

BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH WAGGA WAGGA
PALM/PASSION SUNDAY
28TH MARCH, 2021

GOD COMES TO US

We welcome our king

Your king comes to you,

righteous and having salvation,
gentle and riding on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

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

Amen.

Friends in Christ: For the five weeks of Lent we have been preparing for the celebration of our Lord's suffering and death. Today, together with the whole church, we begin this Holy Week by welcoming our Messiah.

We read in the gospel of John:

He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.

So, like the people of long ago, let us welcome Jesus and walk with him to the cross.

If we have been united with him in a death like his,

we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

The Lord be with you:

And also with you.

Let us pray.

Lord, as we honour Christ the King by carrying these branches today, increase our faith and listen to our prayers, so that we may honour you every day, by living always in him. For he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Mark 11:1-11 *Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem*

¹ As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, ² saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'"

⁴ They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, ⁵ some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" ⁶ They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. ⁷ When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. ⁹ Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted,

"Hosanna!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

¹⁰ "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"

"Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

¹¹ Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

We pray Psalm 118:1,2,19-29

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

Let Israel say:

"His love endures forever."

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

Open for me the gates of the righteous;
I will enter and give thanks to the Lord.

This is the gate of the Lord
through which the righteous may enter.

I will give you thanks, for you answered me;
you have become my salvation.

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

The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
the Lord has done this,
and it is marvellous in our eyes.

The Lord has done it this very day;
let us rejoice today and be glad.

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

Lord, save us!
Lord, grant us success!

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

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
From the house of the Lord we bless you.

The Lord is God,
and he has made his light shine on us.

With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession,
up to the horns of the altar.

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

You are my God, and I will praise you;
you are my God, and I will exalt you.

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

We listen & meditate on the hymn 'All glory, laud and honour' LH 86

1. All glory, laud, and honour
To Thee, Redeemer, king,
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring.
Thou art the king of Israel,
Thou David's royal Son,
Who in the Lord's name comest,
The king and blessed one.

2. The company of angels
Are praising Thee on high,
And mortal men and all things
Created make reply.
The people of the Hebrews
With palms before Thee went;
Our praise and prayer and anthems
Before Thee we present.

3. To Thee before Thy passion
They sang their hymns of praise;
To Thee now high exalted
Our melody we raise.
Thou didst accept their praises;
Accept the prayers we bring,
Who in all good delightest,
Thou good and gracious king.

4. All glory, laud, and honour
To Thee, Redeemer, king,
To whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring.
Thou art the king of Israel,
Thou David's royal Son,
Who in the Lord's name comest,
The king and blessed one.

*Gloria, laus et honor
Theodulph of Orleans (? -c.821)
Tr. John Mason Neale, 1854, alt
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We confess our sins to God the Father and receive forgiveness

Let us humble ourselves before God and confess our sins, begging His forgiveness through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Dear Lord God, we confess that each day we fail to do what pleases You.

Please forgive us for the hasty words we often say, the thoughtless actions we do, and the unloving thoughts that cross our minds – all these harm our fellowship.

Please forgive us for failing to listen sympathetically when people are talking to us about their troubles.

Please forgive us for failing to give up time to spend with others when they so badly need our love.

Please forgive us for losing opportunities to teach our families about Christ, moral standards, and life in general.

Please forgive us for failing to search out the troubles and needs of others.

Please forgive us for being satisfied within ourselves when so many are in moral danger, dying of hunger, both spiritual and physical, and many do not know Your love for them in Christ.

O Lord, we come before You humbly, asking for forgiveness for these and other wrongs we have committed.

Give us we pray, Your Holy Spirit, to lead us more and more into lives which show outwardly the love of Yourself in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Jesus invites us to dwell in Him as He dwells in us, and He tells us that we have already been cleansed by the word that He has spoken to us.

So hear and believe the good news that through Jesus who dwells in us, we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God. Alleluia.

We pray the prayer of the day

The Lord be with you

And also with you.

Let us pray.

Almighty and eternal God, you sent your Son, our Saviour, to take our nature on himself and to suffer and die on the cross. Lead us to follow the example of his great humility, and bring us to share in his resurrection. We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

GOD SPEAKS TO US

We listen to God's word

Old Testament Reading – Isaiah 50:4-9a

⁴ The Sovereign Lord has given me a well-instructed tongue,
to know the word that sustains the weary.

