

## Called To Live His Cross Today. April 5, 2020 Palm Sunday **Minister's Message**

Today is the beginning of Holy Week. In many Christian churches special prayers will be offered every day of the whole week. In our way we do that too with our continued reading of the Upper Room each day. Unfortunately, our joint Good Friday service can't take place this year. But the lead-up of scriptures & prayers is so important to truly celebrate Easter.

We search—we hunger for what is right and true—to live in the Light of Jesus Christ. The focus today is entirely on Jesus—this Holy Man—Why did he die? What is the significance of his death?

Here is a man.

He was born in an obscure village, the son of a peasant woman. --a poor woman with no money.

He worked in a carpenter's shop until he was thirty. Then for three years he became a wandering preacher.

He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a house. He didn't go to college or university. He never travelled two hundred miles from the place where he was born. He did none of those things that one usually associates with greatness.

He had no special credentials --just himself.

He was only thirty-three when the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. He was turned over to his enemies and went through a mockery of a trial. He was executed by the state. While he was dying, his executioners gambled for his clothing, the only property he had on earth.--his coat.

When he was dead he was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Twenty centuries have come and gone, and today he is the central figure of the human race and the leader of humanity's progress. All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of humanity on this earth as much as that **One Solitary Life**.

That is a wonderful summation of our Saviour's life. We stand in awe—and with our small human mind we try to understand. In faith we trust in God and believe as Paul wrote to the Romans: “I am convinced that neither life, nor death, neither angels or rulers, not things present, nor things to come, nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God as revealed to us in Jesus, the Christ”. (Romans 8:38) “In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.”

Good solid foundation there! It is a celebration—Jesus is needed more than ever in our world today.

So as we said earlier, today marks the beginning of the week when we tell the story that is central to our faith. It begins with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, and continues with his arrest, trial, and death. Next comes Easter & Resurrection.

I came across this reflection by Colleen –she is an 11 yr old, living at the time of passover in Jesus’ day. Here’s what she says:

Today was a strange day.

My mother makes me get up when the sun comes up so I can get water from the well, and feed the animals. I don’t like to feed the chickens – they scratch at my feet. But I love to feed my colt.--Charlie I’ve called him.

He’s just a baby. He was a gift from my uncle – the best gift I’ve ever been given. I’m the oldest, so it’s my job to make sure he has food and clean water. I shovel out his stall every day and make sure he has fresh hay. He loves to roll around in it and put his feet in the air. Then at the end of the day, I brush him all over and he nuzzles me with his face. He’s quiet but spunky. Kinda like me.

I was taking my colt out to the pasture when Momma started calling for me from the kitchen. My little brother fell and got a big cut on his chin. I had to tie up my colt by the street and run back inside to help her. My brother was fine, but by the time I got back outside I saw two men untying my colt from the tree! I was so angry and scared!

“Stop! That’s my colt! Why are you untying him? You can’t take him!” I screamed as I ran down the dusty road.

I worried they wouldn’t listen to a tall, skinny 11-year-old girl like me, but I didn’t care. I was ready to do anything—I didn’t want to lose him!

But as I got closer and they saw me, the men stopped. They looked at me and smiled,so I slowed down and caught my breath.

“That my colt. He’s mine. Please, don’t take him!” I said.

“Our friend Jesus needs it,” they said, “but we’ll be sure to bring it back after. We promise.”

I was stunned. I’ve heard about Jesus from my mom and her friends. They say he has come to be the Saviour of Israel and that he is the King of the Jews. But he’s a different kind of King. He teaches that no matter who we are or what we do, God loves us all the same. Even a poor 11 yr old like me.

I was nervous to let my Charlie go, but there was something about these men that made me know they were telling the truth. So I gave him a nuzzle and ran back to the house.

When I told Momma, she was surprised too! We were still standing in the kitchen when a neighbour came by and told us that we needed to hurry up into Jerusalem – that Jesus was coming.

When we got to town, there were people everywhere. The street was lined with cloaks and leafy branches to cover up the dust and the mud. I pushed my way to the front and looked down the street and saw Jesus riding on the back of my little brown colt Jesus was riding Charlie!. Everyone around me was shouting and waving branches and going crazy.

“Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of our God! Blessed is the kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!”Save us!

I couldn’t take my eyes off Jesus’ face. He didn’t look like any ruler I had ever seen. He was smiling at everyone. He looked almost embarrassed at all the fuss. As soon as I saw his kind face, I knew everything Momma told me about him was true.

