

Palm Sunday / **Sunday of the Passion** April 5, 2020

Lectionary Year A – the Gospel of Matthew

Living the Lutheran Lectionary

A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.

An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.

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<https://www.redletterchristians.org/why-we-want-to-skip-holy-week/>

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 442 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 160
“All glory, laud, and honor”

“This hymn, written by St. Theodulf (762–821) of Orleans, France, has been sung in varying forms in the Church since the ninth century...

According to legend, Theodulf, imprisoned for complicity in a plot to overthrow King Louis I, composed this hymn in his jail cell and sang it as the king processed through the town. Upon hearing it, Louis ordered the release of Theodulf. While this legend cannot be confirmed, the hymn beautifully paints the picture of the triumphal entry.

The crowds in Jerusalem did not comprehend that Jesus’ kingdom is not of this world. We do. This is reflected in each stanza as Theodulf beautifully weaves the uninformed praises of the Hebrews with those whom the Holy Spirit has now called, gathered, enlightened and sanctified.”

- <https://www.lcms.org/worship/hymn-of-the-day-studies>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-r2ikdu88cc> Piano instrumental hymn with lyrics by [Kaleb Brasee](#)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhbYS31TYbs> First Plymouth Church, Lincoln Nebraska, March 20, 2016. Arrangement: Richard Webster

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 438 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 142 **“A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth”**

“Reading any biography of Paul Gerhardt (1607–76) quickly reveals that this Lutheran pastor and hymn writer was a “suffering servant” of the Lord. His father died while he was a boy. During his time of studies at the University of Wittenberg, the Thirty Years’ War raged around him. He suffered at the hands of the governing authorities in his work in the Holy Ministry because of his faithfulness to the Lutheran Confessions. His wife and all but one of his children died before him.

Still, even at age 70, this “theologian sifted in Satan’s sieve,” as a portrait epitaph reads, could write about the joy that was his in serving his Lord...”

- <https://www.lcms.org/worship/hymn-of-the-day-studies>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=756FTRuX-Nw> Acapella version ...from the 1941 Lutheran Hymnal, with onscreen lyrics. [Lutheran Quartet](#)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRRfak00g0> String introduction. Heirs of the Reformation: Treasures of the Singing Church © 2008 Concordia Publishing House
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVH3nxlPZmM> A Lenten Cantata for SATB, tenor soloist, organ and strings composed by David von Kampen

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001
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John Holbert sets the scene for choosing this week's emphasis, Palm Sunday and/or Sunday of the Passion. This year I have chosen to concentrate on the Palm Sunday readings.

"I readily understand how and why most preachers will turn this day to one of the Gospel texts recounting Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. After all, it is hard to justify the children's parade of palm branches, not to mention those familiar hymns like "Hosanna, Loud Hosanna," without reading one of those passages that actually talk about palm branches, hosannas, and donkeys. Exactly what those texts mean, and how they work now in our Lenten journey, I will leave to my New Testament colleagues to expound.

For those of us who wish to focus on the day as the stark beginning of the Passion of Jesus, his terrible road to suffering and death at the hands both of the Romans and the religious authorities of his own people, we will naturally turn to the prophet ···Isaiah. The prophet's four "Servant Songs" so richly informed the early Christian communities as they sought to understand just what Jesus' ministry was finally about and how his ignominious and tragic death was finally to be understood as that ministry's culmination, rather than its completely catastrophic end..."

➤ <https://www.patheos.com/progressive-christian/humiliated-servant-john-holbert-03-18-2013.html>

John C. Holbert, retired from Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

O.T.– “It is the **Sovereign LORD** who helps me.”

Psalm – “Save us, we pray, O LORD!”

Epistle – “but emptied himself,”

Gospel – “behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt”

Palm Sunday: Isaiah 50:4-9a; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), the same reading (Next week: Acts 10:34-43 or Jeremiah 31:1-6; RCL, the same reading)

“Isaiah 50:4-9a’s juxtaposition of beauty and brutality is so jarring that it may be disconcerting. Yet that combination is part of what helps make our text in so many ways reminiscent of daily life. After all, it sometimes feels as if we’re almost constantly moving from beauty to brutality (and then, so often, right back to beauty – and back yet again).