He wakens me morning by morning,
wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed.

⁵ The Sovereign Lord has opened my ears;
I have not been rebellious,
I have not turned away.

⁶ I offered my back to those who beat me,
my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard;
I did not hide my face
from mocking and spitting.

⁷ Because the Sovereign Lord helps me,
I will not be disgraced.

Therefore have I set my face like flint,
and I know I will not be put to shame.

⁸ He who vindicates me is near.
Who then will bring charges against me?
Let us face each other!
Who is my accuser?
Let him confront me!
⁹ It is the Sovereign Lord who helps me.
Who will condemn me?

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Psalm 31:9,10, 13-16

⁹ Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am in distress;
my eyes grow weak with sorrow,
my soul and body with grief.
¹⁰ My life is consumed by anguish
and my years by groaning;
my strength fails because of my affliction,
and my bones grow weak.
¹³ For I hear many whispering,
"Terror on every side!"
They conspire against me
and plot to take my life.
¹⁴ But I trust in you, Lord;
I say, "You are my God."
¹⁵ My times are in your hands;
deliver me from the hands of my enemies,
from those who pursue me.
¹⁶ Let your face shine on your servant;
save me in your unfailing love.

Epistle Reading - Philippians 2:5-11 *Christ- the obedient servant and exalted Lord*

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:
⁶ Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
⁷ rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
⁸ And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!
⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Gospel Reading - Mark 14:1 – 15:47 *Jesus' suffering and death*

¹ Now the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. ² "But not during the festival," they said, "or the people may riot."

³ While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

⁴ Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? ⁵ It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly.

⁶ "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷ The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. ⁸ She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. ⁹ Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

¹⁰ Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. ¹¹ They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

¹² On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

¹³ So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. ¹⁴ Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' ¹⁵ He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."

¹⁶ The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

¹⁷ When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. ¹⁸ While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me."

¹⁹ They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely you don't mean me?"

²⁰ "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. ²¹ The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

²² While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."

²³ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

²⁴ "This is my blood of the[c] covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. ²⁵ "Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

²⁶ When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

²⁷ "You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written:

"I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered.'

²⁸ But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

²⁹ Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not."

³⁰ "Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times."

³¹ But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same.

³² They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." ³³ He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled.

³⁴ "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."

³⁵ Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

³⁷ Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour? ³⁸ Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

³⁹ Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. ⁴⁰ When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

⁴¹ Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

⁴³ Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.

⁴⁴ Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." ⁴⁵ Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. ⁴⁶ The men seized Jesus and arrested him. ⁴⁷ Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

⁴⁸ "Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? ⁴⁹ Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." ⁵⁰ Then everyone deserted him and fled.

⁵¹ A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him,
⁵² he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

⁵³ They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, the elders and the teachers of the law came together. ⁵⁴ Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire.

⁵⁵ The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. ⁵⁶ Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree.

⁵⁷ Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: ⁵⁸ "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with human hands and in three days will build another, not made with hands.'" ⁵⁹ Yet even then their testimony did not agree.

⁶⁰ Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" ⁶¹ But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.

Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?"

⁶² "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

⁶³ The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. ⁶⁴ "You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?"

They all condemned him as worthy of death. ⁶⁵ Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophecy!" And the guards took him and beat him.

⁶⁶ While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. ⁶⁷ When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him.

"You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus," she said.

⁶⁸ But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway.

⁶⁹ When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, "This fellow is one of them." ⁷⁰ Again he denied it.

After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean."

⁷¹ He began to call down curses, and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about."

⁷² Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times." And he broke down and wept.

¹ Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, made their plans. So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate.

² "Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate.

"You have said so," Jesus replied.

³ The chief priests accused him of many things. ⁴ So again Pilate asked him, "Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of."

⁵ But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.

⁶ Now it was the custom at the festival to release a prisoner whom the people requested. ⁷ A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising.

⁸ The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.

⁹ "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, ¹⁰ knowing it was out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. ¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.

¹² "What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them.

¹³ "Crucify him!" they shouted.

¹⁴ "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

¹⁵ Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

¹⁶ The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. ¹⁷ They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. ¹⁸ And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" ¹⁹ Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. ²⁰ And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

²¹ A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. ²² They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means "the place of the skull"). ²³ Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. ²⁴ And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

²⁵ It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. ²⁶ The written notice of the charge against him read: the king of the jews.