When we got home, there was my colt – clean and fed with a fresh bucket of water, tied up on the tree by the street, just like the men said he would be.

“Hosanna!” I thought to myself. “Hosanna in the highest heaven!”God does provide.

We have this vision of Palm Sunday.

We have a vision or expectation of what should happen on Palm Sunday. A parade, leafy branches waving in the air as the voices of children sing sweetly. In some churches, there might even be the appearance of a donkey coming down the church aisle! The parade into Jerusalem that day was similar, . New Testament scholar, theologian and author Marcus Borg describes a second parade that day:

On Sunday, Palm Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem from the east in a procession riding on a donkey cheered by his followers. At the same time, a Roman imperial procession of troops and cavalry entered

the city from the west, headed by Pilate. Their purpose was to reinforce the Roman garrison stationed near the temple for the season of Passover, when tens (hundreds?) of thousands of Jewish pilgrims filled the city.

The contrast between Jesus' entry and the imperial entry sounds the central conflict that unfolds during the rest of the week. Jesus' mode of entry was symbolic, signifying that the kingdom of which he spoke was a kingdom of peace. According to the prophet Zechariah, it had been foretold that the king entering Jerusalem on a donkey was to banish the weapons of war from the land and speak peace to the nations. The kingdom of Rome on the other hand was based on violence –many weapons and the threat of violence.

It is clear from Mark that Jesus pre-arranged this way of entering the city. In modern language, it was a planned political demonstration. Of course, it was also religious: Jesus did so because of his passion for God and the kingdom of God.

**Jesus is known as the Prince of Peace** –he was to speak peace to the nations & banish the weapons of war.

How does this fit into our modern context?

In Canada, in 2020, we have a very different kind of war—a war against COVID -19. As I write, it has been announced that 9 residents died and at least 34 residents and staff tested positive for the virus at Pinecrest Nursing Home in Bobcaygeon. There is a lot of fear. We continue to keep our 2 meters social distancing, wash our hands, stay home--& be kind. The headline in the National Post today said, “Best case scenario: Covid-19 measures expected to last until July, according to government document”. Our present situation calls for perseverance. Paul writes: “**Rejoice in hope, endure in troubles and continue steadfastly in prayer**”. (Romans 12:12)

And the GOOD NEWS?

We continue to be inspired by God's creation. This morning the early sunrise was pink, orange and splashed across the eastern sky, the male bluebird yesterday was flapping his wings, puffing up to the admiration of his mate, my neighbour phoned this week just to say “hello”, how are you doing? — And my cupboards have never been so tidy! All those jobs I've been thinking of doing for months (sometimes actually for years!!)

We hold in prayer the family of Betty Marie Annett who passed away March 26, 2020. Her service of celebration was held at Shetland Cemetery on Sunday March 29. “A most wonderful lady who continues to inspire all of us”. And we hold in prayer all who presently know pain & suffering, loneliness and disappointment. “O Lord, keep us strong in your love”

As you see, I'm sending this out by email. (and Canada Post to some). **If you know of someone who has been missed, please send it on to them—and let me know their email** (or mailing address) so that they can receive the next GOOD NEWS letter.

Thank you to everyone who is showing kindnesses to neighbour & family.

God's PEACE and GRACE to you, dear friends.

Do keep in touch--

Phone: 519 695 5411

Text: 519 365 5511

Email: [kerr.annalee@gmail.com](mailto:kerr.annalee@gmail.com)

Remember to keep looking at [wabashunited.org](http://wabashunited.org) and [united-church.org](http://united-church.org) for lots of good info, prayers, etc. **And keep sending those happy songs & fun jokes.**

Shalom, Annalee

Jesus—the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is he.  
Jesus calls us over the tumult of our life's wild restless sea.  
Day by day his clear voice sounding saying Christian, follow me.  
Long ago the apostles heard it by the Galilean lake  
turned from home and toil and kindred, leaving allowing  
In our joys and in our sorrows, days of toil and  
hours of ease  
still he calls in cares and pleasures, Christina, love me more than these

Saviour may we hear your call, give our hearts to your obedience, serve and love you best of all.

Let us pray:

Loving God, as we process with our Palms prepare us for what is to come. We want to live your cross today. May we be agents of your compassion & peace As we read, hear, and experience this familiar story, remind us of its central place in our faith story. Open us to a new encounter with your love, and an experience of your promises being kept.

May we be agents of your compassion, joy & peace on this earth. Amen.