



At Home Worship for Faith and Hope

Palm/Passion Sunday

March 28, 2021

Pilate replied, "Take guards and secure it the best you can." So they sealed the tomb and posted guards to protect it.

Matthew 27:65-66 (NLT)

Palm Sunday Praise

*Call to Worship

~ written by Ann Siddall

The story of Palm Sunday tells of how people removed their cloaks and spread them out in front of Jesus as he entered Jerusalem.

The cloak we wear every day to face the world is both the persona we wish to present, and our defense against the elements.

As we come to worship may we be willing to lay down our defenses and disguises, at the feet of the One who sees us we really are.

And then, set free for worship, may we offer our praises with open hearts and lives.

Either Sing/Read the Song Below or Listen to a Worship Song

Opening Prayer

*Lord, as we remember how Christ the King entered Jerusalem to the sound of joyful shouts, increase our faith and listen to our prayers, so that we may praise 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.***

NO Children's Moments This Week

Share How You Can Present Your Offering to God

Make your offering personal...through a donation or an act of service...bring to God an offering of gratitude with grit! Lift up with thanksgiving to God for the ways He has helped you through these difficult days.

Sing the Doxology Together

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Palm/Passion Sunday Prayer

God of all hopefulness, God of my life, on this holy day of Palms and Passions and through this the holiest of weeks, when our Lenten journey finds its completion through pain, sorrow, despair, illness, losses of all kinds, through fear, anger, and hatred.

Through a self-examination of all the ways we work against you -against your hopes and dreams for creation, against your love poured out in flesh and blood -we hang our heads and bow our hearts seeking your forgiveness, yearning for your guidance, and desiring your compassion.

Fill us we pray, with the ability to turn to you, kneeling before your grace, open our spirit to Your Spirit, that we may take you in, let you in, receive you in taking You in. Into our hearts and minds and souls, let you in that we might turn to you, return to you, be transformed in you, through you, by you, for you.

Transformed once more, this day, this week, into a new self, me, you. May we become a new people, a gentle people, a people of love and compassion, born anew from our deepest sorrow through the breadth of your forgiveness and love. And then, may we do likewise. Forgive. Love. Amen.

The 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. Amen.

Passion Sunday Declaration

God's Word

Matthew 27:62-66 (NLT)

The Word of God for the people of God...Thanks be to God!

Message

"The Futile Word"

Pastor Clark

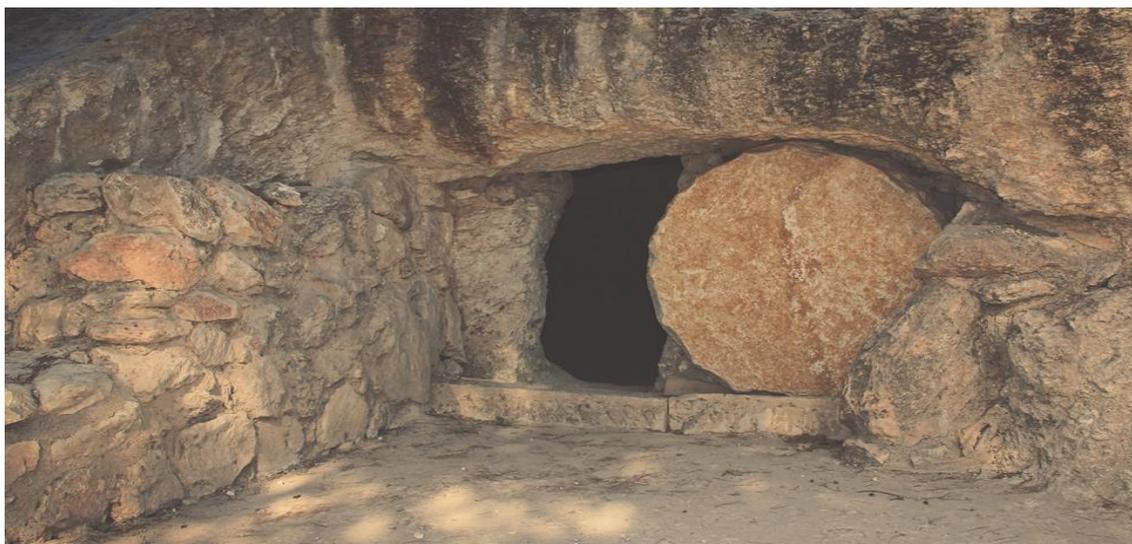
...see below or go to website to listen online

*Foretaste of Easter

"Up from the Grave He Arose"

UMH 322

Blessing



The Futile Word... “Command the tomb to be made secure”

Matthew 27:62-66

⁶² The next day, on the Sabbath, the leading priests and Pharisees went to see Pilate. ⁶³ They told him, “Sir, we remember what that deceiver once said while he was still alive: ‘After three days I will rise from the dead.’ ⁶⁴ So we request that you seal the tomb until the third day. This will prevent his disciples from coming and stealing his body and then telling everyone he was raised from the dead! If that happens, we’ll be worse off than we were at first.”

