

April 5, 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

God's Peace be with you.

When we glance at our calendars, it does not seem possible that today is indeed Palm Sunday. Palm Sunday, a day filled with traditions to remember Jesus' triumphal entry into the Holy City of Jerusalem. It is our tradition that before worship there is the annual Easter egg hunt followed by a light breakfast and a time of fellowship. Then we gather for worship, we wave our palm branches and sing our favorite hymns to recapture the spirit of this joyous event. And as jubilant as the service begins, it takes a grim turn as we conclude the service with the reading of the Passion.

But this year, there are no eggs, there is no breakfast, order for the palms has been canceled and there will be none of our favorite hymns being sung in our sanctuary. And even though we are not together today, I invite you to be present – to join with your brothers and sisters in Christ from all over the world – to embrace this sacred story to prepare ourselves for the most holy of weeks to come.

For the past two weeks, the church council has met once a week by means of a conference call to talk about concerns and issues that are arising as we are being challenged to do things differently. This week, the Church Council had an additional special council meeting via Zoom to take care of some of the urgent business that is necessary during this time that we are called to love one another from afar. Your leaders have been challenged with a heavy burden of making hard decisions during this time that are worship services have been suspended, our schools have been closed and we have been directed to "Shelter in Place". We are blessed to have such faithful, conscientious, creative and courageous leaders as we walk through these uncharted waters of this storm.

On Thursday night, the council approved the following actions:

1. to authorize our finance committee to engage in conversations with our mortgage lender to defer our mortgage payments for the next few months,

2. to lay off until further notice our Pre-School Teachers and Aides, our Kid's Korner Staff, our Children's Programs Director and our Administrative Assistant
3. to apply for a community support grant for non-profits.

These decisions have not come easy and the loss of wages for our faithful staff has indeed added a financial burden for them and their families on top of the stress that this crisis has already presented. We are hopeful that they will qualify for supplemental governmental assistance to support them until we are able to call them back to work.

We recognize that this Coronavirus epidemic may have put unforeseen financial constraints on your personal funds also. However, if you are able to continue to support the church during this time, you may do so electronically on our website or by writing a check and mailing it to the church. (addresses are listed below)

Our lives have been impacted in ways that I never even considered a few short weeks ago. I continue to pray for your spiritual, physical and mental health and well-being throughout this health emergency. Please reach out by phone or email to your brothers and sisters in Christ from Good Shepherd as well as your family, your friends and your neighbors. If you need contact information for someone, give me a call at home and I may be able to help you. If you need someone to talk to, do not hesitate to call.

This week in addition to those people previously listed on our prayer list, prayers are requested for:

- the family of Harry Burgess; Harry was the husband of Sharon Burgess, Denny Buckley's sister. Harry died on April 3 from a stroke.
- the family of Joe Deren; Joe was the husband of Louise Deren, Betty Ledig's sister. Joe died on March 30 from COVID-19.
- Charles Michael Henzie; grandson of Diane and Gary O'Brien. Charles Michael has shown signs of improvement but remains in critical condition in the NCIU at CHOP. Gary's Saturday afternoon update is printed at the end of this letter.
- Lauren Mauroschatd and her friend Christian, Lauren is the niece of Kristin Morrisey. Lauren and Christian are nurses in a COVID-19 ICU unit

- Gene Shobert, food pantry volunteer from GSUCC. Gene has been hospitalized with pneumonia.
- All who are separated from their loved ones in their time of need.
- All those who have are suffering for the effects of COVID-19
- All who are working to care for those who have been infected by the virus
- All who are working for a cure
- All who are keeping us safe and supplied with our daily needs
- All who are suffering physically, financially and/or spiritually
- All who are in need and all who I have not remembered to mention

If you have prayer concerns, please contact Kathy Buckley (610-223-8373) or me.

Since, I am sending out a weekly update, I chose not to have a newsletter compiled and sent out this month. The information sent in by Kathlynn has been included in a separate file in this email.

Stay safe – take care of yourself and take care of one another.

And may you find peace in God’s mercy, God’s love, God’s grace and God’s presence throughout these trying times.

Your sister in Christ
Pastor Denise

Baby Charlie – Saturday, April 4th Update

Good afternoon friends and family. The update on Charles Michael was positive this morning. He has bounced back from a rough night Thursday night. His blood pressure is better, his heart rate came down and is more consistent. His kidneys are producing a little more urine. His white blood count has dropped slightly and his platelets are stable although they haven’t found the source for the elevated white cells. He had a corneal abrasion in each eye that has improved. The Irish blood in him is definitely showing us he wants to fight. Please continue the prayers for this little boy. Thank you for the love and support!

Sincerely,

The O'Brien/Henzie Famil

Pastor Denise's contact information:

Home 610-750-6432
Cell or Text 610-858-8187
Email denise.keltz@gmail.com

Pastor Denise's Home Address

521 Oak Hill Lane
Reading, PA 19610

Church Address

4201 Stoudt's Ferry Bridge Road
Reading, PA 19605

Church Phone

610-926-4201
leave a message for the pastor – press 1
Pastor checks this voice mailbox daily

Church Website – Dale Nelson webmaster (610-462-2475)

Goodshepherdlc.org

Prayer Chain – Kathy Buckley coordinator

610-223-8373

Mark 11:1-11, 4:3-9

11:1 When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples² and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it.³ If anyone says to you, "Why are you doing this?" just say this, "The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately."⁴

⁴ They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, ⁵ some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" ⁶ They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. ⁷ Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it.

⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. ⁹ Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

"Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

¹¹ Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

14:3 While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head.

⁴ But some were there who said to one another in anger, "Why was the ointment wasted in this way? ⁵ For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they scolded her.

6 But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. 7 For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. 8 She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial.

9 Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."