²⁷ They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left. [²⁸] ²⁹ Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, ³⁰ come down from the cross and save yourself!" ³¹ In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! ³² Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

³³ At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. ³⁴ And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").

³⁵ When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah."

³⁶ Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink.

"Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said.

³⁷ With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

³⁸ The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

⁴⁰ Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. ⁴¹ In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

⁴² It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, ⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. ⁴⁴ Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. ⁴⁵ When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. ⁴⁶ So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. ⁴⁷ Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.

This is the gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ, Lamb of God.

We listen & meditate on the song 'The Servant King' ATE 261

1. From heaven you came, helpless babe,
entered our world, your glory veiled;
not to be served but to serve,
and give your life that we might live.

*This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.*

2. There in the garden of tears
my heavy load he chose to bear.
His heart with sorrow was torn,
'Yet not my will, but yours', he said.

*This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.*

3. Come, see his hands and his feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space
to cruel nails surrendered.

*This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.*

4. So let us learn how to serve,
and in our lives enthrone him;
each other's needs to prefer,
for it is Christ we're serving.

*This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.*

*Words and music: Graham Kendrick
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We listen to the address

The LCA provides this sermon edited for lay-reading, with thanks to the original author.

Text: Mark 11:1-11; Philippians 2:5-11

Jerusalem is built on Mount Zion, opposite the Mount of Olives, with the Valley of Kedron in between. The road to Jerusalem winds around the Mount of Olives, down into the Valley of Kedron, up to the gates of Jerusalem. If you visit, you can still walk a road that follows the same route.

In the Gospel story for Palm Sunday Jesus is about to travel down into the valley, and up into the city.

In a deeper sense, Jesus is about to travel down into bitter conflict with his enemies; down to the final confrontation, arrest, accusations, trial, and condemnation; down to the agony of torture, crucifixion, death and burial. That was the huge valley in front of him, and Jesus was going to walk that journey.

But that was not the end of the journey. There was another path leading upwards. Ahead of Jesus was also his glorious resurrection from the tomb; his reunion with his disciples; and his ascension into heaven.

Palm Sunday is a pause before this final journey. Palm Sunday happens on the Mount of Olives, with Jerusalem in view, but the deep Kedron Valley in between.

We celebrate Palm Sunday as the last Sunday in Lent, after following Christ on his journey towards Jerusalem, with the knowledge that his journey will lead to the Cross. We celebrate Palm Sunday with a pause at the beginning of Holy Week, preparing to watch those great events of Jesus' passion, and then Jesus' resurrection.

As Jesus comes around the Mount of Olives, he receives a royal welcome—a crowd waving branches, making a carpet of cloaks on the road. Jesus is welcomed as a king. Not just a king, but the King whom God has promised—the Messiah King.

We hear this in their words: "Hosanna to the Son of David... Blessed is he who comes in the name

of the Lord ... Hosanna in the highest...".

Did the people understand where the road was leading Jesus? I do not think so. They understood that Jerusalem was the city where it would all happen. But they had no idea what was going to happen.

Jesus knew. He showed that he was a different kind of king. He chose to borrow a donkey and he rode that donkey along this journey. He showed that he was coming in all humility.

That too was a prophecy: "Tell the Daughter of Zion (which means the people of Jerusalem): See your king is coming to you, but he is coming as a gentle king, riding on a donkey".

So the people are right welcoming Jesus as their king and saviour, even though it will soon be revealed that he is a different kind of king and saviour to anything they could imagine.

And we are right to make Palm Sunday into a day of praise, when we praise our king and saviour, even though we sense and know the terrible ordeal that is ahead of Jesus.

We join the crowd on the Mount of Olives, to welcome and praise Jesus. We wait nervously as he sets out on that long, harsh, journey down. But we can see the road up in the distance.

Our reading from Philippians chapter 2 speaks of a similar journey, a road down and road up. But it is a different landscape, and a different time frame. These verses tell of the whole journey of Jesus Christ from eternity to eternity, from heaven down to earth and up to heaven again.

We begin in the eternal glory of God. Christ Jesus, who is God by very nature....Jesus is God by very nature, forever and ever. We say this in the Nicene Creed: God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of one being with the Father.