The prophet probably penned the words of the text the Lectionary appoints for this Sunday to an Israel whose sins have dragged her far from the beautiful home God had promised her ancient ancestors and granted her parents and grandparents. But the second half of Isaiah’s prophecy anticipates a time when God will bring Israel home.

That brightening future, however, puts Israel’s fortunes in stark contrast to those of our Old Testament lesson’s narrator. After all, while Isaiah 50 suggests Israel’s fortunes are on the rise, its narrator’s seem moving in the exact opposite direction...”

➤ https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/lent-6b/?type=old_testament_lectionary

Scott Hoezee, Center for Excellence in Preaching

Israel's Sin and the Servant's Obedience

50 This is what the LORD says:

“Where is your mother’s certificate of divorce
with which I sent her away?
Or to which of my creditors
did I sell you?

Because of your sins you were sold;
because of your transgressions your mother was sent away.

² When I came, why was there no one?
When I called, why was there no one to answer?

Was my arm too short to deliver you?
Do I lack the strength to rescue you?

By a mere rebuke I dry up the sea,
I turn rivers into a desert;
their fish rot for lack of water
and die of thirst.

³ I clothe the heavens with darkness
and make sackcloth its covering.”

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? (Continues through verse 11)

“The Song itself falls naturally into four strophes (stanzas*), each of which is introduced by the refrain "The Lord GOD (verses 4, 5, 7, 9):

A The Lord GOD has given (perfect) me the tongue of a disciple (verse 4)

Result: preaching consolation

B The Lord GOD has opened (perfect) my ear

(verses 5-6)

Result: suffering

a did not hide *face*

b disgrace

B' The Lord GOD will help (imperfect) me

(verses 7-8)

Result: vindication

b' no disgrace

a' set *face* like flint

A' The Lord GOD will help (imperfect) me (verse 9)

Result: no one can declare me guilty...

Powerful as this message is this week, Christians must read and hear these words the way the church has always read and heard them: as descriptive of the suffering experienced by Jesus in his life-giving passion and death. Just as the servant was persecuted for his faithful obedience to God, maintaining that faithful obedience to the end, so Jesus was persecuted for his message, remaining obedient unto death, "even to death on a cross" as Paul reminds us in our epistle."

- http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=547 [Mark Throntveit](#), Elva B. Lovell Professor of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.
- *<http://www4.westminster.edu/staff/nak/courses/BibPoetry.htm> "A brief treatment of biblical poetry (that) will introduce the main levels where poetic features operate, as well as the tools and techniques available to the poet at each of these levels."

Psalm 118:19-29 or 31:9-16; RCL splits into Liturgy of the Palms, Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 and Liturgy of the Passion, Psalm 31:9-16 (Psalm 16; RCL, Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24)

Revised Common Lectionary will use Psalm 181:1-2, 14-24 on Easter Sunday.

"In this Psalm the king and the people give thanks to God for his deliverance. It is a Psalm of celebration, and God, their faithful deliverer, is honored and praised. This was probably one of the songs sung by Jesus and his disciples on Thursday evening after the Last Supper and their leaving for the Garden of Gethsemane..." (Continued after the reading)

Psalm 118:19-29 His Steadfast Love Endures Forever

**118 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever!...**

¹⁹ Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the LORD.

²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD;
the righteous shall enter through it.

²¹ I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.

²² The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.^[b]

²³ This is the LORD's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.

²⁴ This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

²⁵ Save us, we pray, O LORD!
O LORD, we pray, give us success!

²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!
We bless you from the house of the LORD.

²⁷ The LORD is God,
and he has made his light to shine upon us.

Bind the festal sacrifice with cords,
up to the horns of the altar!

²⁸ You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;
you are my God; I will extol you.

²⁹ **Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever!**

“Open the Gates! (vv. 19-20)

Verses 19-20 suggest a liturgical procession (Ps 68:24). The king has been reciting his story of distress and answered prayer in front of the gate of the temple. Apparently this was part of an entrance ritual whereby the righteous would gain admittance to the temple (Ps. 15; 24:3-6). At any rate, in verse 19 the speaker begins this section with a call to the gatekeepers to open “the gates of righteousness” for the thanksgiving procession so that he may give thanks to the Lord. Verse 20 is then best understood as the response of (a) gatekeeper(s).

