



Palm Sunday - Sunday March 29th, 2026 ***The Fig Tree Worship Resource***

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

from Ps.118 & Matt.21

Tell the daughters of Zion:

**Look! Your king is coming to you,
humble and mounted on an ass.**

Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of
God.

Hosanna in the highest!

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city
was excited;

people asked: "Who is this?" And the crowd
replied:

**This is Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.
Hosanna!**

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

Acknowledging



*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress*

The Ancient of Days breathed life into this land
and her peoples. From time beyond our
reckoning the *(please name the people on whose
land you gather)* People, the Traditional
Custodians, have blessed this place through their
law and customs, their care and life. We pay
respects to their Elders and leaders past and
present, and pray for the future of their
communities. May we walk gently and
respectfully on this Land.

Singing - All glory praise and honour

TiS 333

OR: Trotting trotting through Jerusalem TiS 243

OR: The King of glory comes TiS 279

OR: Ride on ride on in majesty TiS 348

OR: Lord of creation to you be all praise TiS 626



Prayer

Jesus, friend and lover of us all,
you ride into our experience too,
through the turmoil, in simplicity on a donkey.
Help us to get to grips with your coming to us in
new, unexpected ways, still.

We celebrate your coming,
riding through all the clamour
and broken trust of our world.
Entering past our confusion,
our obsession with weapons and power;
ride on and confront our descent towards
disaster with your peaceful,
transforming resistance.

Jesus, we look to you;
to ride into our patch, bringing hope and dignity,
human warmth and the impact of divine grace.
By ourselves, we often lose the path, and find
ourselves somehow on the wrong side.

Amidst the roar of crowds and clutching at
branches we might yet help to find
another way and to heal,
to bring your love and make a difference.

In the name of Christ,
who sets us free and
makes us whole. Amen

Passing the peace

May the Peace of God dwell with you:
and also with you.

Listening

Read: Isaiah 50:4-9a &
Matthew 21: 1-11

For these words of faith
and for Jesus the Word
Thanks be to God.

*The Fig Tree Worship Resource comes to you from the Friends of the Fig Tree, Uniting Church in Australia
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Reflecting - Rev. Anneke Oppewal

In Matthew 21 we find Jesus on his way to Jerusalem. It is a passage riddled with quotes from the prophets and the psalms, put in by the gospel writer to indicate that something really significant and important is happening.

Time is contracting to one single point where past, present and future is brought together in one moment. "Tell daughter of Zion, look, your King is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey" (Zacharias 9:9-10). "The Son of David, he who comes in the name of the Lord" (Psalm 118: 26). "Hosanna!" - Which means "Save us", or "Bless us". A message for then as much as it is a message for us readers two thousand years later.

For a number of chapters now the tension has been slowly building. The crowds growing, the plotting intensifying, the anxiety of the disciples getting worse.

Is this it? The moment where God's revelation in Christ will reach its climax? Will he finally put the world to rights, bring justice and mercy, bring back the glory days of David and Solomon? Will there once more be a king who will rule with wisdom and insight, bringing prosperity and peace to his people? Will the oppressor be kicked out, and Israel finally be restored to its former glory?

The tension is palpable, we can hear it, feel it, even smell it as the passage unfolds. The shouts of the crowds, the feel of bodies pushing into each other, the smell of the donkey, the dust, the sweat of people swept away on a wave of enthusiasm and eager expectation.

No, this is not it.

That is what Christians have confessed over two thousand years of Christianity. "It" happens five days later when "Hosanna" has turned into "crucify him" and God identifies with the suffering rather than with the successful, with the

downtrodden, rather than with the powerfully victorious.

The pinnacle of God's revealing himself in Jesus Christ does not happen when he rides into Jerusalem, cheered on by the crowds. His mount is not a warhorse, but a donkey. His attire not the armour of a general in command of a great army, but the simple cloak of a wandering teacher.

In him God comes to his people, not overthrowing the violent oppressor with force, but winning the world with love.

Hang on, no, but actually..... that is not the whole story either.

In five days Jesus will be on a cross. Suffering a most horrible death of asphyxiation through an excruciatingly slow process that will literally pull his body apart. He will go down into the deepest valley of darkness, experience hell as only people can invent it for each other. And deeper than that, beyond the boundary of death itself.

We, as Christians, confess that it is there the climax of God's revealing himself in Jesus Christ took place. Not in his life of gentle compassion and deep faith. Not in his humble entry into Jerusalem. But on that day when he died crying: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

But even that is not the whole story.

The story of the Cross tells us that in Christ God went into hell further than most of us will ever have to go and pulled through. That he took on the darkness and did not let go of the light, but rose out of the night into a new day.

Creating a new community, following in his footsteps, living life in his name, taking on his humility and love and letting gentleness and compassion be the foundation of their faith. Amen.



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Singing - Community of Christ TiS 473

OR: You who dwell in the shelter of the Lord TiS 48

OR: God has spoken to his people TiS 636

Offering

Astonishing God who challenges all our ideas of power, and how to move and shake the world; bless our offerings and guide us in the footsteps of Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Prayers for World & Community

Good God, our world is still full of clamouring voices, competing for our attention, crying out in the marketplace of contested values and forgotten needs. We are quite sure of what works and what is most needed,... until your Christ arrives on a donkey.

Into our conflicts, our wars and uncertainty, you turn up unarmed and ask us to follow you. We pray for peace, still unnerved that your way to this went through betrayal, rejection and the cross. So, bring your peaceable ways to Gaza and Lebanon, to Ukraine and Iran. Ride on into these places and into our families, our communities and even our church and turn expectations on their heads; bring new life and hope even out of strife and endings.

You came into the capital, from life in the regions. From healing and teaching ordinary folk, you came to where power was wielded and interests were well established, to where the power of state and religion had their base. But you came without powerful friends and still tried to make a difference and you call us to follow in your way.

We pray for people in our places of power to make wise and compassionate decisions and for ourselves to have the courage to get involved where Jesus on a donkey is needed today. We pray for the people without homes, refugees and victims of violence. For those sick, suffering and dying ones, may the humble arrival of Jesus

present in us, make a transforming difference still.

You surprised your friends, going along with the commotion and failing to avoid the risks. Give us, in our time, wisdom, loving God. Wisdom to know where compromise should be made and peace be sought and wisdom to know when not to bend, to speak with clarity and walk your way, as your people.

So we pray, come into our conflicts, our problems and deepest needs, turn up unarmed and transforming still.

We pray together then as Jesus taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory
are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Singing - Faith will not grow from words alone TiS 691

OR: Kneels at the feet of his friends TiS 640

OR: When his time was over TiS 357

OR: When human voices cannot sing TiS 682

Word of Mission

(from Uniting in Worship 2)

Let us rejoice and be glad,
for God's steadfast love endures forever
and God's goodness is everlasting.

God gave us light to share.

Let us go and be the light of the world
and rejoice with others in the Good News of Christ.



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Blessing

(adapted from a Wild Goose worship resource)

Know that some crosses should not,
and sometimes cannot be avoided,
then may we see in Christ that
even the worst can be transformed
by God's silent power -
go into the world with grace
and a challenge for the indifferent
with encouragement for the timid
assistance for the weak
and patience for them all.

And the blessing of God,
ringing with Hosannas
be your comfort and your guide.
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
in the name of Christ. Amen

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