But Jesus Christ did not consider equality with God as something to be grasped or something to be used for his own advantage. Jesus did not consider his status as God as some prize trophy that he was going to hang onto.

Instead he sets out on this journey downwards. He travels from heaven into this earth. He made himself nothing. He emptied himself. He gave it all up. By taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

His journey begins when he is born into our world. We call this his incarnation. He shares our life with all our human struggles and tragedies.

Even as a person in our world, he lives the most humble of lives. He acts as a servant. He chooses to give of himself for the sake of others, rather than gain as much earthly power and wealth and status for himself.

The journey downwards goes even further. And being found in appearance as a human being he humbled himself further by becoming obedient unto death, even death on a cross. As God Jesus was Lord over everything and everyone. Coming into our world in human form, Jesus was totally obedient to God the Father, and made himself obedient to the human needs of us all.

That obedience took him to the depths of the Cross, total sacrifice. He held nothing back for himself, but gave it up for others. That was the spiritual journey of Jesus Christ, from the glory of heaven to the damnation experienced on the Cross.

But the journey does not end there. The journey continues, and the journey rises steeply upwards. Therefore God has raised him up to the highest place. That includes his resurrection from death to

life, and his ascension from earth to heaven. And God has given him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow in heaven and on earth and below the earth. Once again Jesus Christ will receive the glory and praise of the whole creation.

And every tongue will acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Yes, at the end of the journey every one will know and confess Jesus Christ is Lord, with the power and glory and authority of God, and Jesus Christ will share in the glory of God himself.

So the journey of Jesus Christ is a journey down, and a journey up. We sometimes call the journey down the humiliation of Christ, or his humbling, which he chose for himself. And the journey up is his exaltation, his being lifted up to glory in the power of God.

The gift of our salvation comes in both the humiliation and the exaltation of Christ, in his total giving himself, and in his great victory over sin and death, in the cross and in the resurrection. We see the same pattern in the Apostles Creed, second article:

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord...

There is Jesus Christ as true God.

Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.

There is his step down into our world, his incarnation into our human world.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. It sounds like stepping down, one step after the next, down into the terrible suffering of the Cross where he submitted to human power, suffered human suffering, with total obedience to God's plan of salvation.

Then he descended into hell. This refers to the fact that Jesus suffered the punishment of hell for the sake of his people. But Jesus could also confront Satan and every evil force to show how his self-sacrifice was also the victory over hell and victory over death and victory over sin and evil.

From there the path rises. On the third day he rose again from the dead. He rises from death to life. He ascended into heaven. He rises from earth to heaven. He sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty. All power and authority and glory of God is restored to him. From thence he will come to judge the living and the dead. The one who was once judged by sinful humans is now Lord and Judge over all people, and over all of life.

At the beginning of this passage, our journey is connected to the journey of Christ. Have the same mind, the same attitude, that Jesus Christ had. It is a call to us to learn from Jesus Christ, to learn to be totally humble. Before God we need to let go of everything, all our pride, all our ambitions for ourselves, and repent. Repent of our sins, and trust our Saviour. And then our God will lift us up and lead us forward in his power, and the power of his forgiveness.

It is a call to show that attitude of humility and service in the way we treat others and the way we think of others. Jesus was always concerned for what others needed from him, not what he wanted from others, and his whole life was a life of self sacrifice.

We are called as God's people. That is a great honour and glory. But it does not mean that we therefore demand honour and glory and privilege for ourselves.

The more we have received, the more we can give of ourselves. Christian life, like the life of Christ, is giving, giving of ourselves.

We do so in the faith and trust that our God lifts us up. Our God gives us even greater honour and

privilege than anything we could claim for ourselves. Our God gives us the honour in sharing in the life and salvation of our Saviour.

If we go once more to the Mount of Olives, we join in the praise of the crowd. They were right to praise Jesus Christ as the Saviour and their King, even though they did not know what that would involve or where it was leading Christ.

But their words and their cheering anticipates the whole journey of Jesus Christ, down the mountain and up the other side, from heaven to earth, and to heaven once again. We ask Christ to lead us as we follow in that journey for he has already undertaken that journey for us. Amen.