A Pivotal Personal Thanksgiving (vs. 21)

Once the king has gained entrance to the temple, he proceeds immediately in verse 21 to render the promised thanksgiving to the Lord:

I will thank you
+because you answered me
and have become my salvation.

Significantly, this succinct voluntary resolve to give thanks (Ps 138:1) constitutes the first direct address to God in the poem...

A Remarkable Communal Testimony (vv. 22-24)

With respect to verses 22-27, it is important to note the switch from the first person singular in verse 21 to the first person plural in verses 23-27. This switch indicates clearly that at this point the community joins in the thanksgiving ceremony.

In verses 22-24 the community interprets the king's suffering from a different perspective than verse 18. By means of the well-known mini-parable of the rejected stone in verse 22 the king's experience is explained as a dramatic reversal... In language that recalls the Exodus, the congregation recognizes unambiguously in verses 23-24 that this wondrous change was God's miraculous work... By using the crucial language of Exodus 14-15, the congregation acknowledges that God's dramatic deliverance of the king is on par with this foundational event of Israel's history. As a result of this recognition, the congregation then appropriately resolves to join in the liturgy of thanksgiving (vs. 24*bc*): "Let us rejoice and be glad in it."

As we noted in our introduction, the remarkable interpretation of the king's suffering in verse 22 became a crucial text for the New Testament's interpretation of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord... Because of the powerful demonstration of the truth of verse 22 in the death and resurrection of Jesus believers who suffer in this life may draw comfort from this impressive testimony.

A Unique and Urgent Communal Prayer (v. 25)

The community's resolve to praise in verse 24*bc* passes into a unique communal prayer in verse 25. This communal prayer consists of two short and powerful petitions, in which the congregation prays for deliverance:

O Lord, please save us!
O Lord, please give us success!

A Priestly Benediction (vs. 26)

The unique congregational prayer in verse 25 is followed by a benediction in verse 26*a* that appears to have been pronounced by priests from "within the temple" (v. 26*b*):

Blessed is he
+who comes in the name of the Lord.

The fact that the phrase "in the name of the Lord" occurs three times in verses 10-12 indicates that the king is included in the addressees. However, the plural "you" in next declarative statement, "from the house of the Lord we bless you" (v. 26*b*), suggests that the benediction may also have included those who accompanied the king...

As we noted above, in the Gospels the crowds also used this benediction in verse 26*a* as they greeted Jesus at his entry into Jerusalem on the occasion of the Passover. Together with the shout "Hosanna," however, this priestly benediction became a popular acclamation of Jesus' kingship when Jesus entered the city. Significantly, this benediction is referred to again in Matthew 23:39 (cf. Lk 13:35), in which it is clearly a future orientation.

A Congregational Response (vs. 27ab)

The switch from the second person plural addressee in verse 26b to the first common plural “us” in verse 27 suggests that this verse is the people’s response to the blessing. The first two clauses of verse 27 are a marvelous expression of trust:

The Lord is El,
and he has made his light shine upon us...

A Liturgical Call to a Dance (vs. 27c)

After this robust confession an unidentified speaker, perhaps a priest or a gatekeeper, commands the congregation to perform a liturgical act that is connected with the procession.⁵⁷ Presumably this liturgical act would conclude the liturgy for a thank offering (Lev 7:11-21).⁵⁸ However, the reference to “branches” in verse 27c could be an allusion to the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:40)...

Confession of Loyalty and Resolve to Give Thanks (vs. 28)

In verse 28 we hear once more the voice of the king, who addresses God in a solemn, double confession of loyalty, together with another resolve to praise:

You are my God (El),
and I will thank you;
You are my God (El),
and I will exalt you...

Concluding Call to Give Thanks (vs. 29)

Finally, verse 29 repeats the opening call to praise from verse 1 as a conclusion to the poem. Consequently, like Psalm 8, Psalm 118 is a well-rounded literary unit...”

