fully present in worship and join as a community in one spirit. I invite you to take a few deep breaths and to recognize God’s presence as we join our hearts together in worship. (1 minute of silence)

Blessing of the Palms:

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Let us pray. We praise you, O God, for redeeming the world through our Savior Jesus Christ. Today he entered the holy city in triumph and was proclaimed messiah and king by those who spread garments and branches along his way. We have no path to walk, no branches in our hands, but we do have hearts that yearn for your salvation. Grant us grace to follow our Lord in the way of the cross, so that, joined to his death and resurrection, we enter into life with you; through the same Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

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

Hosanna in the highest.

Palm Sunday Gospel:

Matthew 21:1-11

When Jesus and his disciples 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."

Take a moment to be centered in the prayer of the day:

Sovereign God, you have established your rule in the human heart through the servanthood of Jesus Christ. By your Spirit, keep us in the joyful procession of those who with their tongues confess Jesus as Lord and with their lives praise him as Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Sermon

Hosanna isn't really a word we hear except for this day, is it? Not part of our daily lingo, and we may hardly know what that word means. Hosanna isn't really a rejoicing word, not like "Alleluia" is – a word we still won't truly say until next Sunday. And Hosanna is not really a rallying word either, like the short way of saying "come over here and see this guy riding a donkey!" That's not what the people were shouting. Nor is it a greeting word like "welcome" or "shalom", peace. It's a much deeper cry than that.

We don't say Hosanna very often, not even in church. But I bet you it's on everyone's mind, and it's the subject of many of our prayers these days. Hosanna means "save us." It's a cry for help, for mercy, for some amazing act that will set everything right.

For the people shouting it that day as Jesus rode into Jerusalem, they had lots they wanted to be saved from. Fighting for every meal. Caught under the insecure, narcissistic, oppressive government. Religious leaders piling on one more rule, one more requirement to receive God's forgiveness and live a right life. In the crowd that day were people who were sick, crippled, unclean; people who were mentally ill, those who carried the weight of their mistakes, those who were unsure of their future, those who knew there was something more.

All those things wrapped up and spoken in one word: Hosanna. And they honor the man they think will fix everything for them. Waving branches, throwing coats on the ground, shouting "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

This man has fed thousands on barely enough food for one family, so Jesus can certainly fix their food shortage problems. Hosanna!

This man talks often of the way things are in God's Kingdom, so Jesus can certainly rule better than Herod, Pilate, or Caesar! Lift up the hurting and knock the rulers to the back of the line. Hosanna!

This man has been teaching a new way of following God's commandments that has the religious leaders' feathers all ruffled, so Jesus can certainly set our hearts on the right path back to God. Hosanna!

This man sees the hurts and habits of people and extends forgiveness just as much as he brings healing to the people who are hurting, broken, weary, and despairing. Hosanna! Save us.

The expectations were high. The needs were great. God was more than capable. But Jesus didn't multiply bread that day, nor parade to the palace. He walked into the Temple to upset the ways people were exploiting others. He walked to those in need and brought a word of healing and peace. He walked circles around those who made the rules oppressive and impossible, silencing their flimsy arguments. He walked with his disciples in their confusion, calming their fear. He walked the path that led to death, a path we walk with him this week.

Is this how God would save them? Is this all there is? The insecurity, the oppression, the responsibilities, the fears – they didn't go away, everything wasn't magically fixed, life didn't suddenly get easier for everyone. If that's all they were expecting, it's no wonder a crowd shouted "crucify" later that week.

We want those immediate answers. We might even convince ourselves that we need them. This life is hard – not knowing what to expect each day, how long troubles will last, if things are ever going to return to normal – if they were ever really normal to begin with. We would each like some sign that we're doing ok, that our choices are leading somewhere good, that everything will work out in the end. Hosanna! God, save us!

But to see the true impact of God's answer to our cries, we have to walk with Jesus through the rest of this week and beyond. We have to struggle with him against the rules that hurt and oppress people and live by the rules of a different kingdom. We have to let go of our own egos and choose to do the hard thing so that others may live. We have to rest, to remain and pray, when we would much rather be busy.

In short, to see how God saves us, we have to walk with God through whatever is in front of us. And on that journey, may we find the ways God walks with us to answer our calls of "Hosanna. God, save."

May the peace of God which surpasses all our understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord, amen.

Prayer of God's People

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 (especially). Hear us, O God, **your mercy is great.**

God of mercy, we pray for all who will prepare and lead worship in this Holy Week. 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 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 We pray together the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us to pray,

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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever, amen.

As we come to the end of worship, we are called to live our lives in response to God's grace poured out on us.

Keep offering good works on behalf of your neighbors, get creative in extending care to strangers – no one makes eye contact anymore – change that! And continue to support your church and community with financial gifts to ensure our ministries have a future.

You may mail your offering to our locked mailbox at 1005 St. Nicholas Drive, North Pole, AK 99705. You may give securely on our website, lordoflifeak.com by clicking the "Giving" tab and "I'd like to give" button. You may give securely from your phone using the "Give Plus Church" app, just search by our zip code of 99705 and choose Lord of Life and follow the easy instructions on your phone.

Let us pray, Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with the gifts of our selves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in strengthening and serving the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, amen.

Thank you for your generosity, especially as we are absent from each other.

Announcements

We are still carefully distributing food boxes on Tuesday and Wednesday at 12:15pm. If you would like to put some of that stir-crazy energy to work, come by the church on those days.

Worship this holy week:

Maundy Thursday worship will be at 7pm on Facebook live, and available shortly after on Lord of Life's Youtube channel – also posted on the front page of our website. Subscribing to our channel will help our church have more visibility and help you see those videos immediately.

Our ecumenical Good Friday worship with our local siblings in Christ will be available as a video on Friday around noon. It will include the reading of the crucifixion story from the Gospel of John, some songs, and prayers for the world. An email will also go out when it is available.

Next Sunday is Easter. We will be hosting a drive-in worship promptly at 10:30 in our parking lot and you will be able to tune in through your radio. You are invited, given you stay in your vehicle and may only open your window a crack! We will send an email with more information later in the week.

As always, if you need an ear or a prayer, do not hesitate to call or text me: 322-2065.

Blessing

The God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus.

The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The God of all grace ☩ bless you now and forever.

Go forth to serve God with gladness; be of good courage;
hold fast to that which is good; render to no one evil for evil;
strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted;
honor all people; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thanks be to God.