Worship Resources for March 29, 2015—Palm/Passion Sunday

Revised Common Lectionary: Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16 or Psalm 119:1-2, 19-29; Philippians 2:5-11; Mark 11:1-11 or John 12:12-16 or Mark 14:1-15:47

Narrative Lectionary: Triumphal Entry, Matthew 21:1-13 (Psalm 118:26-29)

We have come to the end of our Lenten season, and we read these words from the prophet Isaiah, who as a prophet of God has faced humiliation and persecution, yet perseveres knowing he is innocent, that God has called him, and God will remain faithful. He has been called not only to prophesy but to teach, and he will face those that accuse him and find justice in God.

Psalm 31:9-16 speaks along similar lines to the passage from Isaiah, but from a place of distress and anguish. The psalmist has suffered greatly and knows that their life is in danger from their enemies, but they put their trust in God. The psalmist trusts that God is their God, a God who knows them, and will deliver them from the hands of their enemies.

Psalm 119:1-2, 19-29 is a celebratory song of arrival in the temple, remembering that the people of Israel, rejected by the world, have been embraced by God. God is the one who saves and is worthy of worship. God is the one who has given light and is the one who saves, so all should give thanks to the Lord, for God’s steadfast love endures forever.

Philippians 2:5-11 contains one of the very first Christian hymns, words of a confession that Christ, who was the son of God, emptied himself of his power and became human like us, a servant of all, and died just like us—to the point of being put to death like a criminal. God raised up Jesus, the one who was brought low for us, and has exalted his name so that we all are called to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Mark’s account of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem in 11:1-11 shows that the people were looking for a worldly Messiah. They were looking for God to establish the kingdom of Israel, as once ruled by David, on earth. They were not looking for the kingdom of God, that is beyond this world. They wanted an earthly king who would overthrow the Roman government. They were looking for “the coming kingdom of our ancestor David” (vs. 10) and did not understand who Jesus was, which is why things turned so greatly in the following days, when Jesus did not take up the sword but instead overturned tables in the temple.

John’s account of Jesus’ entry in 12:12-16 is much shorter than all the other Gospel accounts. John makes it clear that the disciples did not understand what was going on. They did not understand who the Messiah was, and they still did not understand who Jesus was, but the understanding would come later, after the resurrection.

Mark’s account of the Passion narrative in Chapters 14-15 begins with the anointing of Jesus by a woman at the house of Simon the Leper. After Jesus is anointed and the disciples quarrel about how the perfume could have been sold, Judas goes to the priests to betray Jesus. Later, the disciples eat the Passover meal with Jesus, who announces that he has been betrayed, and that they all will become deserters. They all deny it (not just Peter), but of course we know what happened. They fall asleep, and when they wake up Jesus is arrested and they scatter. One of them was so ready to get away, even though he was only wearing a linen cloth, when it was grabbed he left it behind and ran off naked (14:52). There is much to the story in these two chapters, but in the end, it was not his disciples who were with him when he died, but the women, Joseph of Arimathea, and a Centurion who witnessed and took care of his body.

We like to think that the prophets long ago prophesied about Jesus and what would happen to him, but the truth is whatever the prophets knew of the Messiah, they had only a glimpse. And even Jesus’ own disciples, the ones who were closest to him and should have known him best, had only a glimpse of who he really was. It was not until after the resurrection that the pieces came into focus, that they understood that his kingdom was not of this world, but that his kingdom, was coming and all of us can be part of it, that death does not have the final word, that God works in eternity, not worldly timelines.

Call to Worship

We come with joy to greet our Savior!

**Hosanna, Come and Save Us, Lord!**

We pause with doubt when trials come our way;

**Hosanna, Come and Save Us, Lord!**

We turn our backs out of fear and self-preservation;

**Hosanna, Come and Save Us, Lord!**

In all of our wavering, in faithfulness and faithlessness,

**Hosanna, Come and Save us, Lord!**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Eternal God, we are a people of timelines and due dates and deadlines. We do not understand that just like a baby is rarely born on its due date, so do you rarely work in our timetables and schedules. We do not accept that just as it took billions of years for the universe to become what it is for us now, the way You work in our universe, our world, and in our lives is often beyond our understanding. Forgive us for our short-sightedness, for centering ourselves, and not perceiving of all You are doing to bring Your vision of the fullness of life into being. In the name of Christ, who laid down his life so that we might know the fullness of life beyond death, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

All things are made new by Christ. All things are restored in Christ. The fullness of life in Christ is found in forgiving others, finding healing and reconciliation, and working for justice, knowing that death does not have the final word. The opportunity for new life is now, not at death. Eternity is now. Embrace the fullness of life in Christ, knowing you are forgiven, restored, and loved. Amen.

Prayer

Voice in the Silence, You called out light from nothing, called out life from cold earth and water, and called out Your children to live into Your ways. We have forgotten our created image, that we are Your children. We have forgotten the miracle of our creation, that we live now. We have forgotten Your voice, that the light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not overcome it. Help us to remember, to recall all You have done for us and creation, and that You are doing a new thing, even now. Help us to remember all Christ did for us in his earthly life, and all Christ is doing for us now, and all Christ will do for us. Your time is not our time. Call us to tune our hearts to You, to listen for Your voice and to follow Your ways. In the name of Jesus Christ, Your Only Son, we pray all things. Amen.