<https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/open-the-gates-psalm-118/> Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, for the study and renewal of worship, Grand Rapids, MI

Philippians 2:5-11; RCL, splits into Liturgy of the Palms, Matthew 21:1-11 and Liturgy of the Passion, Philippians 2:5-11 (Colossians 3:1-4; RCL, the same reading or Acts 10:34-43)

“Every year, the Sunday that begins Holy Week gives us this reading from Paul: “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus ... ”

The brilliance and wisdom of Philippians 2:5-11 becomes especially poignant when the worship honors both the pageantry of the palm waving (Hurrah for Jesus!) and the darkness of the passion (Oh, sacred head ...) celebrated together on one day, for the admonition to live in the mind of Christ Jesus entails both adulation and sorrow. Entering into Holy Week -- whose end will be both a tortured death and an awe-filled rising up out of the grave -- with the words of this letter, opens the way for the people who have come to reckon with this mystery to know themselves as Christ-bearers: “Let the same mind be in you ... ” How can we possibly imagine such a thing?...”

- http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2370
[Melinda Quivik](#) Liturgical and Homiletical Scholar, St. Paul, Minnesota

Christ's Example of Humility

...⁴ *Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.* ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,^[a] ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,^[b] ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,^[c] being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Lights in the World Verses 12-18

Timothy and Epaphroditus Verses 19-30

- a. [Philippians 2:5](#) Or which was also in Christ Jesus
- b. [Philippians 2:6](#) Or a thing to be held on to for advantage
- c. [Philippians 2:7](#) Or slave (for the contextual rendering of the Greek word *doulos*, see Preface)

“For many scripture readers, Philippians 2:5-11 is a favorite... Paul does not write Philippians 2:5-11 apart from the appeals of verses 1-4 and 12-13. Often as Philippians 2:5-11 is mined for answers to questions of dogma, Paul’s rhetorical purpose is primarily to give a *pattern of thinking and living* for believers in Philippi -- one grounded in the way of Jesus...”

- http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3436 **Troy Troftgruben**
Assistant Professor of New Testament, Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa

“Here Paul again presents to us as a powerful example of the celestial and eternal fire, the love of Christ, for the purpose of persuading us to exercise a loving concern for one another. The apostle employs fine words and precious admonitions, having perceived the indolence and negligence displayed by Christians in this matter of loving. For this the flesh is responsible. The flesh continually resists the willing spirit, seeking its own interest and causing sects and factions. Although a sermon on this same text went forth in my name a few years ago, entitled “The Twofold Righteousness,” the text was not exhausted; therefore we will now examine it word by word...” (if you follow the link to the rest of the sermon.)

- https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/luther_martin/misc/014_love-example.cfm
Martin Luther

“Philippians is generally regarded as the warmest and friendliest of Paul’s thirteen New Testament epistles. Clearly the Philippian church was a healthy and happy congregation with

which Paul had a close relationship. However, that does not mean that everything was well in Philippi. Even at the end of chapter 1 Paul urgently calls for unity and a oneness of spirit.

But when we turn the corner into chapter 2, the fact that the Philippians were struggling with pride becomes very evident. So Paul makes a pitch for humility. In doing so, Paul begins in verse 1 with what could be construed as a kind of tongue-in-cheek shaming of the Philippians. Note these understatement: "If Jesus means anything to you, if his love for you strikes you as being important, if it should happen to be the case that you find the Holy Spirit living in your hearts, if you can find so much as an ounce of compassion somewhere inside you, why then why don't y'all try to be unified in humility!..."

Because as Philippians 2 helps us to see, Jesus had to give up a lot in order to join us on this fallen planet. At minimum he had to give up the glories and splendors of heaven in favor of a world of indigestion, stubbed toes, dirty fingernails, and backaches. But he may also have needed to give up certain other perks and powers of divinity for a little while in order to be every bit as much a human being as you and I are. He had to restrain his power, restrict his location to just one place at a time (instead of being omnipresent), give in to his body by eating when he got hungry and laying down for a nap when he got tired.