We confess our faith

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand of God, the Father almighty,
from thence he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.**

** 'catholic' here meaning 'universal'*

GOD RECEIVES OUR OFFERINGS

We listen & meditate on the hymn 'To your most holy supper, Lord' LHS 285

1. To your most holy supper, Lord,
in mercy you invite us;
you give your body and your blood
to strengthen and delight us.
In weariness, by sin oppressed,
we come to you for needed rest,
for comfort and for pardon.
2. Since you ascended from the earth,
by faith must we adore you;
we will not see you with our eyes
until we stand before you.

Yet you are present with us, Lord,
as you have promised in your word;
you live among your people.

3. We take the bread, we take the cup,
we eat and drink, believing
that here your body and your blood
our lips are now receiving.
Your word remains forever true;
what you have spoken, you can do,
for you, Lord, are almighty.
4. My heart and reason cannot see
how in so many places
your body can be present here,
yet faith your word embraces.
I leave to you how this can be;
your promise is enough for me;
I know that I can trust it.
5. Lord, grant that we come worthily,
repentant and believing,
for we have sinned, yet you forgive
in this meal that you're giving.
Refresh us with your saving grace,
that we may trust you all our days
and live for you, our Saviour.
6. For this consoling holy feast
be praised throughout all ages!
Preserve it, Lord, for everywhere
the world against it rages.
Grant that your body and your blood
may be my comfort and blest food
in my last moments. Amen.

*Herr Jesus Christ, du hast bereit't
Samuel Kinner 1603-68
Tr David Schubert (1995, 1997)
based partly on Emanuel Cronenwett (1880)
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We pray an offering prayer

Let us offer our thanks to God.

Thank you, loving Father, that your Son was obedient all the way to the cross, and suffered and died for us. Make us humble and self-giving, serving others as he served us. Amen.

We pray for ourselves and the world

God the Son humbled himself, taking on human flesh, suffering and dying in our place. Let us

pray to God our Father, and place in his hands the suffering of the world.

We pray for the church, that we may humbly bear our crosses and follow Jesus as our King and Lord.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

We pray for pastors entrusted with your holy word, like the priests and scribes. May they preserve the truth of your word and teach and live according to it.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

We pray for those who have sinned, like Peter. Teach us to be sorry for our sins, and forgive us all that we do wrong.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

We pray for prisoners and criminals like Barrabas. May they find true freedom by changing the way they live.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

We pray for all in government, like Pilate and Herod. May they use their power properly, and serve truth and justice.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

We pray for those who are dying, like the thieves crucified with Jesus. May they die with Jesus by their side, and be received into your kingdom.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

We pray for parents like Mary who have lost a child. May they bear their suffering and know the comfort of your love.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

We pray for peace in areas where there is unrest and conflict. Protect our brothers and sisters in Christ in these places. May their neighbours see the Son of God in them.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

We pray for the whole human race, that all will come to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour, pray for those who hurt them, and forgive them too.

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

And we pray for those with special needs who are known to us personally, and whom we now name silently in our hearts... *(brief silence)*

Lord in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**

Father, may the suffering and death of Jesus lighten the burdens of all who suffer. Lead us in the way of the cross, that as we suffer with Jesus, so we may rise to life in his glory, for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

We pray 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.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.** *Matt 6:9-13*

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

GOD BLESSES US

We go with God

Christ our crucified Saviour draw you to himself, so that you may find in him the assurance of sins forgiven and the gift of eternal life.

And the blessing of almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us now and always.

Amen.

We listen & meditate on the hymn 'Lord Jesus, We Give Thanks To Thee' LH 65/LHS 65

1. Lord Jesus Christ, our thanks shall be
to you, for your death sets us free;
made righteous through your precious blood,
we now are reconciled to God.
2. For us you died; now with us stay,
and be our guide and strength each day,
our comfort when we yield our breath,
our rescue from eternal death.
3. Defend us, Lord, from sin and shame;
help us by your almighty name
to bear our crosses patiently,
consoled by your great agony.
4. Assure us, Lord, until the end
that you will always be our friend.
Do not forsake us in our strife,
but lead us to eternal life.

*Wir danken dir, Herr Jesu Christ
Christoph Fischer 1518-98
Tr August Crull, rev Claire Kleinig (2001)
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Announcements