⁶⁵ Pilate replied, “Take guards and secure it the best you can.” ⁶⁶ So they sealed the tomb and posted guards to protect it.

Introduction

The enemies of Jesus came together... They want the whole Jesus movement to stay buried in the tomb. They were paranoid because they had heard the rumors of what Jesus had said, “*After three days I will rise again.*” So, to protect themselves against what appeared to them as a ridiculous prediction...

These enemies of Jesus go to Pontius Pilate to request that the tomb be made secure. Perhaps they too were afraid Jesus’ disciples will come and take the body away and claim his ridiculous prediction had come true. Either way, they don’t want there to be any doubt that Jesus stays in the tomb.

Pilate seems to be fed up with it all and tells them: “*You have a guard of soldiers; go make it as secure as you can.*” So, the enemies of Jesus made the already secure tomb still more secure; they took the great cartwheel stone, sealed it, and made it fast at both ends of the door, and then left guards there to frighten away any possible intruders.

Command the tomb to be made secure! What a futile word! And what a pathetic estimate of the power of Resurrection! Make the tomb secure? How can anyone make a grave secure against God! How can death and all its bars be strong enough to contain the new life that is in Jesus? William Barclay once declared: “*The had not realized one thing—that there was not a tomb in the whole world which could imprison the Risen Christ. No one had the power to could bind the Risen Lord.*” God’s power subverts the apparent power of human initiative!

The Enemies of Jesus Have Long Since Tried to “Secure the Tomb”

- In Acts 4 the ruling body in Jerusalem ordered Peter and John never to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. Their response: “*We cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard!*”
- Roman Empire’s attempts to snuff our Christianity
- Soviet Union...Alexander Solzhenitsyn
- Communist China...House Churches with current estimates of over 105 million believers
- Vietnam...house churches I had the humble privilege of visiting

A More Confining Tomb

The heaviest stone across the tomb is a surprising one: half-hearted Christianity...clergy and followers...more concerned with comfort, security, prestige...

Listen to J. Ellsworth Kalas: *"If people come to church to be pleased that the music is pretty, the worship entertaining, and the sermon not too disturbing, (if they can listen to it all as if they were at some secular entertainment venue), then this is indeed a heavy stone across the door of the tomb."*

I don't for a moment think we intentionally seek to keep Jesus in the tomb today. I don't think we intentionally seek to thwart Jesus' plans and mission. I do, however, think we indirectly do things which keep Jesus' mission at bay...and, as a result, figuratively, keep the risen Christ entombed.

- When we make church more about our preferences, what's best for us, than what's best for the mission
- When we take the power source of the Holy Spirit out of our daily experience and rely only on our own ingenuity and wisdom and energy
- When we get too busy to pray with a sincere and seeking heart
- When we focus all our resources on tending to life inside the church and little, if any, for our mission outside the church
- When we lose our desire to cultivate relationships with those around us who have yet to taste the joy of new life in Christ

When we do such things, we are in essence rolling a stone across the Tomb as if we could keep Jesus inside, safe and locked up.

Even so, the risen Christ has managed to break through in new life! Just when it appears that Christianity is weakening, resurrection strength has appeared in fresh new ways.

- The House Church movement worldwide
- The ongoing story of Christianity in Africa
- The thrilling emergence of Christianity in Central and South America
- The re-evangelization of Western Europe, now seen as one of the places of greatest spiritual drought worldwide...is experiencing some pockets of renewal and hope.
- The Fresh Expressions movement across America and Western Europe

No tomb is secure enough to fence in the living Christ!

Sealed Tombs in Our Own Lives

Where today does some "tomb" seem most securely to be sealed? For instance: Can human trafficking ever be stopped?

Where in the life of some friend? Is a friend entrapped in the tomb of depression?

Is there a sealed tomb in your life? Threatening circumstances? Illness? Addiction? Idolatry? Oppressive indebtedness? Grief?

A friend of our daughter Kristen, Kanda Strohl, just lost her mother in a horrific accident and her father is still in a coma at MCE. Kanda is an amazing person of faith and is grieving this sudden loss painfully but with great faith. It reminds me of a story of a father whose young pre-teen son was dying of cancer. He was struggling mightily...really wrestling with his faith in this dark time.

Eleven-year-old **Billy** was this couple's only child. His parents had sought out specialist after specialist but none were able to help. The mother had become reconciled to the inevitable, but the father was still struggling—even bitter and unaccepting. ***He was entombed in his grief...in his bitterness.***

It was Christmas Eve and the father couldn't sleep. He tossed and turned and finally went out to the living room. Under the Christmas tree there were lots of presents the Billy would likely never be able to use. As he pondered the cruel injustice of it all, he gradually began to pray:

"Dear God, something has happened. I ask you to hear me out. As I sit here, I remember what a personal success I have been and how you have responded whenever I asked you to give me a hand. But I know now I know now those were selfish prayers for my own personal gain. And when I asked you to save Billy, that was probably selfish too. I couldn't stand to lose him. I had such great plans for him, and I wanted someday for him to carry on for me. I wanted everybody to know what a fine boy I had raised.