Perhaps sometimes we forget what enormous sacrifice was required of God's Son not only at the end when he died, but every step along the way. Day and night, and not only during those famous 40 days in the wilderness, the Devil hounded Jesus with temptations, hoping against hope to derail God's salvation before it was too late. Day after day Jesus had to look into the eyes of people he had created only to see not even the faintest glint of recognition that their own sovereign Creator was standing right in front of them. Day after day Jesus had to live on a planet he himself had lovingly shaped at the dawn of time only to see all around him signs of decay, death, pollution, and sorrow.

"He made himself *nothing*," the apostle Paul sings. He not only was no longer living in exalted heights, he even ended up dying the worst, most public of all deaths: crucifixion. And he did it all out of a humble love of astonishing proportions. "If you want to get the hang of the incarnation," C.S. Lewis once wrote, "just imagine how you'd feel if you woke up one morning to discover you had turned into a garden slug."

- https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/palm-sunday-a/?type=lectionary_epistle Scott Hoezee

John 12:12-19 (Palm Sunday Procession) and Matthew 26:1-27, 66 or Matthew 27:11-66 or John 12:20-43; RCL has no Gospel reading for Liturgy of the Palms (see 2nd reading) and lists for the Liturgy of the Passion, Matthew 26:14-27:66 or Matthew 27:11-54 (Matthew 28:1-10; RCL, John 20:1-18 or the same reading)

"The crowds have been trying to make Jesus their king for a long while now.

The crowds by the side of the lake started it all. When that crowd saw the sign that Jesus had done -- feeding five thousand people with five barley loaves and two fish -- they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world."

This word spread as the crowd's enthusiasm for Jesus grew. They decided to coronate him on the spot, and Jesus knew it. "When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take

him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself” (John 6:14-15). The crowd wanted to make Jesus their kind of king, and Jesus wanted no part of it.

In our reading, the crowd up from the country to purify themselves for the Passover festival has the same idea. They want to make Jesus their kind of king. The crowd hears that Jesus is coming into Jerusalem. And they are sporting for a fight. “The chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who knew where Jesus was should let them know, so that they might arrest him” (11:55-57).

We know that the chief priests and Pharisees have already decided to kill Jesus, because Jesus is drawing crowds. They’ve decided to kill Lazarus too, because they need to eliminate the living evidence of the sign that Jesus performed by raising Lazarus from the dead. So the word is out that the religious authorities are looking for Jesus. For Jesus to show up would be a direct, in-your-face challenge to their authority. And the buzz on the street is that Jesus is coming...”

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1929
[Craig A. Satterlee](#) Bishop, North/West Lower Michigan Synod, Lansing, Mich.

“The Holy Gospel according to the 12th Chapter of St. John”

Mary Anoints Jesus at Bethany Verses 1-8

The Plot to Kill Lazarus Verses 9-11

The Triumphal Entry

¹² The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” ¹⁴ And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

¹⁵ “Fear not, daughter of Zion;
behold, your king is coming,
sitting on a donkey's colt!” [Cited from Zech. 9:9](#)

¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. ¹⁷ The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. ¹⁸ The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. ¹⁹ So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.”

Some Greeks Seek Jesus Verses 20-26

The Son of Man Must Be Lifted Up Verses 27-36a

The Unbelief of the People Verses 36b-43

Jesus Came to Save the World Verses 44-50

The Palm Sunday reading is found in all four Gospels. In addition to [John 12:12-19](#) it is also recorded in [Matthew 21:1-11](#), [Mark 11:1-11](#) and [Luke 19:28-40](#). Reading all four may help you to see it in a new light such as the one suggested below by Ray Stedman.

"The traditional view of this event is that it was a well-deserved recognition by our Lord of his Messiahship; that at last he was receiving a proper welcome as a King, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah which is quoted here. The crowd cried out, "Hosanna!" which means, "Save us now!" They saw him as a conqueror and acknowledged him to be the king of Israel. Most of us have grown up with the traditional idea that this was indeed a moment of joy and triumph for our Lord; that he was at last being received as he ought to be.