Grace and Peace to you from God, our Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. AMEN



[All Glory, Laud, and Honor Video](#)

click on the title above to listen

note, it may take some time to load and you may want to bypass the ads

Refrain

All glory, laud and honor,
To Thee, Redeemer, King,
To Whom the lips of children
Made sweet hosannas ring.

1.

Thou art the King of Israel,
Thou David's royal Son,
Who in the Lord's Name comest,
The King and Blessèd One.

Refrain

2.

The company of angels
Are praising Thee on High,
And mortal men and all things
Created make reply.

Refrain

3.

The people of the Hebrews
With palms before Thee went;
Our prayer and praise and anthems
Before Thee we present.

Refrain

4.

To Thee, before Thy passion,
They sang their hymns of praise;
To Thee, now high exalted,
Our melody we raise.

Refrain

5.

Thou didst accept their praises;
Accept the prayers we bring,
Who in all good delightest,
Thou good and gracious King.

Refrain

The word has reached the people of the city of Jerusalem that the long awaited king, the one spoken of by the prophets of old is about to enter the Holy City of Jerusalem. The people, who had suffered at the hands of their adversaries for hundreds of year, have heard Jesus' message of freedom and restoration – and they are over joyed that the time has come to be freed from the oppression they experience each and every day.

And today is the day – they will get to set their eyes on their long awaited king – so they stop what ever it is that they are doing and prepare to give Jesus a royal welcome to the Holy City.

Some of them are throwing their coats on the road, while others are spreading palm branches on the path that Jesus is about to travel on. Some are watching and waving their palm branches from the side of the road, some have joined in the procession and all of them are chanting:

Hosanna

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

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

Save us – Deliver us – Redeem us – Restore us - O Lord

This day has finally come for them to meet their new king. The king, who will change their lives as he ushers in a kingdom like the days of old when David was their king. They are eager and excited that they will finally get to live with all the security and freedom of their ancestors

And although the hymn *All, Glory, Laud and Honor* was not written until the mid eighteen hundreds – this certainly was the sentiment of the crowd – David's royal descendant had arrived at his destination to be their redeemer and their King – life for the children of Father Abraham is going to be different from here on out.

But, we who have the advantage of listening to this story with “resurrection ears” - know that this king, this redeemer, this Jesus, this one who has come as an answer their prayers – is not going to be the king that they expected. Jesus has not come to take them back to the glory days of David's reign as king. But, Jesus is about to take them forward to a whole new life and a whole new way of being the people of the God of Israel.

And as I think of this transformative time for the people of Israel, I can't help wondering what life will be like when we get through this transformative time we are currently living in and living through. In these past few weeks in many ways, our daily routines have changed, our priorities have changed, and maybe even our values have changed. For some of you, your faith has not wavered in this time of uncertainty, but for some of us our fears and our unanswered questions have filled our hearts and minds with doubt and anxiety - we ask why - we pray for healing - we hurt for those who are enduring great pain and suffering - we are afraid of being infected or infecting others - we long for our brains to figure this out and assure us that everything is going to be ok.

Lord have mercy on us - for we feel our world is spinning out of control (and that's not just a fear it is a reality) - for we are unsure of what tomorrow will bring. Perhaps much like Jesus' closest friends felt as they gathered at Jesus' friend Simon's house for dinner.

But, unlike Jesus' closest friends who sit with him prior to his death and resurrection, we live post-resurrection - therefore we get to live in the promise of the resurrection - the promise of new life - the promise that God is with us - even in our darkest hours - and like God never left his beloved Son as he hung on that cross - God will never leave us or forsake us, especially when we seem to be hanging on - only by "the skin of our teeth".

Which may be where we find the disciples in the second part of this morning's text - that is hanging on to their vision of the future based on the glory days of the past by "the skin of their teeth"

For this second part of the text, we have fast forwarded a few days after the triumphant entry and find Jesus and his closest followers in a much quieter and calmer scene. They are in the little village of Bethany outside of Jerusalem where they are staying and dining in the house of Jesus' friend Simon.

It was probably an evening where the room was filled with an unspoken tension and anxiety, and a great deal of chatter about the upcoming celebration of the Passover. The disciples had heard Jesus tell them three times what was going to happen when they arrived in Jerusalem - he would be ridiculed, arrested, found guilty and killed and on the third day he would rise again.

And over the past few days, the disciples have seen with their own eyes the first phase of this prediction coming true - as they watched the religious elite taunt

Jesus, they saw the religious elite try to trick him and expose him as a phony and discredit him. It was becoming evident that those who had great status and power in this Jewish community were out to get Jesus.

There were still two days until the Jewish celebration of the Passover would begin. And while Jesus and his disciples were eating dinner, an (unnamed) woman entered the room and began to pour nard, a very expensive aromatic amber-colored essential oil over Jesus head.

The disciples scolded her for being wasteful. After all, the disciples had heard Jesus say time and time again that they needed to use their resources to feed and support the poor, the hungry and the outcast.

But, Jesus corrected them saying – there will always be plenty of time for you to do the work that you have been called to do with regard to the last and the least of these. But, now is the time to keep your focus on me and what is about to happen.

And this act of anointing – this act is an act of love to prepare me for what is about to happen. This act is to prepare my body for my burial. Jesus doesn't go into detail, but all too soon the disciples will realize that this act of anointing his body before his death was necessary – as the circumstances of his death will not give his loved ones the opportunity to properly prepare his body for burial. As the evening lingered on with the smell of this sweet perfume mixed with the tension and the anxiety in the room, Judas got up and left the room.

Mark 14: ¹⁰ Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to [hand Jesus over] to them. ¹¹ When [the chief priests] heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give [Judas] money. So [Judas] began to look for an opportunity to betray [Jesus].

To be continued on Thursday!!!!

AMEN