



## Worship Service Theme: **Palm Sunday**

### Helpful Elements:

Purple table covering (Lenten Season)  
Palm fronds

**Welcome:** Welcome! Thank you for coming to our service today. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'll be leading our worship time. Today is [or, This week we celebrate] **Palm Sunday**, when we remember and celebrate Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem for the Passover festival.

Palm Sunday marks the start of what's called Passion Week. This week we remember the most profound week of Jesus' earthly life: the Last Supper, Judas' betrayal, Jesus' death by crucifixion, and then Jesus' resurrection on Easter Sunday, just one week from today. Our color is still purple, the Lenten color of humility and repentance.

*[Either have palm fronds on the seats before the service begins, or pass them out now]*

Today, we have palm branches as a reminder of when the crowd spread palm branches and clothes on the road as Jesus rode into Jerusalem.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

**Opening Prayer:** Heavenly Lord: As the people spread their coats and palm branches on the ground to welcome Jesus into Jerusalem, so we welcome You into our lives today. Bless these palm branches and make them holy, a reminder of your passion and your victory. King of Glory, King of Peace, Servant King, reign in our hearts and lives today and all days, that we might praise your holy name. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

### Opening Hymn: Doxology

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.faithandworship.com/liturgy\\_Palm\\_Sunday.htm](http://www.faithandworship.com/liturgy_Palm_Sunday.htm)

**Statement of Faith:** Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23, “The Lord is My Shepherd,” together:

<sup>1</sup>The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

<sup>2</sup>He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

<sup>3</sup>He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.

<sup>4</sup>Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

<sup>5</sup>Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

<sup>6</sup>Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

**Hymns:**

**We Gather Together**

**For the Beauty of the Earth**

**Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee**

**First Reading:** From Psalm 118:

<sup>1</sup>O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
for his steadfast love endures forever!

<sup>2</sup>Let Israel say,  
“God’s steadfast love endures forever.”

<sup>3</sup>Let the house of Aaron say,  
“God’s steadfast love endures forever.”

<sup>4</sup>Let those who fear the Lord say,  
“God’s steadfast love endures forever.” ...

<sup>22</sup>The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone.

<sup>23</sup>This is the Lord’s doing;  
it is marvelous in our eyes.

<sup>24</sup>This is the day that the Lord has made;  
let us rejoice and be glad in it. ...

<sup>26</sup>Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

**Hymns:**

**Jesus Loves Me**

**Oh, How I love Jesus**

**Holy, Holy, Holy**

**Second reading:** Matthew 21:1-6: This is Matthew's telling of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem:

<sup>1</sup> Now when Jesus and his disciples drew near to Jerusalem, ... Jesus sent two disciples ahead, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ... <sup>4</sup> This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, <sup>5</sup> "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. <sup>7</sup> They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and Jesus sat on them. <sup>8</sup> Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

Here's more of the story from Luke's gospel, chapter 19:

<sup>37</sup> As Jesus was drawing near to the city, ...the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, <sup>38</sup> saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

<sup>39</sup> And some of the Pharisees [the religious rulers of the day] in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." <sup>40</sup> Jesus answered, "I tell you, if they were silent, the very stones would cry out."

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

**Hymns:**

**O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing**

**Shall We Gather at the River**

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<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 62:11, Zechariah 9:9

**Interactive Homily:** Let's pause our singing for a moment and think about celebration, especially as it relates to Palm Sunday and the week leading up to Easter.