But that is to misunderstand what is happening here. Many of us have learned more from tradition than from Scripture, and tradition is usually grossly distorted. A reading of the other gospels makes clear that this was not actually a welcome by the inhabitants of Jerusalem. John himself tells us in Verse 12, "a great crowd who had come to the Feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem." These people who welcomed Jesus were not residents of the city, but pilgrims, in the city for the feast, many of them perhaps from other countries. In fact, in Matthew's account of this incident, he says that the whole city was stirred when they saw this procession coming down the Mount of Olives. But instead of joining in the "Hosannas!" they suspiciously asked, "Who is this?" The crowd making up the procession had to inform them, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth."

No one seems to have truly understood the nature of this event, as John makes evident ... Even the disciples were bewildered by this turn of events. They had been with Jesus in Galilee when the crowd had tried to crown him king following the feeding of the five thousand, but he would have nothing to do with that. Here, however, they see he is willing to receive the plaudits of the crowd. They must have been very confused at what was going on. In fact, we are told they did not know what this meant until after Jesus was glorified.

Here also was the bedazzled multitude, caught up with the exciting news that Jesus had raised a man who had been dead four days. They were all anxious to see the Wonderworker who had done this amazing thing. Then there were the belligerent Pharisees who had decided (we learn from the other gospels) not to take Jesus prisoner during the Passover feast because they feared the reaction of the multitude. But now, as they see the whole populace seemingly swept along by this appearance of Jesus, they say, "You see that you can do nothing (i.e., their plans to delay arresting Jesus were unavailing); look, the whole world has gone after him." This event changed their schedule. They had to act now.

So not only is this not a welcome to the city of Jerusalem, it's not even a spontaneous demonstration. Most of us have felt that when Jesus appeared the crowd became excited and spontaneously began to break the branches off the palm trees to welcome him. But a careful reading of all four gospels indicates that this was a carefully planned demonstration, orchestrated by none other than Jesus himself! He was the one who was timing events according to his schedule...

More than the prophecy of Zechariah, however, Jesus had read in the ninth chapter of Daniel, in one of the most amazing prophetic passages of the Old Testament, that a special period of 490 years of Jewish history would begin to run its course when the command was given to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem following the Babylonian captivity. When 483 of those years had elapsed, Messiah, the Prince, would then be presented to his people. Two very interesting books by Sir Robert Anderson, "Messiah the Prince," and "Daniel the Prophet," trace the fulfillment of this prophecy, pointing out that on the very day when Jesus rode into Jerusalem 483 years had elapsed from the time of the issuing of the commandment to build the walls of Jerusalem! This was a strategic day in the history of Israel. Our Lord was fully aware of it and that is why he had chosen this day...

But when Jesus came, in fulfillment of the prophecies that he would come as King, he was not riding on a war horse but on a donkey, a symbol of peace. His only scepter was a broken reed, his only crown a crown of thorns, his only throne a bloody cross. This whole scene is telling us that outward appearance means nothing to God when the heart is defiled and unyielded to him..."

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How are you doing with **THE MATTHEW CHALLENGE**, a handwritten copy of the book of Matthew by the Last Sunday of the Church Year (Christ the King Sunday), November 22, 2020.

Living the Lutheran Lectionary

Lectionary Year A – the Gospel of Matthew

The Resurrection of Our Lord /Easter Day April 12, 2020

Acts 10:34-43 or Jeremiah 31:1-6; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), the same reading

Psalm 16; RCL, Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Colossians 3:1-4; RCL, the same reading or Acts 10:34-43
Matthew 28:1-10; RCL, John 20:1-18 or the same reading

Second Sunday of Easter April 19, 2020

John 20:19-31; RCL, the same reading

Third Sunday of Easter April 26, 2020

Luke 24:13-35; RCL, the same reading

Fourth Sunday of Easter May 3, 2020

John 10:1-10; RCL, the same reading

Fifth Sunday of Easter May 10, 2020

John 14: 1-14; RCL, the same reading

Sixth Sunday of Easter May 17, 2020

The Ascension of Our Lord May 21, 2020

John 14: 1-14; RCL, the same reading

Seventh Sunday of Easter May 24, 2020

The Ascension of Our Lord May 21, 2020

John 17:1-11; RCL, the same reading

Pentecost May 31, 2020

John 7:37-39; RCL, John 20:19-23 or the same reading