

## Sixth Sunday in Lent - April 5, 2020

Readings: Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:1-11; Matthew 21:1-11; 27:11-54

### Welcome

**Introit** - *Simon Blake*

Hosanna filio David:  
benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.  
Rex Israel: Hosanna in excelsis.

Hosanna to the son of David:  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
O King of Israel: Hosanna in the highest.

Christus factus est pro nobis obediens  
usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis.

Christ became obedient for us unto death,  
even to the death, death on the cross.

### **Presbyterian World Service & Development Litany:**

*(Written by the Rev. Iona MacLean - The Church of Saint David, Halifax)*

God calls the Servant to sustain the weary  
**the ones in exile,**  
**the ones in despair,**  
**the ones who are afraid.**

Jesus enters the city in humility  
**lauded by the crowds: "Hosanna! Save us!"**  
**questioned by the powers that be**  
**betrayed and denied by his friends.**

We watch with unease and bewilderment,  
**complicit with the fickle crowd,**  
**misunderstanding true power,**  
**frightened and looking to our own interests.**

Lord, have mercy  
**Christ, have mercy**

Lord, have mercy

Let us pray:  
**God our Creator,**  
**we give thanks to you for you are good,**  
**your steadfast love endures forever.**  
**We seek courage for the living of these days.**  
**Let the same mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus,**  
**so that we may give ourselves in love and humility**  
**to further your purpose of life for the world.**

**So may all people come to know  
the height and depth of your redeeming love;  
through Jesus Christ our Crucified and Risen Lord. Amen.**

**Isaiah 50:4 (NRSV)**

<sup>4</sup>The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of a teacher,  
that I may know how to sustain  
the weary with a word.  
Morning by morning he wakens—  
wakens my ear  
to listen as those who are taught.

**Philippians 2:1-11**

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, <sup>2</sup> make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,  
<sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,  
<sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.  
And being found in human form,  
<sup>8</sup> he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.  
<sup>9</sup> Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name,  
<sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
<sup>11</sup> and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**Reflection:**

Government leaders, public health officials, business CEOs, teachers and preachers are all seeking to know in these troublous days "how to sustain the weary with a word."

Many words, too many words sometimes, but all offered in the extraordinary effort to keep people informed, motivated, safe and encouraged. We could never have imagined a few weeks ago that our civic duty could be summed up in "Wash your hands. Keep at least 2 metres distance from others. Stay home." We are weary of hearing the words, yet we know that they are essential and that they have to be repeated until everyone gets the message for the good of all.

The weary ones in the prophet Isaiah's day are the ones who are in exile, whose lives are shaped and crushed by the power of the empire and who are daily close to despair. They feel powerless and afraid. The Servant, a central figure in this part of the Book of Isaiah, is called by God to remind the exiles that it is God, not the empire, who is in charge. It is not a popular message with the powers that be and the Servant-prophet faces ridicule and persecution. Despite these troubles, the Servant believes the message and trusts in God.

So does the Apostle Paul. Weary himself, he writes from prison to a church in Philippi disturbed by self-serving preachers, unnamed opponents, potential arrogance and disagreement. Similar to the exhortations we hear daily to be kind and care for one another, Paul's words put the theme in gospel terms:

"be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus."

The "you" here is plural. Another translation says, "Have this mind among yourselves."

Not just as dutiful citizens (as important as that role is), but as the people of God, as the Body of Christ, here is how we are to think and live. The characteristics Paul has just encouraged among the people--love, humility, putting others first--are supremely embodied in Jesus who reveals in his life and sacrificial death what God is like. It is the very nature of God to act in humble, self-giving love for the sake of others--for us and all people.

On the cross Jesus entered fully into the human condition, into the hardest corners of life, entered into criminality (and slavery), into distorted systems, into hell. . . God-with-us all the way. The cross is God meeting us in the human predicament where we are bogged down, stuck, unable to rise on our own.

And the cross is also God's hand lifting us out: "Therefore God also highly exalted him. . . ." Salvation is about being lifted up into full participation in God, in God's life of healing and hope. In our baptism, we die and we rise with Christ, clothed with Christ's nature and purpose. "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus."

Even at the same time that our world has been down-sized to our own living space, seemingly cut off from community, we are reminded that the whole gospel enterprise is about expanding our world, not contracting it--showing love at work in the empty streets, as one writer put it. We can take this time to deepen our ability to love God through loving our neighbour and to learn even better what this means:

sustaining the weary with a word (saying thank you to store clerks, first providers, health care workers, government leaders);

having the mind of Jesus to love and work for the interests of others (washing our hands, keeping our distance, staying home, keeping in touch, caring through prayer).

As we enter Holy Week, and continue through these challenging days, let us take heart that we are not alone. We have each other.

And in Jesus, humbled and exalted, God is with us all the way. Thanks be to God!

### **Musical Interlude** - *Brogan Cameron*

#### **Prayer:**

All thanks to you, O God, for your Beloved Son, Jesus, whose self-emptying fills us with new life and joy. Let our gratitude shape our lives and reflect your grace in all the things that we do and say.

God of all mercy, bless your people. Keep us serving you faithfully, celebrating your goodness in worship and work even as we find new ways of doing these things, and showing your care for the world in concern especially for the most vulnerable: the impoverished, homeless people, refugees, the newly unemployed, the frightened. May your power of sacrificial love, as made known in Jesus Christ our Lord save and sustain us all.

God of all strength, we pray for people who especially need your strength in these days: health care workers, parents, essential services providers, government officials. Bring them all the grace they need to persevere and stay healthy.

God of love, thank you for all faithful servants of Christ now at rest in you,  
especially those whom we have known and loved,  
who, with us, await a new heaven and a new earth,  
your everlasting reign of goodness and joy.

God of hope, grant us all patience as we wait; grant us all courage as we serve you and care for one another; grant us all hope as we trust in you for the future.

Hear our prayers in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ who taught us to pray together, saying: *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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

**Sung Prayer:** *(Sung twice)*

**Take, O take me as I am; summon out what I shall be;  
set your seal upon my heart and live in me.**

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you.  
Amen.*