- Why do we have celebrations? What kinds of things do we celebrate?
  - Important events, such as a new birth, birthdays, and anniversaries
  - Accomplishments, like finishing college or winning a race
  - Milestones of history as a nation or culture, like Independence Day or the end of a major conflict (Armistice Day)
  - When something has gone well! Any excuse to celebrate 😊
- How do we celebrate?
  - Gather with other people, cake and ice cream, balloons, piñatas, gift-giving, decorations, confetti, champagne, dancing in the streets, tickertape parade
  - Also special or ritual meals, such as the Passover Supper for Jews
- How does it feel to celebrate something? What emotions do you have when you celebrate? Why?
  - Typically feels good! Fun, exciting, remembering, powerful
  - Emotions are tied to the importance of the event or memory
- When Jesus came into Jerusalem on a donkey for the Passover festival, everyone threw down their cloaks in front of him and laid down palm branches as a carpet. I wonder why the people did this? What did people know and believe about Jesus at this point?
  - Jesus had been healing the sick and teaching about the kingdom of God.
  - Jesus had been calling out the corruption of the religious leaders and standing up for people who were normally considered "outside": the poor, women, sinners, "the unclean."
  - Jesus had even shown power over death by raising the dead. Just a few days before Palm Sunday, Jesus had brought his friend Lazarus back to life in front of a big crowd.
  - The crowds believed Jesus to be powerful, a man of God, a friend to sinners, their King and the promised Messiah!
- However, when we celebrate Palm Sunday, we know what's coming next, don't we? What happened to Jesus after Palm Sunday?
  - Judas betrays Jesus, and Jesus is killed by the Romans at the chief priests' request.
  - The disciples scatter in fear and sadness.

- And then Jesus' resurrection on the third day!
- So how is today's celebration different than a typical celebration?
  - This celebration is more serious, even tinged with sorrow. We know the story of what Jesus suffered. This celebration includes themes of wrongdoing and death – realities we all live with today.
  - But because we know the whole story, there's also JOY in this celebration. Like the crowds who welcomed Jesus, we shout Hosanna for our God who saves, with a victory over sin and death that's eternal.

Let us pray together in thanksgiving and wonder for this story and the Passion Week to come.

**(Silent Prayer)** ... Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord's prayer together:

**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, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

**Hymns:**

**Amazing Grace**

**Crown Him with Many Crowns**

**Third Reading:** "All Glory, Laud and Honor," a poem by Theoduphus of Orleans<sup>3</sup> (Italian abbot and bishop around 780 A.D.)

All glory, laud, and honor  
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,

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<sup>3</sup> [https://songsandhymns.org/people/detail/theodulph\\_of\\_orleans](https://songsandhymns.org/people/detail/theodulph_of_orleans)

who in the Lord's Name comest,  
the King and Blessed One.

The people of the Hebrews  
with palms before Thee went;  
our praise and prayer and anthems  
before Thee we present.

To Thee, before Thy Passion,  
they sang their hymns of praise;  
to Thee, now high exalted, our melody we raise.

Thou did accept their praises;  
accept the prayers we bring,  
who in all good delightest,  
Thou good and gracious King.

#### **Hymns:**

#### **O Sacred Head, Now Wounded Beneath the Cross of Jesus**

**Fourth Reading:** A Palm Sunday Story, from Guideposts magazine<sup>4</sup>

On Palm Sunday, a little boy had to stay home from church because he had a cold. After the service, his older sister came home, waving her palm frond in the air.

“What’s that?” asked the little boy. His sister answered smugly, “We waved these in the air and then put them on the ground to welcome Jesus.”

The boy started wailing and fled the room. When his mother held him and asked what was wrong, the little boy said through his tears, “The one Sunday I don’t go to church, Jesus showed up!”

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.guideposts.org/faith-and-prayer/daily-devotions/showing-up-on-palm-sunday>

Palm Sunday is the day Jesus shows up—in our churches, in our hearts, in our minds. We've been waiting for Him all our lives. Are you ready? Will you be there? Don't let anything—physical, emotional, or spiritual—keep you from the warmth of Jesus' dramatic entrance into your life.

Today is the first day of the most exciting, grief-stricken, and ultimately joyous week of our year. Don't miss it. Show up, take the Lord's hand and begin the journey.

**Hymns:**

**The Old Rugged Cross**

**How Great Thou Art**

**Closing Blessing:** (Strike bell as you say the word "Lord")

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his to face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Closing Hymn: Doxology, Reprise**