Father, you know what I remember now? I remember your Son and your great love when you gave him to the world. What sadness you must have felt when he died! As so God, if you would do this one thing for all of us, then I have to be comforted by your sacrifice. It's been a long time since I put my full trust in you. So I pray now that you will welcome Billy when he comes. I know he will be in good hands. Thy will be done."

It was almost time for Billy's medication, so he went in to give it to him. The boy was awake, took his dad's hand and said, *"Dad, I won't need those pills tonight."* The father asked why not. *"I've been dreaming, Dad. I've been dreaming about Jesus. He seemed very close. It sounds funny, but it's almost as though he's here in this room with us right now."* And his hand relaxed its grip on his father's, his eyes closed, and the last breath of life went from him with a gentle sigh. He went home.

Neither he nor his father were victims of circumstances or death; they were the victors. The son went home and the father came out of the tomb that had sealed him shut!

Has the enemy tried to convince you of the lie that that the tomb you are in, is forever sealed in defeat? This is a futile word that hell tries to speak. Circumstances may shut us in on all sides, then seal the stone that is against the door. But it cannot keep Life from happening! When we cast our lot with the Lord Christ; we have cast it with the Source and Power of eternal life.

Climax

The enemies of Jesus were trying to stop what God is doing, trying to stop the work of God. Nothing, however, can hold Jesus back! Nothing can keep resurrection from bursting forth with new life! Nothing can stop Easter from happening!

Peter Larson once declared with Spirit-inspired insight: *"Despite our efforts to keep him out, God intrudes. The life of Jesus is bracketed by two impossibilities: a virgin's womb and an empty tomb. Jesus entered our world through a door marked "No Entrance" and left through a door marked "No Exit."*

Our final hymn of the day is really the conclusion to the message...it is a **foretaste of Easter** with this stunning message:

*Death cannot keep its prey,
Jesus my Savior;
He tore the bars away,
Jesus my Lord!*

Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

- 1. Hosanna, loud hosanna,
the little children sang;
through pillared court and temple
the lovely anthem rang.
To Jesus, who had blessed them
close folded to his breast,
the children sang their praises,
the simplest and the best.*
- 2. From Olivet they followed
mid an exultant crowd,
the victor palm branch waving,
and chanting clear and loud.
The Lord of earth and heaven
rode on in lowly state,
nor scorned that little children
should on his bidding wait.*

3. "Hosanna in the highest!"
that ancient song we sing,
for Christ is our Redeemer,
the Lord of heaven our King.
O may we ever praise him
with heart and life and voice,
and in his blissful presence
eternally rejoice!

Up From the Grave He Arose

1 Low in the grave he lay, Jesus my Savior,
waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord!

Refrain:

Up from the grave he arose,
with a mighty triumph o'er his foes;
he arose a victor from the dark domain,
and he lives forever, with his saints to reign.
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!

2 Vainly they watch his bed, Jesus my Savior;
vainly they seal the dead, Jesus my Lord! [Refrain]

3 Death cannot keep its prey, Jesus my Savior;
he tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord! [Refrain]



Mauddy Thursday Service...April 1 at 7:00 PM...at Hope Church... This year's service will center on the events in the Garden of Gethsemane as we look at Mark 14:32-42 and Jesus' agonizing prayer in the Garden. This illuminating look into Jesus' heart will show us how to pray when we too face life's ultimate tests. Communion and Stripping of the altar will be part of our service.

Good Friday Cross Walk... Meet at the Train Station at 11:45 AM for the Cross Walk to David UCC where we will have an outdoor service with message and music.

Easter at Faith and Hope

We will have Easter Services at both Hope and Faith on Sunday on April 4 to allow us to accommodate the anticipated Easter attendance in a socially distanced way. At each service you can count on a splash of stirring Easter music along with several special Easter themed expressions of worship. We are exploring the possibility of an ***Easter Choir*** with folks from both Hope and Faith singing at both services.

- ◆ Hope (9:30 AM)
- ◆ Faith (11:00 AM)

Jesus' Last Words: Encounters with the Risen Christ

Join us the Sundays after Easter for a new worship series. A person's final words before departing this earth can be telling...representing a significant message they wanted to convey. We often strain to listen intently so we don't miss a single word. Likewise with Jesus...only there is a bit of a twist. Jesus' final words came after his death! Jesus' final message to his followers carries a weight like no other. After his resurrection and before his ascension, Jesus' final words to his disciples serve as an urgent message...to them and to the church today. In the midst of the encounters his disciples had with the Risen Christ, we find the incisive and encouraging message of Jesus to the church as we carry his mission forward.